

Introduction

“Welcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own will!”

Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1997: 22)

In this paper I want to look at the relationship between the United States of America and its cinematic vampires. Since the Count first walked onto the screen in 1931 and said his first fateful words “I am...Dracula” (Browning: 1931) America has been in thrall to the Dark Lord and his progeny. From the early classic Horror cycle by Universal Pictures the vampire has been a continuing presence in mainstream American film production and consumption. I will argue that this is not just an arbitrary attraction but that the relationship is on the level of a symbiosis where the vampire performs a crucial function for the configuration of American identity. I will examine this function to see if it fulfils the same role that Pierre Nora argues ‘gastronomie’ and the ‘tour de France’ perform for French national identity as places “where memory crystallizes and secretes itself” (Nora, 1989: 7) I shall begin by looking at certain aspects of Nora’s theory of the ‘lieux de memoire’, or ‘sites of memory’, and study how they might relate to the ways America has constructed its own national identity. I will then examine if the cinematic vampire can be seen to be part of this process and the ways in which it might be achieved. Further to this I will

see if the continuing metamorphosis of the cinematic 'undead' has changed the function it performs for American memory and identity.

Nora began editorial work on his magnum opus 'Les lieux de memoire' in 1984 and completed his monumental project seven books later in 1992. Within these he examines the changing relationship between the present and the past and what he sees's as an irreparable rupture between the two. He focuses specifically on his homeland of France, but it could equally be applied to any nation that is in a 'liminal' state, which is described by Hue-Tam Ho Tai as "When they are being born and are in need of instant antiquity or when they are besieged, either by internal or external forces." (Hue-Tam Ho Tai, 2001: 35) Nora identifies an increasing separation and opposition between what he calls History and memory. His definitions of these terms, though variable, are not so much imprecise but more in the nature of creating oppositional pairs of 'what was' and 'what is now', and so History can approximate to the hegemonic past of a country and the ideological milestones that are used to create a sense of nation. This interdependence of individual and group memory was explored by Maurice Halbwachs', who influenced Nora, positing similar notions of collective memory where the individuals memories are; "recalled to me externally, and the groups of which I am part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them" (Halbwachs, 1992: 38) Memory on the other hand can be seen to be the individual, or the smaller group constructing a version of its own past separate from concepts of nation, or as American historian Peter Novick, puts it "Every group [is] its own historian." (Novick, 1988: 469) However History can also be the synthetic construction of the individual, or group, trying to validate against 'true' nationhood whilst memory is also equated with a somewhat 'Rousseau-esque' original state

where natural memory is integral to both place and enactment and so requires no exterior mnemonic reminders; for memory is a continually 'lived' experience "real memory- social and unviolated...the secret of so-called primitive or archaic societies." (Nora, 1989: 8) In this way Nora uses the fluctuating definitions of the terms to establish an almost Manichean dichotomy between the past and the present, an epistemological equivalent to the actual rupture that he sees enacted around him, but a project which, no matter how positively spun, is implicitly tinged with nostalgia. As this process develops one can see that one of the main causes of this rupture for Nora is the loss of geographical connection and specificity within the definition of nationhood itself. Hence why Nora cites the importance of the demise of the peasantry in France dropping below a critical amount; "In 1975, the percentage of the population actively engaged in agriculture fell below 10 per cent, a fateful threshold" (Nora, 2002: 2) This is crucial in the loss of 'milieu', as it is a severing of that particularly intimate relationship to the Motherland, not only as origin but as nurturing and protective. This inevitably results in the end of what Nora sees as 'the prototypical "collective memory"' and so necessitating the creation of 'lieux' as surrogate simulacra of what was lost. The effect of this separation from the land and ones 'natural' history are twofold, the first is an 'acceleration' of history, a notion first put forward by Daniel Halevy in his 'Essai sur l'acceleration de l'histoire' (1948) which "essentially means that the most continuous or permanent feature of the modern world is no longer continuity or permanence but change." (Nora, 2002: 4) This is further emphasised by Andreas Huyssen who describes the modern world as a "universe of simulation and fast speed information and cable networks... and often threatening heterogeneity, non-synchronicity, and information overload." (Huyssen, 1995: 7) This necessitates a need to create validation through the construction of a

'history' of ones own, which for Nora emphasizes the separation of the present from the past. A past which contained 'real' memory, where society, place and memory were one, and a future where history is a self conscious organisation of the past, a mnemonic construction of memory rather than actual lived memory; a 'milieu de memoire' as opposed to a 'lieux de memoire'. In Nora's opinion "Today, this distance has been stretched to its convulsive limit." (Nora 1989: 8) Further to this, in terms of the inherent anxiety over national identity, he goes on to say "We knew formerly whose sons we were, [but] ... today we are the sons of no one, and of everyone." (Englund, 1992: 302) This manifests itself in the contemporary obsession with the quest for origins. As mentioned above implicit within this is Nora's idea that there is a quintessential connection between the land and real memory and that there has been a disconnection of the two through increasing industrial urbanisation. In losing this intimate connection with geographical specificity notions of nationhood will inevitably decline. This can also be seen as a change from 'place' to 'space' in that the 'milieu', or integral connection to place, is one of the main instigators in the creation of nation through specificity. Whereas the 'lieux' is at least once removed from actuality, or a simulation of it, similar arguments can be found in the work of Marc Auge and Michel de Certeau. In its capacity as a reconstruction of history and an archival artefact it can be seen to exist in non-specific space as it has become detached from its particular point of origin. This change from place to space that Nora see's happening around him produces not an excess of memory but an excess of history. The inevitable result of this is the boom, in the late twentieth century, of heritage studies. This has been identified not only by Nora but Huyssen, Kammen and Glassberg, where the quest for individual origins and the recording, or reification, of the traces of ones passing for prosperity has produced an overdependence on the externalised

archive. Consequently this is seen by all of them to be caused by an anxiety within the previously established meta-narratives of nationhood. In both France and America the cause is identified with, but also symptomatic of, the increasing agency of the previously disenfranchised. In talking of the profusion of ‘historical’ activities in the latter twentieth century in America, David Glassberg unequivocally states its cause as:

“a growing number of organised groups- racial, ethnic, religious, as well as veterans, women, gays, people with disabilities- acquired sufficient economic and political power to have their places recognised and preserved in public alongside those established earlier in the century that honoured primarily white males of northern European descent.

Contemporary politics dictates that each new identity requires a history.”

(Glassberg, 2001: 207)

For France this is caused not so much by differentiation from within its traditional borders but the integration of its external colonies within the ‘homeland’, This increased differentiation within the traditional national boundaries has created, for Nora, a further separation between society and the “stability of the rural society” (Nora, 2002: 2). For America this is reversed in that there was not so much an issue of external integration, though that is arguably now not the case, but one that is mainly internal. Differentiation comes in establishing itself as being essentially different from the external and so the ‘lieux’ or ‘site’ created by America, particularly at the start of the twentieth century, whilst fulfilling the same function as that of those in France are fundamentally different. In France the state created the universalising norms to produce a sense of nationhood which continued the hegemonic ideologies of the Third Republic and in doing so utilised what for them was the most obvious tool for

indoctrination “the school and university system as the principle instrument to create a collective identity and a form of national consciousness” (Nora, 2001: xxxvi) Thus promoting the continuation of the rule of the white male northern European whereas for America that was exactly what they were trying to separate themselves from.

Harvey J. Kaye states “The years 1915-1945 witnessed dramatic shifts in the making of American memory and tradition. Though Europeanism persisted, Americana and Americanism were clearly ascendant.” (Kaye, 1994: 255)

This second American Revolution began at the start of the twentieth century and utilised culture and the arts as a main part of its ongoing programme of dissemination. Its function was to promote the idea of a unique and discrete ‘American-ness’ and not the continuance of European culture, which had previously been seen to be the case. This was initialised in 1913 “after the first national election in which every voter in the continental U.S. cast his ballot as a citizen of an established state.” (Kamp, 2009: 2) and was re-enforced by a period of American ‘isolationism’ which meant that from the beginning there was the creation of a very particular kind of ‘lieux’, or ‘site’ in America, one that defined itself not by what it was but by what it was not. That is to say rather than reflecting a very specific part, or characteristic, of national identity, some of the American ‘sites of memory’, can be seen to be based on the idea of what its national identity is not or what it is created in opposition too. For example rather than citing ‘gastronomie’, as Nora does, as containing an explicit and unique idea of ‘Frenchness’ in terms of history and character and so constitutive of the larger notion of nationhood. Some American ‘sites of memory’ can be seen to be formed explicitly from an idea of anti-Europeanism.

To examine exactly how this works I want to use the example of the cinematic vampire and Tod Browning’s “Dracula” in particular. So in the next chapter I will

show how Bela Lugosi's portrayal of the Count might be used to construct a 'site of memory' that configures American identity not from an inherent national characteristic but from an oppositional configuration of the 'Monster' that is Europe. In chapters two and three I will look at how the vampire as American 'site of memory' evolves over time, specifically in "Son of Dracula" (Siodmak: 1943) when Dracula takes his first steps on American soil and then in "Fright Night" (Holland: 1985) when we see the first born and bred American vampire. In conclusion I shall look at the film "Twilight" (Hardwicke: 2008) where it is possible to see that America's relationship to the revenant has turned full circle and that it now configures itself positively with the figure of the vampire and that its manifold representations in contemporary American cinema means that rather than a 'lieux de memoire' it in fact constitutes a 'milieu de memoire'.

Chapter 1

‘The appearance of vampires becomes the sign of profound trouble.’

Stephen Arata, *The Occidental Tourist: Stoker and Reverse Colonization*

(1996:115)

The 1930’s was a traumatic time for America as the boom of the ‘Roaring 20’s’ disappeared in the stock market crash of 29th October 1929 and then turned into the Depression. Increasingly loud calls for intervention, in both Europe and Manchuria, were met with a continuance of America’s earlier isolationist policies first introduced between 1914 and 1917 “keeping American citizens and ships out of war zones, prohibiting loans and munitions to belligerents and requiring a popular referendum for a declaration of war” (Cooper, 1969: 214-215) So much so that they declined inclusion in the League of Nations after the First World War in 1919. With the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt to the presidency in 1932, and the introduction of the ‘New Deal’, the government became increasingly central to America and what it was to be ‘American’. The programmes set up by the administration at this time were primarily intended to help Americans survive and, or, recover from the effects of the Depression. Bodies such as the Civil Works Administration (CWA) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) provided work for the needy. The WPA was also responsible for the flourishing of more arts based bodies such as the Federal Theatre Project, the Federal Writer’s Project and the Federal Art Project. Whilst

encouraging new talent, Orson Welles and Jackson Pollack both come through the system (Heale, 2004: 119-121), it also centralised the funding of the arts in America more than ever before. This greater concern on domestic rather than international affairs in the 1930's was also informed by a sense of the need for reconstruction. Warren Susman explains that after the Depression "[p]eople wanted to make sense of where they now stood" which prompted a "self-conscious search for a culture" that could "make their own world comprehensible" (Susman, 2003: 159- 160) This new nationalism for a 'new' America found obvious outlets in the expanding mass communication media of radio, cinema and advertising. It was now possible to "see and know the details of life in different areas of the country, to feel oneself part of some other's experience." (Eldridge, 2008: 23) More importantly for this study the unification of experience across the country also meant that "Hollywood stars and genres became common currency across the nation."(ibid) Cinema became an important medium in configuring what this new, or reconstructed, American identity might be.

During this period the film industry had also suffered from the 'best of times and the worst of times'. The 'talkies' had gripped the public's imagination in 1927 with Warner Brothers "The Jazz Singer" (Crosland: 1927) and by 1930 it was enjoying 'Hollywood's Greatest Year' with theatre ticket sales at an all time high. Conversely by 1933 '[a]dmissions and profits plummeted, theatres closed, and RKO, Paramount, Fox and Universal studios ended up in receivership' (Hark, 2007:6) However by the end of the decade "[t]hey had weathered the Depression, the establishment and enforcement of the Production Code, and labor actions and unionisation among the creative ranks to become a well-oiled industrial powerhouse." (ibid: 1) One reason for

this was the consolidation of the studio system, where the same actors, directors and creative teams worked for one particular studio. This gave the productions of each studio a distinctive ‘look’ whilst also increasing efficiency. This further consolidated the creation of filmic genres, or fictional narratives, that can be seen as based more on marketing possibilities than artistic intent. The guarantee of financial return and ‘genre-fication’ in the sound era was initially realised in the Musical genre. The sight, and more importantly the sound, of Al Jolson singing on one knee to his ‘Mammy’ launched a myriad of musicals afterwards. The same can be said of the film “Dracula” whose archetypal Count arguably created the Horror genre and gave birth to all subsequent ‘children of the night’.

There is a useful correlation between genre and ‘sites of memory’ for both use familiar and recognisable elements that deliberately make connections to its past and to the past of its audience. Also, and more importantly, as Gerald Mast points out “genre films, because of their popularity and familiarity, have a more powerful impact on their audience... converting that audience into a unified cultural force.” (Mast, 1992: 430) In this way the establishment of the genre film and its dissemination across America at this time can be seen to facilitate the creation of ‘sites of memory’. By creating a common language and ideology it not only draws the disparate peoples of America together but produces shared identification and memory that are common to all. If, as I argue, the Count can be seen as a ‘site of memory’ what aspects of his cinematic representation make him uniquely part of American identity in the 1930’s? Previous to Browning’s film there had been many earlier silent films which we would now place in the category of horror. Many of the most influential examples were made by German directors in the era of German Expressionism such as “The Golem” (Wegener: 1915), “The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari” (Wiene: 1920) and “Nosferatu: A

Symphony of Horror” (Murnau: 1922). Undoubtedly these inform the visual character of the majority of early Hollywood horror films. However it was not until the classic Universal Pictures Horror series that began in 1931 that the genre truly coalesced into its true Hollywood form. I contend that that form was undoubtedly in the shape of Dracula who was the first of this series. David Pirie notes “[m]any... Gothic prototypes...have commanded an astonishing success since their original composition, but the popularity of Dracula and its various offshoots goes beyond everything else.” (Pirie, 2008: 95). Curiously before the release of the film in February 1931 the appellation ‘Horror film’ was not part of the marketers’ language and so “Dracula” was originally billed as “the strangest love story ever told.” (Auerbach, 1995: 202) The ‘look’ of Dracula in this film is seminal to the genre with “the dark clothes and full flowing red-lined cape, the hair brushed back straight and flat from the forehead” (Silver, 1997: 91) This came mainly from the theatrical show, the cape with high collar being introduced so that the Count could mysteriously vanish, through a trapdoor, leaving the now empty cloak to fall to the stage floor (Skal: 1990). Whilst important I argue that what actually changes Dracula from an everyday monster to a ‘site of memory’ is his voice.

“Dracula” was made at the end of a transitional point in Hollywood’s history. It appeared three months before the end of the change from silent to sound movies which, as identified by film researcher Donald Crafton, was May 1931 (Spadoni, 2007: 9-15) as such it occupies a unique place at the crossroads of sound and horror where the uncanny-ness of the newly created forms combine to produce the otherworldliness unique to “Dracula”. Although the use of sound in the film established the stalwarts of the genre with the creaking coffin lids and the howling ‘children of the night’ it is the voices that create the sense of place and difference.

This is emphasized by the strangely ambiguous scenery that rather than creating any real sense of place only produces an undefined otherworldliness. Even the Count's spectacularly gothic castle is denied its roots in Transylvania by such oddities as Armadillo's and Possum's running around the hallways. What actually produce's the *mise-en-scene* are the voices or accents of the characters. It is the English accents of the servants and the police that locate us in London, not the generic sets of streets and drawing rooms. Although the accents are somewhat over determined without them we could be anywhere. Of course this also serves as an easy signifier for the audience making these rather bumbling characters indicative of 'Merrie Olde England', which is somewhat confused by the fact that the main characters, the majority of which are also supposedly British, sound more 'New England' than 'Old England'. This creates difference between the two sets of characters with the main ones, who the audience would be expected to identify with, symbolising a sophisticated intellectual America as opposed to a clumsy traditional Europe. If this perceived aural difference is used to partition the 'New World' from the 'Old World' and maintain an appearance of moral and intellectual superiority then as soon as Dracula speaks he threatens to corrupt and obliterate all of this.

Interestingly Bela Lugosi, who plays Dracula, was not the first choice for the role. Although he had played the Count for many years in the highly successful theatrical productions that toured America he was Universals last choice. David Skal observes "the list of actors tested or talked about for the part included Chaney [Lon snr.], Ian Keith, Paul Muni, William Courtney, Chester Morris, and Arthur Edmund Carewe." (Skal, 1993: 117) Whilst the director Tod Browning wanted to cast an unknown actor 'I favour getting a stranger from Europe.' (ibid), Universal believed that Lugosi was "too foreign' for the part" (Lennig, 2003: 95) Browning however understood the

need to highlight the link between the Other and the foreign, or more specifically the European. Ina Rae Hark notes “The accented voice is of course the key signifier of foreignness.” (Hark, 2007: 53). This is important not only in terms of the film but in how the character of Dracula went on to achieve its significance. David Pirie explains that in Stokers novel “[he] goes to enormous trouble to stress the Count’s anglophile charm in his characterisation: he speaks excellent English” (Pirie, 2008: 98) Browning’s Dracula does exactly the reverse and from the very beginning of the film he emphasizes this difference. Many critics point to the large amounts of silence in what was the first horror ‘talky’ and as observed by Hark:

“It is surprising that the build-up to Dracula’s meeting with Renfield should make such heavy use of silence. The sense that there is too much silence in the Transylvania section has inspired the legend that Browning did not know what he was doing.” (Hark, 2007: 53)

What this actually achieves though is a far greater emphasis on his voice when he does speak. When Lugosi first opens his mouth and intones “I am...Dracula” in his thick Hungarian drawl he is immediately configured as foreign, Other, and dangerous. Skal contends that Dracula is “the first monster, the fear that preceded fear, that shadowy harbinger of the Depression that was now at every throat.” (Skal, 1993: 169) But I would argue that it is not the monster at home, the Depression, which the vampire signifies but the one from abroad. Lugosi’s voice pinpoints his foreignness not just as *not*-American but distinctly *un*-American. Robin Wood explains “[i]n the 1930’s, horror is always foreign... it is always external to Americans... [this] designation of horror as foreign stands even when the ‘normal’ characters are

Europeans.” (Wood, 2004: 124-125) The ‘normal’ characters here are of course American and for all their implied superiority are in fact amazingly ineffectual against this ‘Monster’. Whilst this hints at an implicit connection between America and Britain it more strongly highlights the correlation, which Browning, I believe, purposively makes explicit in the film, of Europe not only being home to monsters but actually being the Monster itself.

There is a strong correlative here with Stephen Arata’s work in ‘The Occidental Tourist’ where he writes that the figure of Dracula was chosen by Stoker specifically because of the vexing ‘Eastern Question’ facing Britain at the end of the Nineteenth Century. In the Europe of 1897, when Stoker’s book was published, nowhere else showed “the rise, decay, collapse, displacement” (Arata, 2000: 165) in such a compressed and vivid manner, as Eastern Europe, where “Greeks, Romans, Huns, Avars, Magyars, Turks, Slavs, French and German, all have come and seen and gone, seeking conquest one over the other.”(ibid. 165-166) What Arata highlights is the innate fear of contagion with regard to these places and that they will enact some form of ‘reverse colonialism’ where the disease of social anarchy and despotism would infect the homeland. If the Count from Transylvania could embody such fears for the declining British Empire then he can certainly be seen to fulfil a similar function for America’s own ‘vexed Eastern Question’ regarding the fear of further embroilment in European squabbling. I would argue that the thick Hungarian drawl of Lugosi positioned Dracula not just as foreign Other but as an embodiment of Europe itself. Not only as the decadent and corrupt ‘Old World’ but the petty, destructive, even vampiric entity, that had started World War One and now threatened to drag them into World War Two. Arata continues “With vampirism marking the intersections of racial strife, political upheaval, and the fall of empire, Dracula’s move to London indicates

that Great Britain, rather than the Carpathians, is now the scene of these connected struggles.” (ibid. 166) The new America could not risk the same happening to them. I argue that the figure of Dracula, as portrayed by Bela Lugosi, stands not only for the decadent and destructive nature of the Old World but also the fear of its contaminating the New World. In this light Lugosi’s Count is specifically configured to represent not just what America fears but what is not. In the same way that during the reconstruction of identity taking place in the 1930’s other ‘sites of memory’ were created such as Shirley Temple’s plucky child exemplifying optimism in the face of the Depression and Jerry Siegal’s and Joe Schuster’s ‘Superman’, who first appeared in June 1938), to fight for “truth justice and the American Way” (Hark, 2007: 5) to represent what America was, Dracula is positioned as its complete opposite. If Superman and Shirley Temple, among others, are ‘sites of memory’ that define what America is, then Dracula, as portrayed by Lugosi, is constructed to show what America is not. In this sense, if a ‘site of memory’ is used to configure ideas of national identity in a positive way, Dracula is its negative and as such can be seen as an ‘anti-site of memory’. The use of such a ‘site’ consolidates American identity as separate and oppositional to Europe but also justified its continued non-involvement and isolationism.

However this situation could not be maintained and was to change dramatically at 7.50am on December 7th 1941, and with it, America’s relationship to international affairs but also to Europe and to Dracula. In the next chapter I shall look at the Counts first tentative steps onto American soil in 1943 in “Son of Dracula” and show how his configuration as an ‘anti-site of memory’ and externalised Otherness developed to include the Otherness at home and societal transgression. The vampire was no longer ‘over there’ but was most definitely now ‘over here’.

Chapter 2

“Frank, isn’t eternity together better than a few years of ordinary life?”

Katherine ‘Kay’ Caldwell in *Son of Dracula* (Siodmak: 1943)

“Leave these others and come to me. My arms hunger for you. Come, and we can rest together.”

Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897: 223)

As the 1930’s came to an end America found itself inexorably pulled towards conflict in both Europe and Asia. Although, even as late as October 1941, America tried to show the world a face of neutrality:

“Senate Resolution 152 [that] proposed that a congressional subcommittee investigate ‘any propaganda disseminated by motion pictures...to influence public sentiment in the direction of participation by the United States in the ...European War,’” (Schindler, 1979: 31)

Meanwhile President Roosevelt, who was elected to an unprecedented third term in 1940, had already shown his preparedness for conflict. Forcing through the Burke-Wadsworth Bill, permitting the first peacetime draft in American history, which became law in the autumn of 1940 and in September 1940, he bypassed Congress and negotiated a deal directly with Churchill for “fifty old destroyers in return for the lease of naval bases on British Western Hemisphere possessions.” (ibid: 24)

Hollywood would be central in the dissemination of American wartime propaganda both at home and abroad. “Hollywood started making feature pictures...that brought some of the truths of war home to America more graphically than any of the cold little facts which people read in their papers.” (Welts and Novelli, 2003: 562) But production was not only of films that “brought the war home” there were also those that “provided a few hours release.” (Foertsch, 2008: 112) Somewhat strangely this meant that the “production plan for the studios in 1942 indicated that more musicals would be made that year than at any other time in cinema history.” (Schindler, 1979: 39) This reflected not only the need for diversion but also the difficulty of keeping up with changing events in Europe, on 23rd September 1942 *Variety* magazine commented that Twentieth Century Fox thought it unwise to include any topical sequences because of the rapidly changing situation and so was dating all its musical features pre-Pearl Harbour.

There also emerged a changing sense of Hollywood’s role in American life and the creation of national identity. Kelvin Small observes that “During the Second World War more than half the population of the United States went to at least one movie a week. An average feature film reached more people than any single book, newspaper or magazine.” (Small, 1973: 326) It also realized its capacity to influence that audience, as Robert Shaw notes “There was a re-evaluation of the role and the

possibilities of the entertainment feature film as a broad educational factor in the conditioning of mass audiences to meet the emergencies of struggle.” (Shaw, 1946: 72) Another result of warfare, both in America and in Hollywood, was the increasing agency of women. Partially because they were required to fulfil the roles left vacant by the men joining the conflict but also in their potential for use in propaganda material. On screen they could either example what was expected of the Good American Woman or could be used as the catalyst to “bring out the avenging knight in the least chivalric of men.” (Dick, 1985: 166) This latter effect is probably most famously exemplified by Ingrid Bergman and Humphrey Bogart in “Casablanca” (Curtiz: 1942) where the ‘world-weary’ Rick (Bogart) is inspired to re-join the fight by his self-sacrificing love for Ilsa (Bergman). The majority of films fell into the former category as exemplified by such films as “Mrs. Miniver” (1941) and “Since You Went Away” (1944). However other films highlighted what happened when this new positioning was taken too far and what punishment would be enacted by wartime society on the woman that didn’t know her place. This brings me to “Son of Dracula” directed by Robert Siodmak.

Unlike their British Allies, America did not ban the production of horror films during the war (Worland, 1997: 51) This is largely taken as a sign that by the 40’s they had become “irrelevant except as purely escapist, increasingly puerile entertainment.” (ibid: 47) However I would argue that “Son of Dracula” is not just ‘puerile entertainment’ but is utilized as part of Hollywood’s evolution into ideological educator and uses the figure of the vampire to create another ‘anti-site of memory’ of what wartime American identity was not. “Son of Dracula” followed “Dracula’s Daughter” (Hillyer: 1936) and was the last of the original Universal Dracula series. It

stars Lon Chaney Jr., whose father Lon Chaney Sr. was originally Browning's first choice for the 1931 film, as Count Alucard, Dracula spelt backwards. Chaney was better known for his sympathetic portrayals of the 'Wolf-Man' but here he makes a rather strange Count seemingly too at odds with himself to be convincingly vampiric. This ambivalence on the Counts part reduces him to a subordinate role, leaving the center-stage free for the true 'vamp' of the film Katherine 'Kay' Caldwell. Kay, played by Louise Allbritton, is the daughter of a plantation owner, whose property 'Dark Oaks' is located in the Deep South of America. We first see her after she has returned from Budapest, where she purposively travelled in search of Alucard to invite him back to America. She is now awaiting his arrival. Once here she plans to marry him and become immortal herself. Kay's liminality is further established by her visit to Queen Zimba, a 'seer' that Kay brought back from Budapest, who lives in the swamp land which is part of the plantation. Zimba warns her that she will "marry a corpse". Kay is totally unfazed by this, as she is by the sudden appearance of a bat that proceeds to attack Queen Zimba. This is of course because Kay knows exactly what she is doing; she is not "Alucard's willing victim" as proposed by Alain Silver and James Ursini (1997: 69) but rather the victimizer. Stacey Abbott perceptively observes "What is significant about this film is the character Kay, who courts Alucard to orchestrate her own induction into the undead. She is not seduced into her life as a vampire but chooses it." (Abbott, 2007: 68) and as further observed by Pirie "In a major break with the traditions of the thirties she eagerly embraces the immortality Dracula offers." (1997: 60) Viewed this way the vampires first steps on to American soil then are not so much the chance to bleed dry a "young and virile country", as he thinks at the start of the film, but rather an invitation into a trap.

In the film Kay has taken the new position and agency offered to women during the war and used it to her own ends. The vampire becomes “something of a cipher for Kay Caldwell’s aspirations” (Silver and Ursini, 1997; 69) or rather she has used the immortality offered by the Count to facilitate her own agency rather than that of society as a whole. In doing so she has exceeded the proscribed role that wartime society has offered her as a woman. By marrying Alucard, becoming immortal and then destroying him she can have, not only the man she loves, Frank her fiance, but live with him forever. This is in direct opposition to the ‘good’ women portrayed in the films “Mrs. Miniver” and “Since You Went Away” who lose their man, not just during the war but sometimes, forever. Kay does not symbolise the self-sacrifice required by the nation during warfare but embodies selfish self-interest. As such, like Lugosi as Dracula before her, she can be seen as a ‘site of memory’ against which American identity was configured, in this case the identity of the Good American Woman. Through the figure of the vampire she subverts her new position in society and rather than using it to facilitate the expected self-sacrifice to the nation she uses it to her own ends and ‘feeds’ off society rather than giving herself to it. This would seem to sideline the vampire’s position as a ‘site of memory’ but I would argue otherwise. The essential part of the original creation of Dracula as a ‘site of memory’ was his Otherness. One that was configured with the idea of a European monstrous Other that signified decadence, superstition and self interest. Through Count Alucard, Kay, however willingly, has been infected with this Otherness, the vampire is the one that has produced the position where “She has wanted what she should not want, done what she should not have done and so is done for.” (Twitchell, 1985: 146) But because of America’s changed relationship with Europe it cannot reveal such explicit negativity towards its allies and now is reconfigured to only signify the monstrousness

of superstition and self interest. This positioning is supported throughout the film where we are repeatedly told, by the male characters, that Kay has a taste for the 'morbid' and the occult directly linking her to Old World superstition whilst not expressing it explicitly. Her Otherness cannot be linked directly to 'infection' from Europe but more to the inherent liminality and Otherness within America itself. Alucard is then no longer specifically European but embodies the monstrous inherent within America itself and so resonates with the monstrous self-interest of Kay. Together they create a 'site of memory' of what wartime American identity was not.

Alucard, or Dracula, then as a 'site of memory' has evolved from 1931 to 1943 from monstrous Other 'over there' to the monstrous Other 'over here'. The vampire's first steps on American soil reveal, or bring forth, the dark side of American identity and the difficulty in spotting it when it does. It is only through selfishness and an interest in the 'morbid' that this makes itself apparent. This begs the question of what happens when there are vampires that are American born and bred and that do not require illicit nocturnal rendezvous' with mysterious European Counts to be identified? I shall look at this in the next chapter where the Otherness of the vampire, in terms of American identity, changes yet again to become an accepted part of the framework that constructs national identity and embodies the anxiety that the nation feels about itself, or rather a particular part of itself. This part, that manifests the first pure bred American vampire, is the teenager.

Chapter 3

‘to be in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity, to share its life, its change, its death, and all that makes it what it is.’

Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1997: 26)

“And you, their best beloved one, are now to me, flesh of my flesh, blood of my blood, kin of my kin.”

Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897: 304)

The appearance of the first born and bred American vampire did not take place for another forty two years. After “The Son of Dracula” Universals ‘vampiric’ output gradually waned with stock in trade genre efforts such as “The House of Frankenstein”, “The House of Dracula” (Kenton: 1945), and finally petering out with “Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein” (Barton: 1949) The Monster might be over here but he’s firmly kept at arms length. This interval of torpor can be partially explained as a reaction to the horrors of the war itself, as explained by Thomas Doherty “Next to Buchenwald, Dachau, and Auschwitz, the once terrifying trio of movie horror-Frankenstein, Dracula, and the Wolfman- seemed...almost laughably harmless.” (Doherty, 2002: 116) However the length of this stasis is still strange given the not uneventful period of history that America was experiencing at that time, the continuing ‘Cold War’ with the Soviet Union after the Second World War and

overseas interventions in Korea and Vietnam as well as home grown racial and political strife. It would seem to be the perfect time for the 'undead' to make their presence felt as an expression of national anxiety, as posited by Kim Newman, author of vampire novel "Anno Dracula" (1992), "Dracula evidently appeals to nations in crisis" (Newman, 1993: 12). I would argue that he was in fact maintaining a low profile and was biding his time to strike at the new heart of Post-War America suburbia.

The 'Father' of suburbia was William J. Levitt, who was in one of the many Construction Battalions (CBs) based in the Pacific during the war. Once hostilities had ended he took up an option on a potato field in Hempstead, New York and the first 'Levitt' houses were built in 1947. They were designed for returning soldiers and their families. This coincided with the enactment of the G.I. Bill in 1944 which "offered returning veterans low-interest loans with no money down to purchase a house" (Kamp, 2009: 3) When "coupled with a severe housing shortage and a boom in young families... [which lead to]... the rapid-fire development of suburbia."(ibid) In 1940 only 15% of the population lived in the suburbs but by 1970 this had risen to 37%, an increase from 20 million to 75 million people. John Ehrman observes "Suburbanites had gone from being the smallest category of residential population to the largest, and were well on the way to becoming a majority" (Ehrman, 2005: 27) This period of consolidation for the bourgeoisie and centre liberal politics, saw the 'American Way' being increasingly typified as the well educated professional family. In turn this lead to a developing interrelation between the ideas of nation and family, making the nuclear familial unit a barometer for the larger social collective; if there is something wrong in the family then there is also something wrong with the nation.

Conversely when the nation is sick the cracks will also show in the American family.

Almost inevitably the point where these cracks began is with the teenager.

The word itself, according to historian William Manchester, did not appear until 1945 when it was used in an article by Elliot Cohen in the New York Times Magazine (Medovoi, 2005: 24) but has its history in a continuing line of societal ‘moral panics’. From late Victorian youths being corrupted by ‘penny dreadfuls’ (Springhall: 1998), to “[t]he ‘roaring twenties’ [and] widespread moral panic over youthful female sexuality (Griffen, 1993: 18) as embodied in the figure of “[the] female ‘flappers’ of the period” (Kett, 1977:258-264) Whilst societal anxiety over its youth seemed to typify industrial modernity it is, arguably, not until the 1950’s that the figure of the teenager comes into its own through the validation of Hollywood. This came as a way to reinvigorate Hollywood’s diminishing finances. After the Paramount Ruling stripped them of their total control over the industry and the continuing investigations of the House of Un-American Activities by 1949 “Americans were deserting the movies in droves” (Doherty, 2002: 19) with the exodus to the suburbs being partially responsible. However the suburbs would also provide a solution in the shape of the teenager.

Although marketers in the 1940’s had “first begun to promote teenagers as a group apart” (Palladino, 1996: xv) it was not until the late 1950’s that Hollywood realised that by bringing together “the youth audience, the exploitation film, and the drive-in venue... into the coherent strategy of the ‘teenpic’” (Medovoi, 2005: 136) that it could turn this audience into a reliable means of income. Timothy Shary notes “Hollywood studios did not suddenly bank on hedonistic teen roles in the 1950’s; their process of introducing the post-war teenager was careful if not apprehensive.” (Shary, 2002: 4) However, by the end of 1957, *Variety* “included a goodly number of

what could only be called ‘teenpics’”(Doherty, 2002: 82) in their box-office hit list. Whilst there were ‘clean teen’ pictures, notably Jane Powell in “A Date with Judy” (Thorpe: 1948) and Elizabeth Taylor in “Little Women” (LeRoy: 1949) the archetypal teen of the time was James Dean in “Rebel without a Cause” (Ray: 1955). Dean as James Stark constituted the “confusion, trauma and upheaval [and the] instability and transition” (Hodkinson, 2007: 1) of the teenager whilst also expressing “the ephiphobia-fear of teenagers- that was seeping into popular culture and politics.” (Shary, 2002: 4), a positioning explained by Doherty, in relation to the film and its continued appreciation “*Rebel* has been consistently popular... for its on-the-mark rendering of what it’s like to grow up dazed and confused in America.” (Doherty, 2002: 82) Set in suburbia the film’s anti-hero, James Stark, battles against the ideological strictures and misunderstandings of his family, achieving a partial reconciliation through the death of his friend ‘Plato’. The closing promise from his father that he will be ‘a father that Jim can depend on’ brings him tentatively back into the fold. Only by working together can the family quell the potentially disruptive and uncontrollable forces of youth. The family in this scenario becomes a site of contestation where the memories of nationhood of one generation are both embodied and created to be passed on to the next. *Rebel* does not fully resolve these issues’s but does establish the ‘American Teenager’ as a ‘site of memory’ not just as a point of anxiety within the family and between generations but also as an “emancipatory character”. A point made by Leerom Medovoi where, during the Cold War, the ‘teenager’ was used as a signifier of America’s freedom (Medovoi, 2005: 1-3) The teenager read this way represents future possibility rather than a clinging on to the past, memories to be made not remembered but also a politicisation of the figure of the teenager; at once a symbol of the ‘land of the free’ but also embodying the anxiety

within the new America of how to maintain those freedoms. The suburban family then acts as a synecdoche of the larger 'national' family with its aspirations and anxieties being played out through, or embodied in, the figure of the teenager.

By the 1980's America been through Vietnam, Watergate and the 'Summer of Love', ending with an ineffectual democratic administration lead by Jimmy Carter. The subsequent voting to office of Ronald Reagan in 1980, and again on 1984, signalled a return to conservatism where, in the cinematic family at least, the parents of the 80's represented the eternal liberal teenagers of the 60's. The teenager becomes a central figure, not only in the re-creation of the family but also in a return to traditional values. Combined with a growing dependence of Hollywood on the teen-market, this resulted in what Andy Smith calls "the raft of 1980's teen dramas, known as the 'Brat Pack' films" (Smith, 2007: 89). This included the re-emergent American vampire film. Ken Gelder identifies how these films concentrate on the instability created by "the movement from equilibrium to disequilibrium to renewed equilibrium" (Gelder, 1994: 93) and that it is "often primarily inscribed through a characters sexuality... [hence the]...focus on youth when sexuality is in its most formative moment." (ibid) There is a sense of inevitability about the conflagration of the vampire and the teenager. The Hammer productions from Britain made between 1958 and 1972 were greedily snapped up by the major studios in America because of their popularity with the youth market. In these films Dracula was no longer a figure of superstition and decadence but had become modern and sexy. The vampire was no longer just the catalyst for others sexual repression, but now elicited such reciprocal responses through his 'devilish' good looks. As before, when stepping onto American soil for

the first time, the vampire did not have to force itself onto the teenagers; he was all too willingly invited in.

The 1980's produced six mainstream American teen-vampire films: "Fright Night" (Holland: 1985), "Once Bitten" (Storm: 1985), "Vamp" (Wenk: 1986), "The Lost Boys" (Schumacher: 1987), "Near Dark" (Bigelow: 1987), "My Best Friend is a Vampire" (Huston: 1988), "Fright Night II" (Wallace: 1989). All but one of these films, "After Dark", was set in or around the suburbs. The family in these films is an inversion of the 'myth of the family' propagated by Reagan's neo-conservatism as virtually all the parents are either not-there or bringing up the children alone, most often lacking a father figure. This is implicitly exemplified as a result of the 60's baby-boomers liberalism and reluctance to grow-up. The vampires have also changed, no longer a 'site of memory' of that which is foreign or the monstrous Other, they now achieve the anonymity that Stoker's Dracula craved "Well I know that, did I move and speak in your London, none there are who would not know me for a stranger."

(Stoker, 1997: 26) Stacey Abbott confirms this "vampires are no longer interlopers within a modern setting but are born and bred within the urban milieu." (Abbott, 2006: 126). This infers what is the most important aspect, in terms of this paper, in some of these films; for the first time there are born and bred American vampires. The vampire is no longer an infection attacking from the outside but a manifestation of the contagion within. Ruth Goldberg makes this connection noting that during the 'Reagan years' "American culture itself is revealed to be the source of all the horror that ensues" (Goldberg, 2007: 194). The first film to do this is "Fright Night" and it makes the connection between the imbalance created by sexual awakening and the Monster moving in next door. This is not dissimilar to Stoker's "Dracula" where the Counts arrival precipitates the release of sexual repression in Lucy Westenra and

Mina Harker. Here however it is subtly different in that the sexual repression of the main character, Charlie Brewster, is not sublimated but is already explicit and it is his inability to fulfil it that draws the vampire to the house next door. The film opens with the camera panning down a suburban street at night. We hear the voices of a woman and a man. She is trying to seduce him. The camera stops and slowly zooms in to a bedroom where the television is on. We discover that the voices come from here and it is a re-run of an old vampire film where the woman is trying to get her teeth into a male victim. She is interrupted by a vampire hunter who stakes her before she can slake her fiendish lust. Meanwhile on the bed in front of the television Charley Brewster is being similarly frustrated by his girlfriend, Amy, who will not allow him to go 'all the way'. After this first rebuttal Charley's interest is attracted by movement in the empty house next door, and even though Amy takes off her bra, Charley is now too interested by the new neighbour to notice. Alain Silver and James Ursine note that this scene highlights "the dilemma of those who first notice the blood-suckers next door, i.e. overcoming the complete incredulity of those who have not." (Silver, 1997: 167) Indeed Charley will spend the rest of the film trying to convince everyone else of its existence but it also establishes a direct link between the two main protagonists. Charley is the only one who 'sees' the new neighbour, Jerry Dandrige, for what he really is and so creates a kind of symbiotic relationship between them. "Fright Night" exemplifies what all the other teen-vampire films also do that in the 80's the vampire is no longer the instigator of sexual release but is in some way summoned, or called forth, by male teenage sexual frustration; no longer a 'site' of what America is not, as in the case of Bela Lugosi, it now becomes integral to how American society sees its teenagers. The vampire here is made manifest by the cultural rite of passage from boy to man as expressed in the act of losing one's virginity. John Springhall reiterates this

when he talks about “modern horror film... acting as some kind of adolescent ‘rite of passage’” (Springhall, 1998: 158) The vampire then becomes the concentrated point of focus for all teenage ‘growing pains’ and emotional turmoil experienced in the years between childhood and adulthood. The vampire embodies the dark forces contained within the teenager, those forces that are selfish and destructive and whose uninhibited release would tear apart the fabric of the ‘American family. This corresponds to Count Alucard who as a ‘site’ of Otherness embodied American selfishness and self-interest but conversely the vampire here not so much elicits them as is made manifest by them.

In “Fright Night”, “The Lost Boys” and “Near Dark” the culmination of the transition to adulthood stands for the re-establishment of the American family with the eldest male child giving up ‘childish things’ to take his rightful place as the ‘man’ of the household. At this level the vampire of the 80’s seems to be a more personal version of the “Dark Wanderer” as explained by James Iaccino, a Jungian archetype reflecting the darkness within all of us (Iaccino, 1994: 61-73). Jerry Dandrige then becomes a physical manifestation of Charley’s burgeoning manhood and the social, psychic and sexual tension thus entailed. This is why Charley is the only one who can see Dandrige for what he really is for he is created from the tension, or darkness, within Charley himself and hence why it must be Charley who kills him to re-establish societal order.

However this situation can be read further. As mentioned earlier the ‘broken’ family is a major feature of all the 80’s teen-vampire films and various commentators have seen it as the inevitable result of liberalist 60’s culture. Graham Thompson observes “One of the features of moral conservatism in the 1980’s was the frequency with which the sixties served as a spectre of damaging moral, social and cultural

promiscuity.” (Thompson, 2007: 9). The parents then stand-in for the damaging residue of 60’s liberalism in Reagan’s neo-conservative 80’s, it is down to the children, always male, to rebuild order out of the chaos. The figure of the vampire then not just signifies the rite of passage from childhood to maturity but from social irresponsibility to responsibility; it reflects the growing pains of a teenage boy but also the growing pains of adolescent liberalism into the conservative adulthood of America itself. The children of the 60’s never grow up, it’s the children of the 80’s that must mature and re-establish the American values of family, home and nation. Essentially the vampire is made manifest by a crisis of memory, the memory of 60’s liberalism that still lives in 80’s conservatism. This crisis is enacted out through male adolescence which embodies the new generation making whole what was dismantled by the previous one. Within this the figure of the vampire is vital. It is created by this crisis but is also the means of its resolution. In this configuration it is not the product of one particular memory, be it of a particular era or political stance, but is the manifestation of the tensions between them, with the resolution of the tension bringing the inevitable dissolution of the vampire. Nina Auerbach claims that in such teen-vamp films “the ramifications of vampirism have shrunk from the political arena into the snug domestic unit.” (Auerbach, 1995: 168) I would claim that the two are inseparable. In its acceptance into the homes of suburbia the vampire has been welcomed into the very heart of America itself and its actions on that small stage reflect and influence what takes place on the national and political stages, the memory of the family is the memory of the nation and the vampire is made manifest and configured by both.

In this chapter I have shown how the American cinematic vampire as a 'site of memory' changed in the 1980's from that of the Monster 'over there' to the Monster inside. Through its acceptance into the heartland of America it is no longer what American identity was configured against but rather reflects what American identity was and what it must destroy to move on. This is of course nowhere as clean cut as it sounds for the figure of Jerry Eldridge contains elements that are very alluring and even charismatic, hence the willingness to invite them 'in' in the first place. The 1980's provided a solution for their un-masking by revealing their interior 'heart of darkness', usually through extreme special effects, to show that however charming they are on the surface, beneath it all the vampire was still evil and the 'site' of selfishness and self-interest. But what if this position were to change, what kind of 'site of memory' would the vampire provide if it was indistinguishable from us both inside and out and in fact had higher ethical standards than humans themselves? The possibility of a total reversal in how America views the vampire, and therefore how it see's itself, takes me to my final section and the film "Twilight".

Conclusion

“You don’t care if I’m a monster? If I’m not *human*?”

Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight* (2006:184)

“What if I’m not a superhero? What if I’m the bad guy?”

Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight* (2006:92)

In the previous chapters I have shown that Dracula, along with his kith and kin, has evolved as a ‘site of memory’ from being what American national identity was configured against to being America’s anxiety over its teenagers and the physical manifestation of teenage anxiety itself. In this final section I want to show how America’s relation to Dracula has come full circle and the continued humanizing of the vampire in the late 20th century means that it can be viewed as being more ‘human’ than the ‘humans’ and it is no longer the European Other to be feared but a figure of traditional values to be embraced. To do this I will focus on the film “Twilight”. However before this I should mention important markers on the path travelled since the American teen-vamp films of the 1980’s.

Possibly the most important change is the creation of the vampire-gang as initially seen in such films as “The Lost Boys” and “Near Dark”. As it developed it changed from a challenge to the “traditional family structure” (Bohn, 2007: 34) but became a symbol of larger and darker affiliations as typified by global corporate conglomerates. Abbott explains “[i]n the 1990’s, the allegory of vampirism as consumer capitalism

evolved from the embodied vampire to extended and disembodied vampire conglomerates.” (Abbott, 2007: 217) The traditional image of Dracula as a solitary consumer tied to the earth of his origins, as Katherine Verdery points out “[he] must go to London *in his own soil*, shipped in numerous coffins” (Verdery, 1999: 106) has been replaced:

“the mob of vampires that emerged in the 1970’s...organised themselves at the end of the twentieth century into a vast corporation amassing large amounts of capital, stocks and property as the means of extending their consumption beyond the human body to the modern world itself.”

(Abbott, 2007: 217)

This highlights a link between the Count and money. In Stokers novel Jonathan Harker stumbles across “a great heap of gold in one corner...gold of all kinds” (Stoker, 1987: 62) Steve Pile see’s this conflation of vampires and finance as giving “the sense of the immortality of money in circulation.” (Pile, 2005: 101) Of course this works the other way, if money then takes on the vampiric characteristic of immortality the vampire then acquires the universality of money in a consumerist society, being everywhere and nowhere instantly. Films such as “Blade” (Norrington: 1998) “Blade II” (Del Toro: 2002) “Blade Trinity” (Goyer: 2004), and the television series “Angel”, a popular spin-off from “Buffy the Vampire Slayer”, are all predicated on this notion of a dark and unseen order that controls the world via financial institutions or globalised conglomerates which feed off the human population. In this configuration the only thing preventing humans becoming mere cattle to vampiric overlords is, somewhat anachronistically, a vampire, in these cases Blade or Angel

respectively. The vampire then becomes not just a figure of agency, but a signifier of resistance. This resistance is aimed against what is seen as authoritarian multinational companies that drive late capitalist consumerism for their own ends which echoes the selfishness that Alucard personified during the Second World War. This version of the vampire provides a way to redefine the individual in the face of increasing globalisation or homogeneity.

This increasing 'sympathy for the devil' is symptomatic of attitudes toward the vampire entering the Twenty-First Century. From Louis in "Interview with the Vampire: The Vampire Chronicles" (Jordan: 1994) to Selene in "Underworld" (Wiseman: 2003) and "Underworld Evolution" (Wiseman: 2006), the vampire is no longer purely representative of evil but invokes our empathy or even our aspirations; no longer the 'baddie' but the hero with which we identify. As Stephanie Meyer, the author of the "Twilight" saga explains "[vampires] have attributes we envy: they are beautiful, they are forever young, they are intelligent and well-spoken... We want what they have, even as we fear what they want." (Craig: 2006). Julie Plec also observes "The vampire is the new James Dean." (La Ferla, 2009: 1) This resonates with the rise of the teenager in the 50's where the 'bad-boy' was also seen as a 'site' of emancipation. For if the 'bad' vampires embody 'the system' and self-interested authority then the 'good' vampire becomes a 'site' of resistance that prevents our being 'consumed' by it. The new-age vampire then is most definitely a rebel with a cause.

This brings me to the film "Twilight" which exemplifies the way contemporary American cinema is 'humanising' the vampire but not so much as a figure to release or express anxiety, sexual or otherwise, but as one that controls it. "Twilight" is the

film of the first book in Stephanie Meyer's teenage vampire saga and tells the tale of Edward Cullen and Bella Swann whose love can never be consummated without irrevocable consequences. Our modern day Romeo and Juliet meet at the high school in Forks, Washington, but it is not so much about opposing families as opposing species for Edward is not like the other teenage boys as he is a vampire. Nicole Sperling elucidates "Edward also falls for Bella, but his desire for her barely controls his instinct to devour her. It's this combination of passion and danger... that surrounds this teen romance with a halo of epic, doomed love." (Sperling, 2008)

This film provides some very interesting comparisons with the first wave of teen-vamp films, as discussed earlier, and the role of the family: all of them are about negotiating the difficult terrain through adolescence into adulthood, and were made in a time of neo-conservatism in America with Ronald Reagan in the 1980's and George W. Bush in the 2000's. The family in both eras is portrayed as equally dysfunctional but the means of its reparation is vastly different. Bella has moved to Forks to stay with her father because her mother is with a new boyfriend who is touring with a minor league baseball team. This configures to the earlier configuration but rather than the teenager being the means of reintegration it is the vampire family that fulfils the conservative trope of the all-American family with a father and mother, Dr. Carlisle Cullen and his wife Esme, and their five 'adopted' children. This is not the 'dark reflection' of conservative idealism as portrayed by the vampire 'family' in Kathryn Bigelow's "Near Dark" (see Abbott, 2007: 177-194) but a model of what the American family should be. This is exemplified in their self-imposed 'vegetarianism', they only drink the blood of animals and free-range ones at that, and is further emphasised in the way they greet Bella into their home and then go of to play baseball together as a family unit. The adolescent in this equation is not left alone to make

decisions, as in “Fright Night” and “Lost Boys”, but is actually advised and supported in that process. The vampire family then becomes the role-model for what constitutes a good American family in the Twenty-First Century. In the human family it is not just the parents who refuse to grow up but the children also, it is up to the immortals that never age to act as adults. What this also does is change the vampire from being a manifestation of male teenage sexual frustration, as in the 1980’s, to become an embodiment of a more general adolescent anxiety. This is corroborated by folklore professor Michael Dylan Foster who says the undead “personify real-world anxieties.” (La Ferla, 2009: 2). Mike Russell explains this further “[Twilight is] about benevolent vampires who struggle with their blood lust in much the same way that teens struggle with their surging hormones.” (Russell: 2008) Bella is only too eager to give in to her impulses but Edward knows that it will cause him to lose control and result in her being turned into a vampire too. The consequences of this Edward knows only too well as it has meant that he has remained a teenager for over a hundred years. It is up to him, as a vampire, to install the idea of sexual constraint This Reagan era child, who had to grow up and take on the mantle of responsibility, is now as selfish and impulsive as its adolescent parents. In the new millennium it’s the vampire who embodies responsibility and maturity in the face of excess. The pertinence of this in an America post 9/11 that is engaged in military offensives in Afghanistan and Iraq is explained by Thomas Garza, chair of Slavic and Eurasian studies at the University of Texas:

“Impulse- control is an especially resonant theme in the current era of conflicts and cutbacks...With a recession and war, the conflict has indeed seemed to turn inward, as we question our fiscal, political and moral

status. ‘Have we been too excessive? Do we need to be more restrained?’” (La Ferla, 2009: 3)

In this scenario not only the vampire but the vampire family become ‘sites of memory’ of what the American citizen and the American family should be; people that think of others beyond themselves and stick together as a unit. “Twilight” explicitly holds up the ‘good’ vampire and the ‘good’ vampire family as new-age ‘sites of memory’, that whilst resonating with earlier traditional constructions of both, now replace the normalised human figure for that of the vampire. This interpretation is in direct opposition to Stokers novel and the earlier Dracula films where the dark lord can only be defeated by the human ‘family’ of the “Crew of Light”, as named by Ken Gelder (Gelder, 1994: 94), with Van Helsing as the father and Mina Harker as its mother (Roth, 2001: 468) The vampire it would seem has come full circle from being a ‘site’, or ‘anti-site’, of memory *against* which America configured its identity to one that it now aspires to imitate. However in this process can the vampire as ‘site of memory’ still fulfil its function as a unifying nationalistic mnemonic prompt?

As I conclude it would be useful to return to a quote by Pierre Nora regarding memory:

“For if we accept that the most fundamental purpose of the *lieux de memoire*’ is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting... to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial... in order to capture a maximum of meaning in the fewest of signs, it is also clear that *lieux de memoire* only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of

their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications”

(Nora, 1989:19)

The vagaries of such an indefinite definition makes the list of possible candidates for ‘*lieux*’ or ‘sites of memory’ almost endless. That said I would contend that Dracula and his off-spring qualify more fully and convincingly than most for such a categorisation. I have already argued that there exists a special relationship between America and the cinematic vampire. From its introduction with Bela Lugosi in 1931 it has always been used as a signifier of Otherness, this core part has remained fixed, or fulfils the purpose to ‘stop time’, but as America has changed so has the complexity of the vampires meaning with regard to national identity. When America entered the war in 1941 Europe could no longer be kept at arms length and so in 1943 Dracula was allowed, or invited, onto American soil. The Other he represented could no longer be the Monster that was Europe but now identified the monster of America’s own self-interest and superstition that had no place in the war effort. After a long period of stasis the vampire emerged again but this time in the heart of suburbia, and not as a monster from abroad but as American born and bred. This time its Otherness expressed societal anxiety over ‘teenage’ culture and burgeoning sexuality as well as the Conservative ‘monster-isation’ of 60’s liberalism. By 2009 the vampire is not so much made manifest by conservative anxiety but actually embodies it, its Otherness now symbolising a return to the past and traditional values. From this we can see that at one and the same time the figure of the American cinematic vampire retains a ‘core’ meaning of Otherness but the totality of its significance has gained many layers and contextual ramifications. Even in its latest incarnation as American role-model it still possess the underlying scent of danger, as Amanda Craig notes “the vampires

status as the outsider who looks like us plays to our deepest preoccupations now that Britain and the US feel under siege from home-grown terrorists.” (Craig: 2006) It is simultaneously light and dark, our good and bad selves. This taps directly in to what Nora is expressing as a *‘lieux’* for it takes social or national memory and externalises it in a form that embodies that meaning or ‘materializes the immaterial, in this case ‘Otherness’. However as time progresses this ‘immortal’ core accrues further layers of meaning, again conforming to Nora’s definition, metamorphosing and capturing a ‘maximum of meaning in the fewest of sign’. Hence why, in “Twilight”, the vampire is able to signify a memory of otherness that is simultaneously the “way things were” (Edensor, 2005: 127) but also remain the enemy within.

This highlights an interesting side to the cinematic vampire as a ‘site of memory’; if it began as an ideological tool in 1931 it is now more of a social signifier in 2009.

Lugosi was a singular ‘site’ that signified an America united against a common cause, “Twilight” is manifold and contradictory and reveals what M.J. Heale calls “The dispiritingly divided condition of the American polity” (Heale, 2004: 307)

I would argue that the original American cinematic vampire was created by the nation and for the nation and was concentrated in one ‘site’ with one face. The contemporary vampire is created by the people and for the people and is not a single ‘site’ with many facets but a multitude of ‘sites’ with a multitude of meanings. This is not so much the result of the much quoted phrase of Nina Auerbach that there is a ‘vampire for every generation’ but is more akin to James Donald’s explanation “It seems to me that the persistence of tales about vampires...within popular culture tells a different story: simply that this version of subjectivity is closer to the insistent everyday reality of how we experience ourselves in the world.” (Donald, 1989: 235) As American identity becomes more divided and diverse so does the meaning of the vampire as a

‘site of memory’. I would also argue that its continued relevance to American society remains because of its resistance to homogeneity and the sense of agency it provides within this framework. The director Guillermo del Toro explains “whereas other monsters emphasize what is mortal in us, the vampire emphasizes the eternal in us. Through the panacea of its blood it turns the lead of our toxic flesh into golden matter.”(Del Toro and Hogan, 2009: 2) The vampire then not only reflects everyday individual anxiety but offers a way out of, or control over, it. Rather than asserting group identity it becomes a focus of individual expression. Where the vampire began as a point of national integration it now offers individual differentiation. The vampire then is not a ‘site of memory’ for the nation but a personalized ‘site of memory’ for the people that are constitutive of that nation.

In this study I have shown that it is possible to see the American cinematic vampire as a ‘site of memory’ and that it has changed from being a ‘site’ against which American identity was configured to one which American identity now aspires. However its continued cultural popularity, whilst emphasizing its relevance to contemporary American society, reveals an aspect of inherent divisionism within it. It is now not so much a ‘site of memory’ but the ‘sites of many memories’, a fact possibly reflected in Dracula being replaced on screen by his manifold progeny. This weighs against the vampire continuing to conform to Nora’s criteria for it shows it as a living, evolving entity and not the immortal memorial that he believes *lieux* to be “moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded.” (Nora, 1989: 12) The cinematic vampire of the Twenty-First Century then is not just a *lieux de memoire* but in fact configures more to Nora’s, nostalgic and, original state of a

'milieu de memoire', a community, or environment, of living and continually evolving memory 'sites' revealing that whilst the 'undead' remain with us memory will always be alive.

Of necessity this paper has covered a large period of American history to identify some key elements in America's relationship to its cinematic vampires and the construction of its national identity; the relevance of this being emphasized by the continual production and popularity of major feature films and television series issuing from the United States. This paper makes a start on what is an, as yet an under researched but important area investigating how America see's and constructs its identity through its particular relationship with the cinematic vampire but also how its own 'sites of memory' are utilised to construct individual identity both within and beyond its borders.

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