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**SANGUISUGHE SEXY:  
VAMPIRES  
IN ITALIAN GENRE CINEMA  
BETWEEN 1956 AND 1975**

**M GUARNERI**

PhD

2018

**SANGUISUGHE SEXY:  
VAMPIRES  
IN ITALIAN GENRE CINEMA  
BETWEEN 1956 AND 1975**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements of the  
University of Northumbria at Newcastle  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

*Sanguisughe Sexy: Vampires in Italian Genre Cinema between 1956 and 1975* explores the ways in which 1956-1975 Italian vampire cinema functioned within its then-contemporary, and nationally-specific, industrial and socio-historical context. Taking as its subject thirty-five vampire movies made, distributed and exhibited during the peak years of genre film production in Italy, and certified to be of Italian nationality by the Italian government, this thesis asks: why, and how, is the protean, transnational and transmedial figure of the vampire appropriated by Italian genre cinema practitioners between 1956 and 1975? Or, more concisely, what do the vampires of post-war Italian genre cinema mean? Situated at the intersection of Italian film history, horror studies and cultural studies, the research shows that Italian cinematic vampires reflect their national zeitgeist from the ‘economic miracle’ of the late 1950s to the mid-1970s austerity (two decades of large political and socio-economic change in which gender politics were also in relative flux), thus demonstrating the importance of cultural specificities in understanding the metaphorical functions of vampire figures.

Resultantly, a threefold contribution to knowledge is offered. Firstly, since scholars of vampire fiction have so far concentrated their efforts on Anglo-American literature and film, the thesis reveals, indicts and partially counterbalances the almost total neglect towards world-cinema vampires in the academia. Secondly, and more specifically, as the first sustained attempt to historicise and analyse the Italian vampire subgenre, which spanned several, more or less popular film genres across three decades, the research sheds light on so-called lower forms of cinematic culture, whose study has until very recently been largely ignored by Italian-cinema scholars. Thirdly, since the existing, English-language scholarly work on Italian cinema has approached horror and the other genres produced in post-war Italy mainly through the prism of psychoanalysis, the thesis seeks to introduce an alternative method by reworking Siegfried Kracauer’s reflectionist paradigm from the 1947 book *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*. Here, psychoanalysis’ attempts at accessing the timeless, immutable dimension of universally-shared, unconscious fears via an exclusive focus on textual analysis are traded off for a historicist approach **blending textual and contextual analysis** in order to highlight the Italianness of 1956-1975 Italian vampire cinema, i.e. the interconnections between the filmic texts and their then-contemporary, national context of production and consumption. Ultimately, by accounting for the composite, polymorph monstrosity of Italian vampires in relation to the gender, socio-economic and political issues of the post-war Italian Republic, the thesis offers a template for future studies concerned with the cultural specificity of monsterdom.

## **DECLARATION**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on 11 December 2015.

**I declare that the Word Count of this thesis is 84,431.**

Name: Michael Guarneri

Signature:

Date: 23 January 2019

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## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Answering Hutchings's (2004) call for a culturally-specific monsterology, *Sanguisughe Sexy: Vampires in Italian Genre Cinema between 1956 and 1975* takes as its subject thirty-five vampire movies made, distributed and exhibited during the peak years of genre film production in Italy, and certified to be of Italian nationality by governmental institutions such as the Italian State Cinema Bureau and the Italian Censorship Office. Positioning itself at the intersection of Italian film history, horror studies and cultural studies, the thesis investigates the connections between the thirty-five filmic texts and their then-contemporary industrial and socio-historical context by asking: why, and how, is the protean, transnational and transmedial figure of the vampire appropriated by Italian genre cinema practitioners between 1956 and 1975? Or, more concisely, what do the vampires of post-war Italian genre cinema mean? The aim is to show that Italian cinematic vampires reflect their national zeitgeist from the 'economic miracle' of the late 1950s to the mid-1970s austerity (two decades of large political and socio-economic change in which gender politics were also in relative flux), thus demonstrating the importance of cultural specificities in understanding the metaphorical functions of vampire figures.

*Sanguisughe Sexy: Vampires in Italian Genre Cinema between 1956 and 1975* offers an original contribution to knowledge in relation to both its subject matter and methodological approach. As for the subject matter, the contribution is twofold. Firstly, since scholars of vampire fiction have so far concentrated their efforts on dissecting Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula* and its German and Anglo-American cinematic reworkings *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* / *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* (F. W. Murnau, 1922), *Dracula* (Tod Browning, 1931) and *Dracula* (Terence Fisher, 1958), the research reveals, indicts and partially counterbalances the neglect towards world-cinema vampires. Secondly, and more specifically, the thesis represents the first sustained attempt to take seriously, historicise and



analyse the Italian vampire subgenre, which spanned several, more or less popular film genres across three decades. Indeed, until relatively recently, Italian-cinema academics have rarely shifted their attention away from auteurs such as Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica, Luchino Visconti, Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni and Pier Paolo Pasolini (O’Leary & O’Rawe, 2011). And when scholars did take into consideration so-called lower forms of cinematic culture, they focused on applying auteurist readings to highly-successful genre filmmakers, especially those active in the *commedia all’italiana* (the tragedy-tinged ‘Italian-style comedy of manners’ immensely popular at the domestic box office and critically lauded and awarded abroad) and the spaghetti western (possibly because the Hollywood western had gained cultural legitimacy throughout the 1950s thanks to the work of French intellectuals like André Bazin and his *Cahiers du cinéma* disciples) (Brunetta, 1980; Gili, 1980; Laura, 1981; D’Amico, 1985; Aprà & Pistagnesi, 1986; Camerini, 1986; Wagstaff, 1992; Giacobelli, 1995; 1999; Frayling, 1998; Grande, 2003; Canova, 2004; Fournier-Lanzoni, 2008; Comand, 2010; Bini, 2011b; Fisher, 2011; Manzoli, 2012; Fullwood, 2015; Lawrence-Doyle, 2017). In particular, due to their engagement with the 20<sup>th</sup>-century history of the country combined with a scathing social critique and an abundance of dramatic elements, the *commedie all’italiana* from trailblazing *I soliti ignoti / Big Deal on Madonna Street* (Mario Monicelli, 1958) to late entries like *C’eravamo tanto amati / We All Loved Each Other so Much* (Ettore Scola, 1974) are commonly studied as “a distorted, often grotesque, reflection of Italian society”, especially from ‘the art of getting by’ that was typical of the reconstruction period to ‘the art of getting ahead’ that characterised the unequally-affluent society brought about by the ‘economic miracle’ (Lawrence-Doyle, 2017: 276).

Making a timely intervention in a period of burgeoning interest in Italian horror (Baschiera & Hunter, 2016) and other so-far-neglected genres produced in post-war Italy like melodrama (Bayman, 2014) and adventure (O’Brien, 2014), an original contribution is also provided method-wise: by employing a careful blend of textual and contextual analysis to

highlight the connections between the industrial, political and socio-historical context of 1956-1975 Italian vampire cinema and the nature of the texts it produced, the thesis shows the limits of those studies that have approached Italian horror mainly, or exclusively, through the universalising prism of psychoanalysis (McDonagh, 1991; Jenks, 1992; Krzywinska, 1995; Hunt, 2000; 2004; Reich, 2001; MacCormack, 2004; Günsberg, 2005; de Ville, 2010; Bini, 2011a; Mendik, 2015), and have therefore tended to be rather ahistorical and unable to fully penetrate the Italianness of Italian genre cinema.

### **The corpus**

Building the corpus of Italian vampire films to be studied first of all requires an engagement with the notion of ‘national cinema’. In fact, distinguishing Italian movies from non-Italian ones is not as intuitive and clear-cut an operation as distinguishing vampire narratives from non-vampire ones. Over the past thirty years, there have been several attempts in the academia to answer the question of what national cinema is, thereby establishing under which conditions a film can be said to come from, or belong to, a given nation-state (Higson, 1989; 2000; Crofts, 1993; Sorlin, 1996; Eleftheriotis, 2001; Rosen, 2006; Willemen, 2006). These attempts have typically adopted an industry-based approach, a text-based approach, or a mix of the two. As for the industry-based approach, scholars have essentially conflated “the terms ‘national cinema’ and ‘the domestic film industry’”, identifying national cinema with “the films produced within a particular nation-state” (if the focus is on production) or with the films circulating in a particular nation-state regardless of their official country of production (if the focus is on consumption, i.e. “on the activity of national audiences and the conditions under which they make sense of and use the films they watch”) (Higson, 1989: 36). The scholars adopting a text-based approach, on the other hand, have concerned themselves with film content rather than industrial infrastructures and market players, analysing what the style and narratives of a given film, or body of films, have to say about national character(s) and

nationhood (Higson, 1989; Rosen, 2006). As academic debates have so far been unable to produce a satisfactory, universally-accepted definition of national cinema and ‘transnational’ is becoming more and more popular a category in film studies, the present thesis has decided to adopt a pragmatic, industry-based approach in the building of its corpus, considering as Italian only those movies that fulfil all of the following requirements: 1) made in Italy or across the globe with the financial backing of Italian companies; 2) distributed in Italy; 3) certified to be of Italian nationality by governmental institutions such as the Italian State Cinema Bureau and the Italian Censorship Office.

In order to build the corpus of Italian vampire films to be studied, vampire cinema filmographies (Ursini & Silver, 1975; Pirie, 1977; Murphy, 1979; Flynn, 1992; Browning & Picart, 2010) were cross-referenced with catalogues indexing Italian fantastic films made between the 1950s and the 2010s (Lippi & Codelli, 1976; Colombo & Tentori, 1990; Avondola, Calderale & Garofalo, 1997; Gomarasca, Pulici, Stellino et al., 2002; Castoldi, 2005a; b; Fassone et al., 2009; Marchena, 2009; Della Casa & Giusti, 2013; 2014; Curti, 2015; 2017b). Further research was conducted on the website of the Italian Censorship Office ([www.italiataglia.it](http://www.italiataglia.it)) by searching the keyword ‘vampir\*’ in the online database containing information about all the movies reviewed for rating purposes by Italian state officials from 1913 to 2000. This way, five currently-lost, supposedly vampire-themed films produced by Italian companies in the 1910s and 1920s were found: *La torre dei vampiri* (Gino Zaccaria, 1913), *La vampira indiana* (Roberto Roberti, 1913), *Il vampiro* (Vittorio Rossi Pianelli, 1914), *La carezza del vampiro* (Romolo Bacchini, 1918) and *Vampiro* (anonymous, 1927). At the same time, Italian silent cinema filmographies (Bernardini & Martinelli, 1993a; b; c; d; 1994a; b; 1995a; b; 1996a; b; Martinelli, 1991a; b; 1992a; b, c; d; 1995a; b; 1996a; b; c) confirmed that no references to vampires were made in the titles and synopses of Italian films prior to 1913. A list of about sixty vampire-themed Italian movies was then put together and the entries divided into two groups: a ‘silent phase’ going from 1913 *La torre dei vampiri* to

1927 *Vampiro*, and a ‘sound phase’ spanning from *I vampiri* (Riccardo Freda, 1957) to *Dracula 3D* (Dario Argento, 2012). From this initial list, some twenty films were excluded for a variety of thematic and industrial reasons.

The main thematic reason has to do with the definition of vampire. This thesis considers as vampire movies only those films that, regardless of genre, feature human or supernatural characters that live on human blood. The five entries from the silent phase were therefore excluded from the corpus, either because no plot synopsis is available or because then-contemporary reviews show that the bloodsucking creatures evoked by the titles never appear in the films.<sup>1</sup> As for the sound phase, a few movies from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s were discarded because, in spite of featuring parasitic beings and/or referencing vampire lore, literature and iconography, the focus is not at all on bloodsucking or blood transfusions, but rather on the assimilation of vital energies [*Caltiki il mostro immortale* / *Caltiki, the Immortal Monster* (Riccardo Freda as Robert Hamton, 1959); *Una storia moderna – L’ape regina* / *The Conjugal Bed* (Marco Ferreri, 1963)], on a miraculous embalming fluid [*Il castello dei morti vivi* / *Castle of the Living Dead* (Warren Kiefer, 1964)], on the mourning process [*Leonor* / *Mistress of the Devil* (Juan Luis Buñuel, 1975)], on the sexual and/or inheritance intrigues of aristocrats [*Ursus, il terrore dei kirghisi* / *Hercules, Prisoner of Evil* (Antonio Margheriti as Anthony Dawson, 1964); *Malenka la nipote del vampiro* / *Fangs of the Living Dead* (Amando de Ossorio, 1969); *Il gatto di Brooklyn aspirante detective* (Oscar Brazzi, 1972); *La morte negli occhi del gatto* / *Seven Dead in the Cat’s Eye* (Antonio Margheriti as Anthony M. Dawson, 1973); *Nuda per Satana* / *Nude for Satan* (Luigi Batzella as Paolo Solvay, 1974); *La sanguisuga conduce la danza* / *The Bloodsucker Leads the Dance* (Alfredo Rizzo, 1975)].

As for industrial reasons, the main criterion is a focus on feature films made in Italy or across Europe with the financial backing of Italian production and/or distribution companies during the ‘golden age’ of Italian genre cinema that went from the second half of the 1950s to the late 1970s. Qualifying films must also have been exhibited in the industrial circuit of

Italian cinema theatres. Hence the exclusion of short movies with advertising content shown in cinemas or broadcast on TV [*Il vampiro della strada* (Luciano Paganini, 1963); *L'ispettore Bramiè: La fine del vampiro* (Mario Fattori, Edo Cacciari, 1965); *Chiamami Peroni: Travestimento - Vampiro* (Franco Giraldi, 1973); *Raid Vampiri* (anonymous, 1978); *Vampiri* (anonymous, 1983)], TV mini-series [*Nella città vampira* (Giorgio Bandini, 1978)], TV- or straight-to-video movies [*Anemia* (Alberto Abruzzese, Achille Pisanti, 1986); *A cena col vampiro / Dinner with a Vampire* (Lamberto Bava, 1989); *Sete da vampira* (Roger A. Fratter, 1998)], amateur and underground/artist films [*Il figlio di Dracula* (Corrado Farina, 1960); *Isabell, a Dream* (Luigi Cozzi, 1968); *Necropolis* (Franco Brocani, 1970); *Salomé* (Carmelo Bene, 1972)], and feature films made for theatrical release after the 1977 crisis of the Italian film industry [*Fracchia contro Dracula / Fracchia versus Dracula* (Neri Parenti, 1985); *Nosferatu a Venezia / Vampire in Venice* (Augusto Caminito, 1989); *Zora la vampira / Zora the Vampire* (Antonio and Marco Manetti as Manetti Bros., 2000); *Dracula 3D*]. Finally, two vampire movies shot in the 1960s weren't taken into consideration: *L'ultimo uomo della Terra / The Last Man on Earth* (Ubaldo Ragona, 1964) and *Los monstruos del terror / Assignment Terror* (Tulio Demicheli as Tulio Demichelli, 1970). In fact, in spite of being classified as an Italian film by the Italian State Cinema Bureau, the former actually is a US runaway production fully financed by American companies and directed by American Sidney Salkow, with the Italian producers and Ragona acting as dummies in order for foreign investors to access Italian state aids and tax rebates (Moras, 2005). The latter, on the other hand, is a co-production between Spanish, West-German and Italian companies according to the opening credits, but it was never rated and distributed in Italy.

The corpus of thirty-five films resulting from the overlap of the above criteria is the following, and includes horrors, thrillers, comedies, adventures and erotica, or a combination thereof:

<b>Italian title [literal English translation] / Most popular English title on IMDB <sup>2</sup></b>	<b>Director as credited in Italian prints (director's nationality)</b>	<b>Nationality of the film (as certified by)</b>	<b>Year in which production began</b>	<b>Year of Italian Censorship Office's review</b>	<b>Genre</b>
<i>I vampiri</i> [The vampires] / <i>Lust of the Vampire</i>	Riccardo Freda (Italian)	Italian (Italian State Cinema Bureau)	1956	1957	Horror, thriller
<i>Tempi duri per i vampiri</i> [Hard times for vampires] / <i>Uncle Was a Vampire</i>	Stefano Vanzina as Steno (Italian)	Italian (ISCB)	1959	1959	Comedy
<i>L'amante del vampiro</i> [The vampire's lover] / <i>The Vampire and the Ballerina</i>	Renato Polselli (Italian)	Italian (Italian Censorship Office)	1959	1960	Horror
<i>Il sangue e la rosa</i> [The blood and the rose] / <i>Blood and Roses</i>	Roger Vadim (French)	Italian, French (Italian State Cinema Bureau)	1959	1960	Horror
<i>Il mulino delle donne di pietra</i> [see below] / <i>Mill of the Stone Women</i>	Giorgio Ferroni (Italian)	Italian, French (ISCB)	1959	1960	Horror, thriller
<i>La maschera del demonio</i> [The mask of the devil] / <i>Black Sunday</i>	Mario Bava (Italian)	Italian (ISCB)	1960	1960	Horror
<i>L'ultima preda del vampiro</i> [The last prey of the vampire] / <i>The Playgirls and the Vampire</i>	Piero Regnoli (Italian)	Italian (ISCB)	1960	1960	Horror
<i>Maciste contro il vampiro</i> [Maciste versus the vampire] / <i>Goliath and the Vampires</i>	Giacomo Gentilomo (Italian)	Italian (ISCB)	1961	1961	Adventure
<i>Ercole al centro della Terra</i> [Hercules at the centre of the Earth] / <i>Hercules in the Haunted World</i>	Mario Bava (Italian)	Italian (ISCB)	1961	1961	Adventure
<i>La strage dei vampiri</i> [see below] / <i>Slaughter of the Vampires</i>	Giuseppe Tagliavia as Roberto Mauri (Italian)	Italian (ISCB)	1961	1962	Horror
<i>L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock</i> [The horrible secret of doctor Hichcock] / <i>The Terror of Dr. Hichcock</i>	Riccardo Freda as Robert Hampton (Italian)	Italian (ISCB)	1962	1962	Horror, thriller

<i>I tre volti della paura</i> [The three faces of fear] / <i>Black Sabbath</i>	Mario Bava (Italian)	Italian, French (ISCB)	1962	1963	Horror, thriller
<i>Sexy proibitissimo</i> [Sexy and very forbidden] / <i>The Most Prohibited Sex</i>	Mario Amendola as Marcello Martinelli (Italian)	Italian (ISCB)	1963	1963	Erotic, comedy
<i>Ercole contro Moloch</i> [Hercules versus Moloch] / <i>Conquest of Mycene</i>	Giorgio Ferroni (Italian)	Italian, French (ISCB)	1963	1963	Adventure
<i>Danza macabra</i> [Danse macabre] / <i>Castle of Blood</i>	Antonio Margheriti as Anthony M. Dawson (Italian)	Italian, French (ISCB)	1963	1963	Horror
<i>Roma contro Roma</i> [Rome versus Rome] / <i>War of the Zombies</i>	Giuseppe Vari (Italian)	Italian (ISCB)	1963	1964	Adventure
<i>La cripta e l'incubo</i> [The crypt and the nightmare] / <i>Crypt of the Vampire</i>	Camillo Mastrocinque as Thomas Miller (Italian)	Italian, Spanish (ISCB)	1963	1964	Horror
<i>Maciste e la regina di Samar</i> [Maciste and the queen of Samar] / <i>Hercules Against the Moon Men</i>	Giacomo Gentilomo (Italian)	Italian, French (ISCB)	1964	1964	Adventure
<i>Il mostro dell'Opera</i> [The monster of the Opera]	Renato Polselli (Italian)	Italian (ISCB)	1961	1964	Horror
<i>Amanti d'oltretomba</i> [Lovers from beyond the grave] / <i>Nightmare Castle</i>	Mario Caiano as Allan Grünwald (Italian)	Italian (ISCB)	1965	1965	Horror
<i>La vendetta di Lady Morgan</i> [Lady Morgan's revenge]	Domenico Massimo Pupillo as Max Hunter (Italian)	Italian (ISCB)	1965	1965	Horror
<i>Il Conte Dracula</i> [see below] / <i>Count Dracula</i>	Jesús Franco Manera as Jesse Franco (Spanish)	Italian, Spanish, West-German (Italian Censorship Office)	1969	1973	Horror
<i>La notte dei dannati</i> [see below] / <i>Night of the Damned</i>	Filippo Walter Ratti as Peter Rush (Italian)	Italian (ICO)	1970-1971?	1971	Horror, erotic
<i>...Hanno cambiato faccia</i> [...They changed their face]	Corrado Farina (Italian)	Italian (ICO)	1970	1971	Horror

<i>L'amante del demonio</i> [see below] / <i>The Devil's Lover</i>	Paolo Lombardo (Italian)	Italian (ICO)	1970	1971	Horror, erotic
<i>La corta notte delle bambole di vetro</i> [see below] / <i>Short Night of Glass Dolls</i>	Aldo Lado (Italian)	Italian, Yugoslavian, West-German (ICO)	1971	1971	Thriller
<i>Nella stretta morsa del ragno</i> [In the firm grip of the spider] / <i>Web of the Spider</i>	Antonio Margheriti as Anthony M. Dawson (Italian)	Italian, French, West-German (ICO)	1971	1971	Horror
<i>La notte dei diavoli</i> [see below] / <i>Night of the Devils</i>	Giorgio Ferroni (Italian)	Italian, Spanish (ICO)	1971	1972	Horror
<i>Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel Trecento...</i> [Rituals, black magic and secret orgies in the 14 <sup>th</sup> century...] / <i>The Reincarnation of Isabel</i>	Renato Polselli as Ralph Brown (Italian)	Italian (ICO)	1971	1972	Horror, erotic
<i>Il prato macchiato di rosso</i> [The red-stained lawn]	Riccardo Ghione (Italian)	Italian (ICO)	1972	1972	Thriller
<i>Le vergini cavalcano la morte</i> [Virgins ride death] / <i>The Legend of Blood Castle</i>	Jorge Grau (Spanish)	Italian, Spanish (ICO)	1972	1973	Horror, thriller
<i>L'uomo che uccideva a sangue freddo</i> [The man who killed in cold blood] / <i>Shock Treatment</i>	Alain Jessua (French)	Italian, French (ICO)	1972	1973	Thriller
<i>Il plenilunio delle vergini</i> [The full moon of the virgins] / <i>The Devil's Wedding Night</i>	Luigi Batzella as Paolo Solvay (Italian)	Italian (ICO)	1972	1973	Horror, erotic
<i>Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!</i> [Dracula looks for virgins' blood... and died of thirst!!!] / <i>Blood for Dracula</i>	Antonio Margheriti as Anthony M. Dawson (Italian); Paul Morrissey (American)	Italian, French (ICO)	1973	1974	Horror, comedy, erotic
<i>Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza</i> [The demonic cavaliere Costante Nicosia, or: Dracula in Brianza] / <i>Dracula in the Provinces</i>	Lucio Fulci (Italian)	Italian (ICO)	1975	1975	Comedy



Although the corpus comprises genres other than horror, production and release dates suggest a periodisation of Italian vampire cinema that perfectly matches the history of the Italian horror film that scholars have been constructing for the past four decades. The starting point is *I vampiri*, which, by bundling up the Erzsébet Báthory legend and the Frankenstein myth, is generally considered the first Italian horror movie (Pironi, 1977; Mora, 1978; Troiano, 1985; 1989; Newman, 1986a; Jenks, 1992; Tohill & Tombs, 1995; Hunt, 2000; Brunetta, 2003; Lucas, 2007; Di Chiara, 2009; Bini, 2011a; Shipka, 2011; Pezzotta, 2013; Della Casa & Giusti, 2014; Koven, 2014; Curti, 2015). After Freda's prototype – immediately dubbed by then-contemporary Italian critics “the first ‘black film’ of Italian sound cinema” (Anonymous, 1957c), “the first [...] Edgar-Allan-Poe-style *film di orrore*” (Marinucci, 1957) – a sustained production of Italian vampire films starts in 1959, triggered by the worldwide box-office success of the Hammer *Dracula*, and lasts until the exhaustion of the thirty-something-film Italian Gothic horror cycle in 1965-1966 (Di Chiara, 2016b), to reprise on a much smaller scale in the early 1970s, through Italian Gothic horror's “late and bastardised excrescences, [...] isolated splinters” trying to cash in on either the classics of the previous two decades or new hits like *Night of the Living Dead* (George Romero, 1968), *Rosemary's Baby* (Roman Polanski, 1968), *L'uccello dalle piume di cristallo / The Bird with the Crystal Plumage* (Dario Argento, 1970) and *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973) (Curti, 2011: 300). Given that the notion of horror as a film genre was formalised by the Anglo-American press and censorship bodies in the early 1930s, after the inception of Universal's and Paramount's horror cycles (Peirse, 2013), the question is: why the first Italian horror film – and a vampire one at that – appeared only in 1956-1957? Detailed information about the national, international and transnational industrial context of Italian vampire cinema is provided in Chapter 3. However, in order to introduce some key elements of Italian cultural specificity, it's useful here to outline a brief history of literary and cinematic horror fiction in Italy prior to the mid-1950s,

with particular attention to vampire-themed works.

### **A scant heritage of horror**

Although a favourite setting for British and American Gothic novels and uncanny short stories since Horace Walpole's 1764 *The Castle of Otranto*, Italy never fostered a horror tradition worthy of the name.<sup>3</sup> As noted by Tardiola (1991), Lattarulo (1995) and Curti (2011), from the early 19<sup>th</sup> until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the most prominent Italian intellectuals had been championing rationalism, classicism and realist literary genres as the true expressions of the Italian character, repeatedly criticising Anglo-American Gothic fiction and English and German Romanticism for their focus on the disproportionate, the undefined, the macabre, the oneiric and the supernatural. In spite of the abundance of ghosts and witches in Italian folklore (Spagnol, Santi et al., 1966; 1967; Batini, 1968), notable figures such as Giacomo Leopardi, Alessandro Manzoni and Benedetto Croce maintained that Italy is no country for the “Nordic cavalcade of spectres, dying virgins, angelic demons, [...] creaking skeletons, and sighs and cries and laughters of crazy people, and the deliria of the feverish” (1904 essay by Croce, quoted in Curti, 2011: 18). These pronouncements against the inclusion of fantastic stories into the Italian literary canon probably explain the absence of a conspicuous heritage of horror in the *bel paese*.<sup>4</sup>

As for Italian vampire literature in particular, leaving aside the cursory references to bloodsucking creatures in Leopardi's 1824 philosophical dialogue “Dialogo di Federico Ruysch e delle sue mummie”, in Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi's 1854 historical novel *Beatrice Cenci*, in Francesco Mastriani's 1868 satirical novel against human greed *I vampiri (romanzo umoristico)*, in Gabriele D'Annunzio's 1894 erotic-philosophical novel *Il trionfo della morte*, in Edoardo Calandra's 1909 novella *Juliette*, and in the avant-gardist works by the Scapigliati and the Futurists (Cammarota, 1984; Roda, 1996; Pautasso, 1998; Bibbò, 2017), only a handful of texts have been written prior to Italy's 1959-1961 ‘vampire craze’

(see Chapter 3). The first in chronological order seems to be *Il vampiro*, an 1801, currently-lost opera seria by A. De Gasparini (Tardiola, 1991). This was followed by two comic takes on the vampire lore – Silvestro Palma and Giuseppe Palombache’s 1812 opera buffa *Vampiri*, “partly based” on an 18<sup>th</sup>-century scholarly “dissertation on vampirism by Trani Archbishop Giuseppe Antonio Davanzati”, and Angelo Brofferio’s 1827 comedy *Il vampiro*, a parody of John Polidori’s 1819 short story “The Vampyre” and its various French and English stage transpositions, centred around “a fake undead terroris[ing] the inhabitants of a castle in Westfalia” (Giovannini, 1997: 238-239).

The first fully-fledged Italian vampire novel is Franco Mistrali’s 1869 *Il vampiro. Storia vera* (‘The vampire. True story’). The title manifests the unease of the Italian writer in approaching the critically-discredited genre of the fantastic, and so does the plot. Set in 1862 in Monte Carlo, just outside Italy’s newly-established nation-state borders, the story adopts the first-person perspective of a detective who explains away seemingly-supernatural events by exposing the Secret Society of Vampires, a group of Eastern-European political conspirators who dabble in poisoning and blood transfusions. After Mistrali’s detective novel – which was neither a bestseller nor a critical success – in Italian literature vampire figures would play a leading role only in a dozen short stories, namely man-versus-giant-bat jungle adventures such as Emilio Salgari’s 1912 “Il vampiro della foresta”, and uncanny tales dealing either with beings that feed on human blood/energies (Francesco Ernesto Morando’s 1885 “Vampiro innocente”; Giuseppe Tonsi’s 1902 “Il vampiro”; Luigi Capuana’s 1907 “Un vampiro”; Enrico Boni’s 1908 “Vampiro”; Vittorio Martella’s 1917 “Il vampiro”; Giuseppe de Feo’s 1921 “Il vampiro”) or life-draining portraits à la Poe (Daniele Oberto Marrama’s 1907 “Il dottor Nero”; Cifra’s 1940 “Il vampiro”) (Foni, 2007; Camilletti, 2018).

Italian editions of foreign vampire literature classics such as Sheridan Le Fanu’s 1871 short story “Carmilla” and Stoker’s novel *Dracula* are similarly scarce. The former was translated into Italian only in horror anthologies of the early 1960s (Camilletti, 2018), while

the first Italian edition of the latter – printed by Milanese publishing house Sonzogno in 1922 under the title *Dracula. L'uomo della notte* ('Dracula. The man of the night') as part of the 'mystery tales for the whole family' series – was a heavily abridged version of Stoker's own abridged text of 1901.<sup>5</sup> The Italian translation of the full 1897 text of *Dracula* was first printed in Milan in September 1945, and again in 1952, by publisher Fratelli Bocca Editori, a specialist in the occult. It's not known if the hiatus between the 1922 and the 1945 edition is due to the Fascist regime's opposing horror fiction. What's certain is that the only book-length piece of vampire fiction published in Italy during Fascist *ventennio* is Mary Tibaldi Chiesa's *Gli enigmi del vampiro* ('The riddles of the vampire'), an Italian translation/reworking of an 11<sup>th</sup>-century collection of Indian novellas narrated by a *vetala*, the Hindu equivalent of a vampire. Printed by Milanese publishing house Mondadori in 1936, *Gli enigmi del vampiro* opens with a preface by a prestigious Orientalist scholar of the time confirming the Italian 'rationalist prejudice' against the fantastic:

We [Italians] don't believe in vampires and sprites anymore; nowadays these are but fantasies good for children and old ladies [...]; our philosophy taught us that unsolvable riddles are just wrongly-posed questions, whose words are devoid of any meaning and connection to concrete reality (Pizzagalli, 1936: 15).

The same nationalism-tinged scepticism, based on the *auctoritas* of Leopardi, Manzoni and Croce, returns over and over in Italian film criticism too, every time an Italian director would try to unsettle the audience by pushing the boundaries of verisimilitude. For instance, in a 1913 review of *Il suicida n. 359* (Roberto Roberti, 1913) – an adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's 1878 short-story collection *The Suicide Club* – a film critic wrote: "I think that Italian companies shouldn't make this kind of frightening, implausible films. Certain acts of collective madness might often happen in the Nordic mists of the Thames, but certainly not on the lovely, sunny shores of river Po" (quoted in Bernardini & Martinelli, 1993b: 271). Reviewing *La terrificante visione* (Ugo De Simone, 1915) upon its premiere, another critic

noted that Italian fantastic films lack “the talent in the strange, the genius in the unlikely, the vivacity and courage in the illogic” to be found in their foreign counterparts that had launched the fantastic trend in the first place (quoted in Martinelli, 1992b: 243). The long-standing bias is encapsulated in a 1940 review of *Bride of Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1935) written by Pietro Bianchi: “We good Mediterraneans have no sympathy for horrors. We leave spirits, monsters and ghosts to Nordic people” (quoted in Venturini, 2014: 5).

More than a decade after Bianchi’s categorical refusal, the horror genre was still perceived as completely alien to Italian culture, to the point that the first Italian-language article surveying the history of cinematic horror was written by a Spanish scholar, who traced the fathers of the “terrorific” or “truculent” film (the expression ‘horror cinema’ is never employed throughout the text) in France, Scandinavia, Germany and the US (Rotellar, 1952). Consequently, upon writing the screenplay of *I vampiri* in 1956, Freda opted for setting his Frankensteinian-vampiric tale abroad, Mistrali-style, while his producers decided mid-shoot to remove the most fantastic and gruesome scenes and insert a detection subplot which was deemed to be more appealing to Italian audiences than pure horror (Cozzi, 2007), given the huge commercial success of Anglo-American whodunit and crime novels published in Italian translation ever since 1929 in Mondadori’s *I libri gialli* series.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, as recounted by Freda, by the late 1950s the prejudice against fantastic films ‘made in Italy’ was a *donné* even among Italian audiences, which led the director to adopt an Anglophone pseudonym for his 1959 sci-fi/horror hybrid *Caltiki il mostro immortale* :

I had the idea [of using an Anglophone pseudonym] while I was in the foyer of a cinema in Italy. I noticed that, after glancing at the film poster for *I vampiri*, lots of people said: “Riccardo Freda? [...] It’s an Italian film, so it must not be very good. If it came from the US, it would be worth seeing!” (quoted in Lourcelles & Mizrahi, 1963: 28)

As a matter of fact, Italy had been a strong importation market for foreign fantastic cinema ever since the silent era. Although occasionally hindered by state censors, films of

“the Nordic school” (Rotellar, 1952: 296) like *Der Student von Prag / The Student of Prague* (Henrik Galeen, Stellan Rye, 1913), *Homunculus* (Otto Rippert, 1916), *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari / The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1920), *Der Golem, wie er in die Welt kam / The Golem* (Carl Boese, Paul Wegener, 1920), *Körkarlen / The Phantom Carriage* (Victor Sjöström, 1921), *Das Wachsfigurenkabinett / Waxworks* (Paul Leni, 1924), *Orlacs Hände / The Hands of Orlac* (Robert Wiene, 1924), *Der Student von Prag / The Student of Prague* (Henrik Galeen, 1926) and *Faust: Eine deutsche Volkssage / Faust* (F. W. Murnau, 1926) circulated in Italy between the 1910s and the late 1920s, and so did between the mid-1920s and the late 1950s Hollywood pictures such as *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (John S. Robertson, 1920), *The Phantom of the Opera* (Rupert Julian, 1925), *Frankenstein* (James Whale, 1931) and its sequels, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1931), *The Mummy* (Karl Freund, 1932), *The Invisible Man* (James Whale, 1933), *Mystery of the Wax Museum* (Michael Curtiz, 1933), *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (Victor Fleming, 1941), *The Phantom of the Opera* (Arthur Lubin, 1943), *The Thing from Another World* (Christian Nyby, 1951) and *House of Wax* (André de Toth, 1953) (Quaglietti, 1991; Martinelli, 2001; Venturini, 2014). Vampire cinema wasn’t trendy, though, as Murnau’s *Nosferatu*, Browning’s *Dracula*, *Vampyr, ou l’étrange aventure de David Gray / Vampyr* (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1932), *Mark of the Vampire* (Tod Browning, 1935), *Dracula’s Daughter* (Lambert Hillyer, 1936) and *Son of Dracula* (Robert Siodmak, 1943) seem to have never been imported and rated by Italian Censorship Office. Prior to 1957, the only vampire-themed movies officially released in Italy were tongue-in-cheek ‘monster mash-ups’ *House of Dracula* (Erle C. Kenton, 1945) and *Abbott & Costello Meet Frankenstein* (Charles T. Barton, 1948), and detective stories *London after Midnight* (Tod Browning, 1927) and *The Return of Doctor X* (Vincent Sherman, 1939) – the latter sharing more than one similarity with *I vampiri*’s screenplay credited to Freda, Piero Regnoli and the inexistent Rijk Sijöstrom (a scientific vampire that feeds via blood transfusions, the reanimated corpse of a child murderer, an inquisitive journalist determined to

solve a string of homicides).<sup>7</sup>

While there have been attempts (Della Casa, 1990; Venturini, 2014; Hunter, 2016; 2017; Rigby, 2016) to trace a ‘horror sensibility’ in pre-1957 Italian films adapting the very few ventures of Italian writers into the fantastic [*Malombra* (Carmine Gallone, 1917); *Malombra* (Mario Soldati, 1942); *Il cappello da prete* (Ferdinando Maria Poggioli, 1944)], reworking texts from German and Anglo-American literature [*Faust* (Enrico Guazzoni, 1914); *La dama bianca* (anonymous, 1916); *Il mostro di Frankenstein* (Eugenio Testa, 1920); *Rapsodia satanica* (Nino Oxilia, 1917); *L’altro io* (Mario Bonnard, 1917); *Notte romantica di Dolly, ovvero: Angoscia di Dolly* (Arnaldo Frateili, 1920); *La giovinezza del diavolo* (Roberto Roberti, 1922); *Il cuore rivelatore* (Cesare Civita, Alberto Lattuada, Alberto Mondadori, Mario Monicelli, 1935); *Il caso Valdemar* (Ubaldo Magnaghi, Gianni Hoepli, 1936)], or simply displaying macabre imagery and supernatural elements [*Lo spettro* (Gaston Velle, 1907); *La strega di Siviglia* (anonymous, 1908); *Il fantasma* (L. Adelli, 1909); *Il diavolo zoppo* (Luigi Maggi, 1909); *La ballata della strega* (Luigi Maggi, 1910); *La madre e la morte* (Arrigo Frusta, 1911); *Satana* (Luigi Maggi, 1912); *I rettili umani* (Enrico Vidali, 1915); *La bara di vetro* (Pier Angelo Mazzolotti, 1915); *La sposa dei secoli* (anonymous, 1916); *L’uomo dall’orecchio mozzato* (Ubaldo Maria del Colle, 1916); *’E scugnizze* (Elvira Notari, 1917); *Kalida’a la storia di una mummia* (Augusto Genina, 1917); *L’uomo che dormì 130 anni* (Arturo Rosenfeld, 1922)], there seems to be a consensus among scholars on seeing *I vampiri* as the first, fully-fledged, Italian-made horror. Besides the rationalist mindset of the Italian *intelligentsia*, the scant heritage of cinematic horrors before *I vampiri* is generally explained through three structural causes.

Firstly, in response to moralising campaigns launched by magistrates and high-ranking clergymen, a state-run Italian Censorship Office was created in 1913 by the centrist government, in order to ban from Italian screens “truce, repugnant or cruel scenes, including scenes of violence against animals; shocking murders and suicides and, in general, perverse

actions or events that might perturb the spirits, teach or spur people to commit crimes and do evil” (Royal Legislative Decree 532 of May 31<sup>st</sup> 1914, quoted in Argentieri, 1974: 20-21). Secondly, we have both the moralising influence of the Vatican on the state-run board of film censors within the frame of the alliance between the Holy See and powerful Italian political parties of Roman-Catholic ideology (Treveri Gennari, 2011; Subini, 2015), and the diligent, incessant activity of Vatican’s own censors to “influence film producers by controlling the market of Catholic cinemas, which [...] were open only to films possessing moral standards established by the Vatican” (Valli, 1999: 8). In fact, starting with its foundation in 1935, the Vatican film censorship office Centro Cattolico Cinematografico took upon itself the task of assessing the morality of all Italian and foreign films to be released in Italy, and published its judgements on widely-read bulletins, newspapers and magazines to prevent ‘immoral’ movies from being exhibited in the very many Italian theatres owned by the Catholic Church itself (the so-called parish cinemas) or owned/run by devout Catholics. Thirdly, during both Fascist *ventennio* and the Christian-Democrat absolute rule of the post-war years, the governing right-wing parties closely monitored the content of the films ever since the screenwriting phase via special state bureaus, pressuring industry people to focus on light entertainment (Bonsaver, 2014), while left-wing intellectuals tended to despise genre cinema of all kinds (Forgacs, 1990; O’Rawe, 2008; Noto, 2011), and to devalue fantastic cinema in particular (AAVV, 1963; Fofi, 1963; Paoletta, 1965; Spinazzola, 1965b; Fink, 1966; Giacci, 1973; Lippi & Codelli, 1976; Mora, 1978), as an escapist flight from the analysis of present-day social reality.

This resulted in an almost total absence of Italian horror cinema proper until the making and release of *I vampiri* in 1956-1957 or, at best, in the production of a few films adopting a parodic register and using Gothic and horror paraphernalia for laughs: *Preferisco l’Inferno* (Eleuterio Rodolfi, 1916), *Maciste all’Inferno* (Guido Brignone, 1925) and *Totò all’Inferno* (Camillo Mastrocinque, 1955) mix Dante Alighieri’s and Gustave Doré’s visions



of Hell with revue-like comedy sketches and slapstick; *L'allegro fantasma* (Amleto Palermi, 1941), *C'è un fantasma nel castello* (Giorgio Simonelli, 1942) and *Abracadabra* (Max Neufeld, 1952) explain away supernatural events as the shenanigans of crooks masquerading as ghosts; *Incanto di mezzanotte* (Mario Baffico, 1940), *Fantasmì a Cinecittà* (Domenico Paolella, 1940), *Quel fantasma di mio marito* (Camillo Mastrocinque, 1950) and *La paura fa 90* (Giorgio Simonelli, 1951) turn the 'vengeful ghost' scenario on its head by featuring good-hearted or inept spectres in romantic-comedy situations, often with 'backstage' elements like the film within a film (*Incanto di mezzanotte* and *Fantasmì a Cinecittà*) and the play within a film (*La paura fa 90*). Parody, in fact, is not only a mainstay of Italian film production ever since the silent era (Menarini, 2001), but also a way to safely import successful-yet-potentially-controversial foreign trends in Italy. This is demonstrated by the aforementioned vampire-themed plays from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century (Palma and Palombache's *Vampiri* and Brofferio's *Il vampiro*) and, as we shall see in Chapter 3, by Steno's 1959 rip-off of the Hammer *Dracula*, *Tempi duri per i vampiri*.

### **Theoretical framework and methodology**

Investigating the metaphorical functions of 1956-1975 Italian vampire cinema within the socio-historical context of then-contemporary Italy, this thesis is based on the idea that the cultural artefacts produced and consumed by a given society reveal something about it. The concept found its first theorisation and empirical applications thanks to left-wing intellectuals in Fascist Italy (notably Antonio Gramsci, whose indictments of the mass literature popular among the working class as an escapist 'opiate' concocted by the economically- and culturally-hegemonic capitalist bourgeoisie saw their first Italian edition in the late 1940s) (Gramsci, 1975a; b; c) and Weimar Republic (Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, and others). The latter – informally identified as members of, or fellow-travellers to, the Frankfurt School – engaged in what they called critical theory and

focused their attention on topics like 20<sup>th</sup>-century mass entertainments, mass communication and mass behaviour. Although the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School never coalesced into a unitary movement and often disagreed with each other in matters of economics, politics, sociology, psychology, history and philosophy, they all borrowed from Karl Marx's dialectical materialism and Sigmund Freud's understanding of cultural symbols as coded neurotic symptoms affecting both the individual and collective mind, and thereby strove for revealing the hidden structures of power and forms of dominant ideology at work in capitalist society, in order to spearhead change towards non-authoritarian social relations (Held, 2013). Such aims became more and more utopic with the advent of Nazism and the Cold War, yet the German thinkers' intellectual legacy remains strong to this very day. For instance, the academic field presently known as cultural studies, institutionalised in the mid-1960s by the British scholars working at the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (During, 1999), shares with Frankfurt School's critical theory an interest in mass-produced commercial culture, an emphasis on interdisciplinarity and a "'worldly' vocation" conceiving of "intellectual practice as a politics" (Hall, 1999: 42) – the hope being to awaken the revolutionary potential of the working class and other non-hegemonic groups in capitalist society.

Given these premises, the main theoretical point of reference for the present study of Italian cinematic vampires is Siegfried Kracauer, the German intellectual associated with the Frankfurt School who popularised the idea that cinema holds a more or less distorted mirror up to the nation-state that produces and consumes it. The seminal work of reflectionist film theory isn't only Kracauer's 1947 book *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (written while he was in exile in New York), but also two much shorter 'American writings' of Kracauer's published around the same period: the 1946 essay "Hollywood's Terror Films: Do They Reflect an American State of Mind?", where it is stated that "movies not only cater to popular demands; they also reflect popular tendencies and

inclinations”, that is to say “contemporary undercurrents of feelings” (2003: 109-110), and the 1948 essay “Those Movies with a Message”, whose opening paragraph includes the sentence “Films mirror our reality” (2012: 72). The conclusions reached by Kracauer apropos of 1918-1933 German cinema, 1940s Hollywood’s psychological thrillers and mid-to-late-1940s American attempts at social-realist drama respectively don’t interest us here. What matters is the method adopted by the scholar in his nationally-specific psychological histories of cinema, as codified in his 1947 major work.

When *From Caligari to Hitler* was first published, cinema had been a mass medium for about fifty years and the almost totality of the then-contemporary critical and scholarly debates focused on whether or not it was an artistic form of expression. As a consequence, with a radical gesture perhaps lost to today’s readers used to considering cinema as the seventh art, Kracauer starts off by stating that he isn’t going to study “films merely for their own sake” (1971: v) and that his book has nothing to do with the prevailing “literature, essentially aesthetic, [that] deals with films as if they were autonomous structures” (Ibid.: 4). Interested in cinema’s “symptomatic rather than aesthetic value” (Ibid.: 56), his aim is to study the relations between the films produced and consumed in a given country during a particular time and “the soul of a whole people” (Ibid: 38), i.e. “the actual psychological pattern of this nation” (Ibid: 5): “What films reflect are not so much explicit credos as psychological dispositions – those deep layers of collective mentality” which, in the Freudian language privileged by many a Frankfurt School thinker, “extend more or less below the dimension of consciousness” (Ibid.: 6). While duly noting that “popular magazines and broadcasts, bestsellers, ads, fashions in language and other sedimentary products of a people’s cultural life also yield valuable information about predominant attitudes, widespread inner tendencies” (Ibid.), Kracauer deems movies the more apt cultural artefacts to be subjected to a reflectionist analysis. This is for two reasons relating to the commercial nature of filmmaking as the capital- and labour-intensive manufacturing of audio-visual narratives to be sold to a

mass audience for profit. Firstly, within an industrial system, films are the result of a “teamwork” that “tends to exclude arbitrary handling of screen material, suppressing individual peculiarities in favour of traits common to many people”. Secondly, since the film industry tops production expenses by attracting as much paying customers as possible, its products must “address themselves, and appeal, to the anonymous multitude”, satisfying “existing mass desires” and adjusting, “so far as possible, to the changes of mental climate” (Ibid.: 5-6).

Once posited the connection between a nation-state’s cinema and the psychological dispositions of the people producing and consuming it, Kracauer outlines the method underlying his symptomatic reading of 1918-1933 German cinema, to reveal which unspoken “fears and hopes swept Germany” after World War One (Ibid.: 8). Such method, applied to the widest possible corpus of films made in Germany during the fifteen years following the fall of the German Empire, starts from a textual approach taking into account both diegetic content and cinematic form/style, i.e. “narrative” aspects (such as plots, characters, dialogues and themes) and “pictorial” aspects (such as lighting, framing, acting, editing, set design, make-up, costumes and special effects):

What counts is not so much the statistically measurable popularity of films as the popularity of their pictorial and narrative motifs. Persistent reiteration of these motifs marks them as outward projections of inner urges. And they obviously carry most symptomatic weight when they occur in both popular and unpopular films, in grade B pictures as well as in superproductions (Ibid.).

Through frequent digressions into the political and socio-economic history of the Weimar Republic from the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II to the appointment of Adolf Hitler as German chancellor, the psychologically-charged, narrative and pictorial film motifs highlighted by Kracauer (the dilemmas between chaos/tyranny and rebellion/submission, conspiratorial paranoia, paralysis) are linked to the then-contemporary German zeitgeist (disbelief towards the World-War-One defeat, humiliating peace conditions, the end of

imperial rule and the establishment of democracy, political unrest bordering civil war, rampant inflation and mass unemployment). Moreover, since the author recognises that the mirroring process isn't an unmediated one in which reality and its collective psychological implications are transposed onto film 'as they are', a chapter about the post-1917 German film industry and statements by film workers who used to be active in Weimar cinema show how the profit-bent "film producers and big executives interfered" with the conscious and unconscious creative work of the filmmakers, "engineering all kinds of compromises" modifying screenwriters' and directors' original visions (Ibid: 38-39).

Kracauer concludes the preface to his 1947 magnum opus on German cinema by declaring that film-based psychological history and its method of analysis "can profitably be extended to studies of current mass behavior in the United States and elsewhere" (Ibid.: v), that is to say the reflectionist paradigm seeing films as "social sensors" (Elsaesser, 2013: 3) is universally applicable. Indeed, not only Kracauer sketched a psychological history of 1940s Hollywood cinema in the 1946 and 1948 essays mentioned above, but many film critics and scholars have been following his footsteps ever since. Some appropriate Kracauer's keywords 'psyche', 'psychic conflict', 'mirror' and 'motif' and offer insights into a national culture by focusing mostly on the analysis of the narratives and *mise en scène* of a nationally-defined corpus of genre movies (Wolfenstein & Leites, 1950; Durgnat, 1967; 1969; 1970; Deming, 1969; Braudy, 1984; Warshow, 1991; 1998) (as signalled by von Moltke, 2016b, Robert Warshow and Barbara Deming were personal friends of Kracauer's). Others privilege a mix of textual, historical and industrial approaches to "stylistically unified waves of film art" like 1920-1931 German Expressionism, 1925-1930 Soviet Expressive Realism and 1945-1955 Italian Neorealism (Huaco, 1965: 1), to "the most popular French and German films of the decade following World War One" (Monaco, 1976: 1), or, in Bongartz's (1992) 'unofficial sequel' of *From Caligari to Hitler*, to 1946-1960 German cinema.

In particular, Huaco (1965) deprives Kracauer's reflectionism of any hint of Freud-influenced mass psychology, renames the psychological history of film a sociology of film and, starting from the Marxian distinction between base and superstructure, studies how, in a given nation-state, political and socio-economic factors influence the social structures that produce and consume film art (directors, actors, producers and audiences) and lead to the making of stylistically-uniform art movies expressing a certain ideology via their plots. Monaco (1976: 10-11), on the other hand, commits to the Frankfurt School's Freudianism: "proceeding from the surface film/dream kinship" (same emphasis on visual over aural communication; same psychomotor behaviour of spectators and dreamers), he maintains that a nation-state's past and contemporary political and socio-economic history imbues that nation-state's cinema just like an individual's past and contemporary life experiences find an obliquely-symbolic representation in the dreams he/she makes. Therefore, "certain motifs and images" common to "the popular films of a nation are treated as a dreamlike reflection of the nation's collective psyche", collectively-produced and collectively-consumed symbols that need to be deciphered to diagnose the historically-grounded psychological malaise of a people.

In spite of the naturalisation of reflectionism as a form of analysis in present-day film journalism and academia (Bongartz, 1992; Elsaesser, 2013; von Moltke, 2016a; b), especially as far as often-trauma-theory-influenced cultural histories of the horror genre are concerned (Tudor, 1989; King, 1991; Crane, 1994; Jancovich, 1996; Wells, 2000; Skal, 2001; Wood, 2003; Maddrey, 2004; Lowenstein, 2005; Phillips, 2005; Dendle, 2007; Blake, 2008; Derry, 2009; Hallam, 2010; Hills, 2012; Lázaro-Reboll, 2012; Wetmore, 2012; Kerner, 2015; Schlegel, 2015; Abbott, 2016; Luckhurst, 2016), a great deal of criticism has been levelled at Kracauer's foundational text over the years. This criticism has been focusing on two major points, which are worth explaining in relative detail so that the methodological soundness of the present thesis can be better appreciated.

Firstly, since in *From Caligari to Hitler* Kracauer states that his analysis of 1918-1933 German cinema is ultimately meant to explain “Hitler’s ascent and ascendancy” from the early 1930s onwards (1971: 11), and repeatedly calls Weimar movies “premonitions” (Ibid.: 72, 84, 272) or “forebodings” (Ibid.: 28-34, 53) of later historical events, he has been accused of acting like a “prophet in retrospect” (von Moltke, 2016a: 46) who “read[s] too much out of the films through hindsight” (Monaco, 1976: 160). In other words, Kracauer is perceived to actually go from Hitler to Caligari rather than the other way around, “adopting an ‘anticipationist’ and teleological line of argument” that projects his knowledge of the totalitarian drift of post-1933 Germany on an earlier epoch’s democratic (however problematically and precariously so) regime (von Moltke, 2016a: 45). The accusation is bolstered by the fact that the German scholar tends to ignore authorial intentions when they don’t fit a Nazi-related historical narrative, as in the case of the 1922 *Nosferatu*, which Kracauer considers a parable about the rise of tyrannical, totalitarian powers in spite of the fact that, upon the film’s premiere, producer Albin Grau publicly declared it an indictment of World-War-One bloodbaths (see Chapter 2) and, in the early 1920s, totalitarianism hadn’t developed yet in Germany nor anywhere else in the world. Moreover, Kracauer “bas[es] his analysis on barely one-tenth of the approximately 1,000 films produced in Germany between 1918 and 1933”, deliberately excluding from his corpus upbeat movies like Hollywood-influenced “comedies or romantic dramas, which might suggest a different insight into the national psyche” (Chapman, 2013: 18-19). Indeed, one can’t help but wonder if the filmic corpus analysed in *From Caligari to Hitler* really reflects the Weimar zeitgeist, or rather the pedagogical agenda of the post-war Nuremberg-trials period in which the book was written (Mack, 2000; Kaes, 2009).

Secondly, and strictly connected to the previous point about the pitfalls of Kracauer’s historical ‘tunnel vision’, *From Caligari to Hitler* has been critiqued for adopting an “overly ‘essentialist’” (von Moltke, 2016a: 45), oversimplified psychology that fails to address the

political, socio-economic and cultural complexity of the Weimar Republic. As Chapman (2013: 18) writes, Kracauer's argument

involves much generalization about such vague ideas as the 'mental climate', 'psychological disposition' and 'collective mentality' of the German people (even sometimes 'the German soul'). [The] notion of 'collective mentality' is especially problematic: Kracauer seems to regard German society as homogenous (even though [Weimar Republic] was a period of social and political dislocation) and assumes that all people shared much the same outlook.

As a result, the German scholar ends up denying the openness, diversity and contradictoriness of the filmic texts he analyses. His conception of films as "organic, unified wholes carrying a single message" (Kaes, 2009: 5) is best exemplified by his allegorical reading of circular shapes in 1918-1933 German cinema. For Kracauer (1971: 73-74, 121, 186, 222), the circle is always a symbol of chaos when it appears in Weimar movies – a rather blunt view that leaves the readers wondering "what distinguishes the circle-as-chaos from the circle as a geometrical symbol for perfection, wholeness, unity, infinity, etcetera" (von Moltke, 2016b: 262).

In order for the present work to avoid raising similar objections about teleological biases and crude reductionism, a series of adjustments have been introduced in the "Freudo-Marxist" (Elsaesser, 2013: 33) reflectionist paradigm originally put forward by Kracauer. Firstly, instead of trying to survey the whole of a nation-state's filmmaking output from a given period, the thesis settles for the more modest and feasible aim of account for a single, nationally-defined subgenre, privileging the depth and nuance of the investigation over its breadth, and thereby avoiding accusations of superficiality as much as possible. Secondly, Kracauer's vaguely-defined psychologist conception of the zeitgeist as "those deep layers of collective mentality" (1971: 6) is traded off for a materialist one in which 'the spirit of the time' corresponds to a given country's mainstream ideologies as inferred from concrete evidence such as parliamentary and journalistic debates, state laws, and so on. This is to ensure that the analysis conducted in the thesis is always grounded in verifiable facts and



figures, and open to the diversity and contradictoriness of reality, not a mere exercise in deriving general claims from a set of indemonstrable axioms. Thirdly, the teleological perspective of *From Caligari to Hitler*, reading 1918-1933 German cinema under the light of the post-1933 Nazi dictatorship, is discarded. The thesis reconstructs the original context of production and consumption of a selected corpus of films, outlining their nationally-specific characteristics and their relations to then-contemporary socio-cultural issues. What matters here is not the movies' symptomatic value (meaning, quite literally given Kracauer's Freudianism, their containing the germs of an illness bound to manifest itself in the future), but their "cultural instrumentalities", the cultural work films perform as "*reflections* of social trends and attitudes of the time, mirroring the preoccupations of the historical moment in which the films were made"; as "society's representations of itself in and for itself"; as texts able to "do [things] to and for their *spectators*", evoking pleasures and triggering fantasies; as "actively involved in a whole network of *intertexts*, of cultural meanings and social discourses" (Kuhn, 1990: 10). The focus on these four cultural instrumentalities calls for a movement away from Kracauer's (and Monaco's and trauma theory's) fuzzy psychology of film, based as it is on the ultimately indemonstrable notion of a public (un)consciousness/soul, towards Huaco's (1965) rigorously-materialist film sociology, seeing the creative work of a country's film industry as influenced by nationally-specific political and socio-economic factors. Let's now see how the above paradigm shift translates into a methodology convincingly connecting the audio-visual texts to the national zeitgeist.

The starting point is delineating the main characteristics of the audio-visual texts and the national zeitgeist separately. The former is achieved through textual analysis: over the course of repeated viewings, each of the thirty-five movies listed in the corpus – acquired in the Italian-dubbed cut originally approved by the Italian Censorship Office for domestic release – is subjected to close reading. This leads to a preliminary sketch of Italian vampire figures (gender, physical appearance, personality traits, behavioural patterns, and so on),

highlighting the similarities and differences from one film to the other. The latter is a matter of **contextual analysis**: the broader socio-historical context of Italy from the immediate post-war until the late 1970s is reconstructed through the existing works by Italianist scholars like Ginsborg (1990) and Crainz (2005a; b). Here, according to the thesis' materialist conception of the zeitgeist described in the previous paragraph, expressions like 'national soul' and 'national psyche' are eschewed in favour of an account of Italian mainstream ideologies based on concrete evidence such as the Italian Republic's laws in matters of gender equality and salaried labour. Once the salient features of texts and context are established, the research moves on to placing the vampire movies in question within their coeval context of production and consumption.

The complex process of bringing to the fore the texts' cultural instrumentalities begins by investigating authorial intentions: were the people making the thirty-five vampire movies listed in the corpus actively and explicitly trying to convey any kind of message relating to 1956-1975 Italy? To answer this question, the first-person accounts of the film workers involved in Italian vampire cinema are of crucial importance. Since most of the key creative personnel are now unavailable for interview due to old age or death, only three people could be interviewed directly over the phone and via e-mail: ...*Hanno cambiato faccia*'s screenwriter and director Corrado Farina (Appendix B), *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza*'s composer Fabio Frizzi (Appendix C), and *L'amante del vampiro*'s, *L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock*'s, *La cripta e l'incubo*'s and *Il mostro dell'Opera*'s screenwriter Ernesto Gastaldi (Appendix D). However, further insights into Italian vampire cinema could be gained by making use of the existing, relatively-large body of interviews with Italian genre cinema's screenwriters, directors and other artistic personnel. These first- and second-hand interviews show that Italian genre cinema practitioners generally were reluctant, if not opposed, to discuss message. For most of them, films were a means for financial gain rather than an outlet for social commentary – the latter being perceived by both

film workers and critics as a prerogative of the *cinema d'autore*, the 'auteur cinema' of the 1940s neorealists and their later offspring.

Some quotes by directors whose work is studied in the thesis perfectly illustrate the point. Looking back at his directorial debut *La maschera del demonio*, Mario Bava said: "Since in that period [the Hammer] *Dracula* had just been released, I thought of making a horror movie. [...] It was my first film as a director, and it was a very serious matter, because if the movie didn't perform well [at the box office] my career was over" (quoted in Della Casa, 1995: 27). This down-to-earth, 'careerist' perspective is shared by Renato Polselli ("When you work in commercial cinema you must make films that are cost-competitive and have the potential to make money. [...] The killing of a woman has spectacular potential; a woman suspended between agony, torment and ecstasy has spectacular potential") (quoted in Fazzini, 2004: 57-59), Antonio Margheriti ("I'm a slave for my producers. A prostitute. If it's for money, my answer is 'Yes'") (quoted in Curti, 2017b: 38), and Lucio Fulci ("Social comments are always out of place in a fantasy film, which should be all the more enjoyable for having nothing in common with the mass of films made by amateurs who take up social standpoints because they aren't experts at making films") (quoted in Palmerini & Mistretta, 1996: 59).

The filmic texts themselves suggest a disdain for highbrow theorisation, with particular fun being poked at psychoanalysis. Just to stick to 1960s Italian horror, in Freda's *L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock* the dashing hero tries to impress his love interest by telling her that he's a pupil of "Viennese professor Freud", to which she reacts with indifference, while in *Seddok, l'erede di Satana / Atom Age Vampire* (Anton Giulio Majano, 1960) a muckraking journalist amuses his colleagues by attributing an old spinster's sighting of the titular monster to her "repressed sexual slavery". The generally playful, cynical approach to filmmaking adopted by genre cinema practitioners was indeed common knowledge at the time, to the point that the few 1960s Italian-language articles advertising or reviewing Italian horror

cinema never fail to highlight its blatantly-economic aims (Anonymous, 1960b; c; Fink, 1960; 1966; Fofi, 1963; Pirro, 1965), thus contributing – together with the Leopardi-Manzoni-Croce anti-fantastic stand – to the critical and academic neglect Italian vampire movies have been suffering until recently.

The interviews with the creative personnel about authorial intentions then call for two methodological precautions. Firstly, since intellectualist readings of genre output are largely dismissed by the interviewees, extra care should be taken in applying to Italian vampire cinema the auteurist approach according to which a film is the emanation of the screenwriter-director's personal beliefs as shaped by his/her political, socio-economic and cultural background. As a consequence, this kind of straightforward auteurist approach is sparingly employed in the thesis (mostly in Chapter 5), only when enough first- and second-hand information about the filmmakers' biographies and worldviews are available for a comparison with the films' content. Secondly, since most of the creative personnel suggests profit-making as the primary reason behind the making of Italian genre movies, the data collection should concern itself with matters of film economics and marketing as well, to obtain information about the vampire subgenre from a 'systemic' perspective including all the main figures active in the Italian film industry in addition to artistic personnel like screenwriters and directors: financiers, producers, censors, distributors, exhibitors and audiences.

The main sources to reach a 'systemic' perspective on Italian vampire cinema are five. Firstly, there is the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome (abbreviated to 'ACS' in bibliographic references), whose 'Ministero del Turismo e dello Spettacolo. Direzione Generale Spettacolo. Lungometraggi (concessione certificato di nazionalità)' section offers pre-production, production and distribution data for every post-1945 movie shot in Italy that applied for a state loan and/or the Italian-nationality certificate. An ACS file typically includes the film treatment, the state censors' assessment of the screenplay, the financial plans, the budget, the cost statement, the shooting schedule, and the contracts with film workers and

distributors – the only drawback being that the official documents for post-1965 movies aren't yet in the public domain. Secondly, to see how vampire films evolved, from a creative point of view, from the page to the screen, the collection of unpublished screenplays preserved at the Biblioteca Luigi Chiarini in Rome has been consulted. Thirdly, we have the censorship proceedings about Italian and foreign films distributed in Italy – namely, the Italian Censorship Office's *Nulla Osta* (public-screening permissions, abbreviated to 'NO' in bibliographic references) preserved at the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali - Direzione Generale Cinema in Rome, and the Vatican film censorship office Centro Cattolico Cinematografico's ratings as published in *Segnalazioni cinematografiche*, a 1935-2010 biannual publication seeking to guide Italian exhibitors and moviegoers of Roman Catholic religion by providing aesthetic, moral and doctrinal judgements on newly-released features. Fourthly, the film-journal, film-magazine and trade-paper collections of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence, Biblioteca Renzo Renzi in Bologna and Bibliomediateca Mario Gromo in Turin have helped clarifying matters of film marketing and critical reception. Fifthly, the popularity and the economic success of vampire movies in Italy has been measured via their domestic box-office receipts, as calculated by Rondolino & Levi (1967), Rondolino (1975; 1976; 1977) and Baroni (1995; 1996; 1999). The exclusive focus on theatrical release is due to the fact that none of the vampire movies studied here was ever broadcast by Italian State Television during the 1954-1976 monopoly years, as at that time only very old films were televised in order not to compete with theatrical screenings (RAI, 1977; Corsi 2001).<sup>8</sup>

Industrial data not only offer invaluable insights into the economic dynamics of Italian vampire cinema, but also prove extremely useful to embed the various cinematic representations of vampires outlined via textual analysis in the Italian socio-cultural milieu **outlined via contextual analysis**. In fact, the study of ACS documents, screenplays and censorship files reveals how a figure that is alien to the Italian tradition, and potentially

controversial/transgressive on moral grounds, was appropriated and adapted to 1956-1975 Italy, as private and public financiers, producers, screenwriters, filmmakers and state and religious censors – each one with his/her own ideology and agenda – took on a creative, authorial role and, starting from the Hammer *Dracula* and other more or less successful foreign models, negotiated cost-competitive, highly-appealing-yet-morally-acceptable film goods suitable for release in the domestic market. Within this institutional, ‘enlarged authorship’ framework, meant to bypass the screenwriters’ and filmmakers’ resistance to ideological interpretations of their output, the absence of the audience perspective stands out as a glaring omission, especially because, ever since the 1960s, cultural studies have been insisting on the act of consuming/decoding a text as being as culturally meaningful as the act of producing/encoding it (Tudor, 1974; 1989; Fiske, 1989; 2010; Hall, 2009; Jenkins, 2013). Unfortunately, then-contemporary audiences of 1956-1975 Italian vampire cinema are largely inaccessible today, forty-plus years after the golden age of Italian genre cinema ended. Consequently, no accurate information about audience demographics, social class, ideology and taste can be found. At the same time, none of the then-contemporary public’s possible “dominant-hegemonic”, “negotiated”, or “oppositional” readings (Hall, 2009) of vampire cinema can be provided, except for a few articles written by 1950s, 1960s and 1970s Italian critics. However, while maintaining an almost exclusive focus on production, the research still manages to enact a feedback process of sorts, concerned with the penetration of cultural symbols in Italian people’s everyday lives and practices. It does so by comparing the cinematic vampire figures with coeval representations of vampires in the broader Italian media sphere, like those from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s publishing industry, which, as we shall see, were far more widely consumed in Italy than the vampire films themselves.

## **Structure**

The main body of the thesis is structured around four chapters. As a literature review, Chapter

2 summarises the current state of the ‘cinematic vampires’ field and points out the gaps in knowledge to be filled. In its first three subsections, the chapter reviews the principal themes in vampire studies mainly in relation to Murnau’s *Nosferatu*, Browning’s *Dracula* and its sequels, Fisher’s *Dracula*, its sequels and Hammer horrors featuring vampiric characters other than the Count – that is to say, what the Anglo-American academia considers the vampire cinema canon. Through the theoretical tools of psychoanalysis, Marxism and feminism, Chapter 2 deals with the psychosexual, political and socio-economic, and gender-related readings of the cinematic vampire figure that have been developed in Europe and the US after World War Two. Here, the vampire is typically seen as a reflection of Oedipal and pre-Oedipal anxieties, as involved in the dialectics of class and nationalism-tinged imperialistic struggle, as the uncanny return of the repressed/oppressed haunting Western bourgeoisie’s patriarchal order. Finally, the fourth subsection accounts for the increasing academic interest in world-cinema vampires and their cultural specificities, and highlights the shortcomings to be found in the small but ever-growing, Italian- and English-language body of literature about Italian horror cinema.

Chapter 3 describes the functioning of the post-war Italian film industry between the mid-1940s and the mid-1980s. The aim is to situate the corpus of thirty-five vampire films into the golden age of Italian genre cinema, i.e. the years of intensive genre film production that, boosted by Christian-Democrat regulations, American investments and European co-productions, went from the peplum boom of the late 1950s to the 1977 productive crisis that greatly diminished the yearly output of genre movies ‘made in Italy’. By outlining the national, international and transnational industrial context of Italian genre cinema – one in which a balance between the clashing economic and ideological positions of private companies, creative personnel and Italian-state bureaus often needed to be negotiated – Chapter 3 prepares the ground for an investigation into the cultural specificity of the 1956-1975 vampire movies that governmental institutions certified to be of Italian nationality. In

fact, while revealing the imported and derivative nature of Italian vampire cinema, thriving as it did in the aftermath of the Hammer *Dracula*'s worldwide success, industrial analysis shows how local factors such as distribution-fed production, time- and cost-saving shooting practices, pre- and post-shooting state censorship and tax-refunds on domestic box-office receipts made the Italian vampire rip-offs into 'variations on the theme' mixing foreign models with distinctively-national traits rather than slavish plagiarisms.

Chapter 4 studies Italian-made cinematic vampire narratives as struggles for gender domination that reflect the zeitgeist of post-war Italy, when a perceived decline in masculine authority due to the vicissitudes of World War Two, the hardships of reconstruction and the post-1958 neocapitalist consumerism went hand in hand with women's ever-increasing challenges to traditional gender roles. Chapter 4 is divided into two subsections. The former subsection nuances the portrait of Italian female vampires as villainous femmes fatales that has been sketched so far by horror scholars: as close readings of the films show, Italian vampire women aren't only power-hungry sexual predators that misogynistic narratives put to death as a punishment for attempting to subvert the patriarchal status quo, but also empathy-inducing characters torn between rebellion and hyper-identification with traditional values. The latter subsection ventures into the largely-unexplored territory of Italian male vampires and investigates how, within the above 'masculinity in crisis' framework, the male vampire acts as a champion of traditional virility seeking to reassure Italian men of their gender leadership. Here, Italian 'makeshift Draculas' are seen as sharing more than one similarity with patriarchal stereotypes like the irresistible Latin lover and the tyrannical *pater familias*.

Dedicated to the political and socio-economic implications of Italian vampire cinema, Chapter 5 is divided into two chronologically-defined subsections identifying Italian vampire figures with an enemy 'within' (a specific group of people within the nation-state's social body) and an enemy 'without' (scheming foreigners). The first subsection focuses on the vampire movies made in the 1959-1965 period, which coincided with the 1958-1963



‘economic miracle’ that turned vastly-backward, prevalently-agricultural Italy into a modern, industrial country. Taking Steno’s horror parody *Tempi duri per i vampiri* as its main case study, the subsection describes a parable of class struggle pointing to the need of renegotiating ancestral class identities in view of the dramatic socio-economic changes brought about by the ‘boom’. At the same time, a careful analysis of 1961-1964 vampire-themed pepla reveals them to be a re-enactment of the Nazi occupation of Italy in the last years of World War Two, possibly reflecting a preoccupation with the neofascist resurgence of the early 1960s. The second subsection, on the other hand, illustrates how 1970-1975 vampire films underline the failure of the 1968-1970 student and worker protests against the Italian status quo through the figure of the triumphant capitalist or ruling-class vampire – an apocalyptic vision heavily influenced by critical theorists of the counterculture like Herbert Marcuse.

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<sup>1</sup> Zaccaria's *La torre dei vampiri* is set in 1790s France and deals with "the former executioner of Paris" who, "after the fall of monarchy", takes refuge in the countryside and resorts to murder and false accusations to steal beautiful peasant Fornarina from her husband-to-be Raimondo (Bernardini & Martinelli, 1993b: 294-295). Roberti's *La vampira indiana* tells the story of a Native-American woman who, "in order to help her brothers, kills a wealthy landowner and has an innocent man condemned for the crime. But the daughter of the innocent man spies on the Indian woman" and, in the end, justice is made (Ibid.: 328). In Rossi Pianelli's *Il vampiro*, "a guy wants to marry a girl who is in love with a cousin. A murder is committed and the cousin is imprisoned on a false accusation. The culprit is punished and justice triumphs" (Bernardini & Martinelli, 1993d: 280-281). Finally, Bacchini's *La carezza del vampiro* has a young aristocrat saved from the clutches of a money-hungry crook by "colossal mulatto Maciste" (Martinelli, 1991b: 40). Here, as in the rest of the thesis, foreign-language quotations (including film dialogues) have been translated into English by Michael Guarneri.

<sup>2</sup> In most cases, the English title refers to English-dubbed editions that are radically different from the Italian-dubbed ones prepared for the Italian market and approved for domestic release by the Italian Censorship Office. Therefore, throughout this thesis, the English title is used with reference to Anglophone editions only.

<sup>3</sup> To avoid wordy phrasings, the noun 'Italy' and the adjective 'Italian' are henceforth used in relation to both the pre- and the post-Unification period (the Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed in 1861, and prior to this date 'Italy' was just a geographical entity).

<sup>4</sup> For an in-depth study of the critical debate about fantastic literature in Italy, and about the creation of the 'fantastico italiano' literary canon from Gianfranco Contini's 1946 French-language anthology *Italie magique: contes surréels modernes* to the present day, see Lazzarin et al. (2016).

<sup>5</sup> The Italian translator didn't work on the English original but on the French edition of 1920, *Dracula, l'homme de la nuit* (same title, same cover art, same misspelling of the author's name as 'Brahm' Stoker). For a detailed study of *Dracula's* first translations in Italian and other languages, see Berni (2016) and Bibbò (2017).

<sup>6</sup> The producers' reworking of the story led some 1957 reviewers to call the film a "giallo" (Anonymous, 1957d; Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, 1957), "a mix of the giallo and the macabre-terrifying genre" (Anonymous, 1957e), a filmic equivalent of "giallo books" (Anonymous, 1957b). Indeed, *I vampiri's* plot – revolving around a journalist investigating the involvement of an aristocrat family in the murder of some girls, drained of blood and thrown into the Seine – might have been inspired by the sensational, real-life 'Wilma Montesi giallo' (in April 1953 the 21-year-old daughter of a carpenter was found drowned on a beach near Rome, and rich and powerful people were accused of her death by muckraking reporters, until all the suspects were acquitted in May 1957).

<sup>7</sup> According to the personnel of the Italian Censorship Office's archive (interviewed in November 2016), some files relating to foreign films imported during Fascist *ventennio* might have been lost/destroyed in 1943-1945, so it's not certain that the above vampire classics were never imported. What's sure is that Murnau's *Nosferatu* started being screened in Italian cinema circles in the late 1940s (Anonymous, 1948), while Dreyer's *Vampyr* was very well known to Italian critics ever since the late 1930s (Viazzi, 1940; Casiraghi, 1942; Doglio, 1948; Campassi, 1949; Carancini, 1949; Lo Duca, 1949; Giani, 1951) and its screenplay – actually a movie transcript desumed from a French film print – was published in Italian in the late 1940s (Buzzi & Lattuada, 1948). Finally, it exists a 1936 promotional article launching the Italian edition of Browning's *Mark of the Vampire* under the title *Il segno del vampiro*: in the article, neither Bela Lugosi nor the words 'Dracula' and 'horror' are mentioned; rather, the selling points are the "dramatic qualities" of the picture, the action-packed murder-mystery plot and star Lionel Barrymore playing a cunning detective (Anonymous, 1936).

<sup>8</sup> Even if there had been no 'gentlemen's agreement' between TV executives and representatives of the film business, very few Italian vampire movies would have been broadcast during the monopoly years, due to 1950s Italian State Television's strict content guidelines (banning works dealing with "vice, dishonesty or crime" and extolling "hatred, violence, vengeance and brutality") (quoted in Forgacs, 1990: 113) and to law 161 of April 21<sup>st</sup> 1962 (banning from TV all those movies whose theatrical access had been forbidden to people under the age of eighteen by the Italian Censorship Office).

## CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

As explained in Chapter 1, this research studies thirty-five Italian vampire films dating from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, with the aim of identify the cultural specificity of the vampire metaphor within its then-contemporary national context of production and consumption. However, before exploring the cultural instrumentalities of vampire films from the golden age of Italian genre cinema, it's necessary to sum up the current state of the 'cinematic vampires' field and point out the gaps in knowledge to be filled. By reviewing the principal themes in vampire studies mainly in relation to what the Anglo-American academia considers the vampire cinema canon – normally understood as Murnau's *Nosferatu*, Browning's *Dracula*, its two sequels *Dracula's Daughter* and *Son of Dracula*, Fisher's *Dracula*, its sequels and Hammer horrors featuring vampiric characters other than the Count – Chapter 2 prepares the ground on which the reflectionist analysis of Italian genre cinema's vampires will develop throughout the rest of the thesis.

Chapter 2 is divided into four subsections: "Haemosexuality", "Sanguine economy, b(lo)ody politic", "Unlike angels, vampires have sex" and "Enter the Italian Dracula". The first three subsections constitute the literature review proper, and are devoted, respectively, to psychosexual readings, political and socio-economic readings, and gender-related readings of the vampire figure. "Haemosexuality" and "Sanguine economy, b(lo)ody politic" show at work the two main theoretical tools that have been used so far to make sense of the vampire figure, namely psychoanalysis and Marxism. Focusing on Freudian theories, "Haemosexuality" explores the sexual nature of bloodsucking and conceives of the vampiric revenant as an uncanny return of repressed sexual wishes. Given the centrality of incest and childhood fantasies in psychoanalysis, the vampire's bite is mainly related to inter-familial sexual strife, with castration anxiety expressing a dread of the father figure and a horror of the maternal body. Reviewing Marxist analyses of vampire fiction, "Sanguine economy, b(lo)ody

politic” posits the vampire’s bite as a form of socio-economic parasitism and political exploitation. Here, the vampire narrative is seen as a tale of class and imperialistic struggle in which a community must face the sexually-coded, socio-economic and political threat posed by a monstrous Other. A synthesis between Freudian thesis and Marxist antithesis, “Unlike angels, vampires have sex” deals with the combination of psychoanalysis and Marxism developed by feminists in the 1970s English-speaking academia. By pairing the notions of sexual repression and economic and socio-political oppression, the subsection examines male and female vampires in relation to the patriarchal structures of Western bourgeois society. Taken singularly, these three subsections follow the same template: they start with a review of vampire folklore and literature studies, and subsequently show how accounts of folklore and literary vampires have been appropriated and adapted by scholars seeking to analyse the very many appearances of bloodsucking characters in the medium cinema. Finally, the fourth subsection “Enter the Italian Dracula” identifies the major gap in the existing literature on vampire cinema and points out the specific areas of intervention of the present thesis.

### **Haemosexuality<sup>1</sup>**

The earliest traces of the vampire figure are to be found in folklore tales that were orally transmitted for centuries from one generation to the next, with each act of retelling inevitably transforming the supposedly-original narrative material. Therefore, it’s impossible to establish when, and under which form, vampires first entered European cultural history. Between 1672 and 1732 a particular type of folkloric vampire gained a sudden popularity thanks to government reports compiled in the wake of a series of epidemics in South-Eastern Europe. It was the “plump and ruddy” (Barber, 2010: 4) reanimated peasant preying on family members and fellow-villagers as well as on livestock: “zombie-like, thick-headed, dim witted” (Leatherdale, 2001: 52), “repulsive, smelly, poor” (Douglas, 1967: 36), the vampire of Slavic folklore definitely is a far cry from the tall, thin, pale, rich, elegant, urbane, sexually-

attractive, noble “Don Juan” (Pirie, 1977: 148; Twitchell, 1981: 75; Lenne, 1985: 99-100; Frayling, 1991a: 9) introduced in Polidori’s “The Vampyre” and later codified and made *de rigueur* by Universal’s ‘Valentino from beyond the grave’ Bela Lugosi and Hammer’s ‘tall, dark stranger’ Christopher Lee (Ursini & Silver, 1975; Tudor, 1989; King, 1991; Auerbach, 1995; Skal, 2004; Creed, 2005; Erb, 2007; Aquilina, 2015).

Eastern-European folklore started attracting scholarly attention at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when “learned essays on questions relating to superstition were by no means uncommon”, and vampire legends presented a special appeal to “those philosophers in Europe who were pledged to the idea of progress [and] enjoyed amassing evidence about what they called the ‘primitive’ and ‘dark’ areas” (Frayling, 1991a: 23). In this cultural climate, the first edition of Abbot Augustin Calmet’s 1746 *Dissertations sur les apparitions des anges, des démons et des esprits, et sur les revenants et vampires de Hongrie, de Bohême, de Moravie et de Silésie*, in which the actual existence of vampires isn’t entirely ruled out, became the main text to be commented upon for both sceptics and believers, and enjoyed a bestselling success across the continent (Dimic, 1984). Indeed, in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Europe the debate on folklore vampires was so heated that the highest ranks of the Catholic Church had to debunk the vampire superstition *ex cathedra*, blaming it on money-hungry priests speculating on common people’s credulity (Lambertini, 1960a; b; Davanzati, 2011). It was only in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that the focus of scholarly discourse shifted from whether or not vampires existed to their broader socio-cultural significance. This was partly due to the popularisation of psychoanalysis, a then-budding branch of psychology that reads the literal content of any form of expression as a coded manifestation of the troubling sexual secrets buried in the unconscious mind (Freud, 1957).

The first account of the vampire figure as a sexual symbol is to be found in a 1912 essay by British psychoanalyst Ernest Jones, which was later expanded and included in the book *On the Nightmare*, published in 1931, the release year of Browning’s *Dracula*. A pupil

of Freud's, Jones diligently applies to folklore tales the notions put forward by his teacher in the 1913 anthology *Totem and Taboo: Some Points of Agreement Between the Mental Lives of Savages and Neurotics* and in the 1919 essay "The Uncanny", conceiving of the vampire as an anxiety dream triggered by sexual issues.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, Jones attributes legends about dead people sucking the blood of the living to an unconscious sexual guilt on the part of the latter, "connected to infantile incestuous wishes that have been imperfectly overcome in the course of development" (1931: 103). Freudianism claims that any three-to-five-year-old child instinctively feels murderous jealousy towards the parent of the same sex and sexual urges towards the parent of the opposite sex, until the infant is taught to feel ashamed and guilty of such feelings and banishes them into the unconscious, where the individual knows none of this. However, the "noisily conscious" external prohibitions against parricide and incest don't abolish the instinctive desire, they merely repress it, so that the constantly-opposing forces of love/hate and desire/fear lead to a state of emotional ambivalence, a "psychical fixation" in which the subject "is constantly wishing to perform the act, and looks on it as his supreme enjoyment, but he must not perform it and detests it as well" (Freud, 1950b: 29-30). Hence, as the child grows up, a predatory, dreadful being such as the vampire may start haunting his/her dreams, symbolically showing how love "gives rise to fear [...] when it is guilty and repressed" (Jones, 1931: 105-106). In sum, to Jones, vampires represent the return of repressed wishes from the unconscious to the conscious mind, i.e. what Freud (2003: 132) terms "the uncanny", something "that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come into the open".

As for bloodsucking – the vampire's essential characteristic – Jones writes:

A nightly visit from a beautiful or frightful being, who first exhausts the sleeper with passionate embraces and then withdraws from him vital fluid: all this can point only to a natural and common process, namely to nocturnal emissions accompanied with dreams of [...] erotic nature. In the unconscious mind blood is commonly an equivalent for semen (1931: 119).

Bloodsucking is then connected to breastfeeding and the focus of Jones's discourse shifts from Oedipus complex to pre-Oedipal sexuality. According to Freud, human psychosexual development starts in the earliest infancy, with the oral stage: babies take "delight in suckling the breast and, following the arrival of teeth, attempting to eat it" (Leatherdale, 2001: 176), as to them loving and ingesting are one. This identification retains its sexual significance in adult life, as both suckling at the breast and sexual intercourse "involve the swelling of an organ, the emission of a precious white liquid, followed by a physical and mental sense of well-being in both participants" (Ibid.: 181). Thus, after making a distinction between love and hate motives (sucking stands for the former, biting for the latter), Jones defines vampirism as a form of regressive infantilism, with a hint of "oral-sadism" (1931: 120-121). These are the very same premises on which Marie Bonaparte bases her brief psychoanalysis of the female vampire, a work that probably counts as the first gender-attentive reading of the bloodsucking figure.

A patient and disciple of Freud's, in the early 1930s Bonaparte authored a psychoanalytic study of Edgar Allan Poe's literary output. In it, she briefly considers the sharp-toothed title-character of 1835 short story "Berenice" as a symptom of Poe's anxieties connected to mother-son incest and breastfeeding, with an inevitable corollary of repression, emotional ambivalence and sense of guilt. The new element here is the fear of castration, a Freudian concept absent from Jones's dissertation. Bonaparte writes:

Mouth and vagina are equated in the unconscious and, when [the male protagonist of Poe's tale] yields to the morbid impulse to draw Berenice's teeth, he yields both to the yearning for the mother's organ and to be revenged upon it [...]. His act is [...] a sort of retributive castration inflicted on the mother whom he loves, and yet hates, because obdurate to his sex-love for her in infancy. [...] This concept of the *vagina dentata* and its consequent menace is, however, also a displacement [...] of a factor with roots deep in infantile experience. We know that babes which, while toothless, are content to suck the breast, no sooner cut their first teeth than they [...] bite the same breast. [Later,] when the sense of what 'one should not do' has been instilled by ever severer [...] moral injunctions [...] the memory, or rather the phantasy, of biting the mother's breast must have become charged, in the unconscious, with past feelings of wickedness. And the child [...] begins to fear that the bites he wished to give his mother will be visited

on him (1971: 218-219).

The excerpt is interesting not only because it challenges Freud (1963), for whom castration is exclusively a father-son dynamic, but also because the ideas of the *vagina dentata* and the devouring woman would prove very influential in vampire studies later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both within the psychoanalytic field (see the discussion about the phallic Dracula in the present subsection) and in feminist studies dealing with the female vampire as an anti-patriarchal symbol (see the “Unlike angels, vampires have sex” subsection).

Jones’s and Bonaparte’s treatises established the three pillars of psychoanalytic readings of the vampire to come: 1) the vampire attack is a coded sexual act; 2) the attack stems from a process of “projection”, or “displacement”, through which “an individual’s psychological states are associated not with the self, but with an object in the outside world” (Hughes, 2009: 23); 3) implicitly, the vampire is the victim’s parent “invested with the imperfectly dissipated desires of Oedipality” (Ibid.: 24). Before examining the impact of psychoanalysis on vampire cinema studies, it’s crucial to note that Jones and Bonaparte mention none of the very many appearances of the vampire in popular literature, in spite of the fact that allusions to infantilism, incest, erotic dreams, emotional ambivalence and breastfeeding seem to abound in Le Fanu’s “Carmilla” and Stoker’s *Dracula* (Veeder, 1980; Auerbach, 1995; Punter, 1996b; Rickels, 1999). In *On the Nightmare* we only find references to studies of folklore or psychological dissertations, and occasional quotes from German and English Romantic poets. The same is true for Bonaparte, who chose as her subject Poe, an American writer of thrillers who entered the canon of European high culture on account of Charles Baudelaire’s admiration for him. However, what today strikes us as a strange silence was probably very natural at the time when Bonaparte and Jones were writing their treatises: just as Freud decided to divulge his theories through examples taken from the culturally-legitimate Greek mythology, his pupils chose to ignore mass literature, which bore the stigma



of low culture.<sup>3</sup> Such late-19<sup>th</sup>- and early-20<sup>th</sup>-century disdain for mass culture was to be disposed of by Maurice Richardson's 1959 essay "The Psychoanalysis of Ghost Stories".

Published in the journal *The Twentieth Century* some eighteen months after the London premiere of the Hammer *Dracula*, "The Psychoanalysis of Ghost Stories" is the first known attempt to apply the tools of psychoanalysis to Stoker's *Dracula*, and an immensely-popular one at that. Its passage "From a Freudian standpoint – and from no other does [Stoker's novel] really make any sense – it is seen as a kind of incestuous, necrophilous, oral-anal-sadistic all-in wrestling match" (Richardson, 1959: 427) is quoted in almost every scholarly book about vampires written ever since. Richardson's original contribution to the sexual understanding of the vampire consists in linking *Dracula* to Freud's 1913 essay "The Return of Totemism in Childhood", in which the beginnings of society as we know it are related to a bloody family drama starring "a violent and jealous father who keeps all the females for himself and drives away his sons as they grow up", until "[o]ne day the brothers [...] came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of the patriarchal horde" (Freud, 1950c: 141). Similarly, Richardson argues, the Transylvanian Count "is a father figure of huge potency" disposed of by a band of young Anglo-Saxons who, under the guidance of "the good father figure" Abraham Van Helsing, become ideal brothers in trying to protect fertile Englishwomen from 'Big Daddy' Dracula's appetites (1959: 427-428). Whilst it has been applied to most appearances of the vampire in literature and cinema (MacGillivray, 1972; Ursini & Silver, 1975; Gubern & Prat Carós, 1979; Astle, 1980; Twitchell, 1981; 1985; Stade, 1986), this reading isn't unchallenged in academia. The strongest criticism to Dracula's 'totemism' comes from Roth (1997: 415-420), who maintains that in the novel there's "a fantasy of matricide underlying the more obvious parricidal wishes", which results in a 'toothed vagina' scenario unconsciously spelling out "the conviction that the sexually desirable woman will annihilate if she is not first destroyed".

In any case, the legacy of "The Psychoanalysis of Ghost Stories" lies more in its

choice of subject matter (popular-culture artefact *Dracula*) and methodology (textual analysis informed by Freudianism) than in its actual conclusions. Indeed, since the early 1970s, countless literary scholars have been following Richardson in applying psychoanalytic theories to *Dracula*, reading the novel as an exploration of human psychosexual development from early childhood to adulthood through the oral, anal, phallic and genital phases (Bierman, 1972; 1998; Mighall, 1999; Mason, 2000; Leatherdale, 2001; Foster, 2002; Sellers, 2005) – a largely-unconscious piece of “quasi-pornography” (Bentley, 1988: 25) that circumvents Victorian repression by depicting “polymorph perverse tendencies” (Richardson, 1959: 427) in a coded way. The above investigations of Stoker’s Count as a “monster in the bedroom” (Bentley, 1988) not only offered cultural legitimacy to a previously-ridiculed work of Gothic mass literature (Frayling, 1996; 2011; Hughes, 2009); starting from the 1970s, they also stimulated academic studies of vampire movies, a cinematic subgenre that had until then been similarly affected by the prejudice that identifies the popular with low culture (Ursini & Silver, 1975; Pirie, 1977; Murphy, 1979).

The main themes in psychoanalysis-influenced vampire cinema studies are the penis (or lack thereof) and coming of age. Predating Roth’s (1997) conception of *Dracula* as a cryptic tale of matricide, Dadoun (1989) suggests that there actually is a female source of fear at the core of the various big-screen reworkings of Stoker’s novel. The scholar makes use of Freud’s (1961; 1963) idea that any boy believes that his mother has a penis until, during the phallic stage, he gets a glimpse of her genitals. After this sight, the boy becomes fully aware of the threat of castration posed to him by the ‘rival’ father and, to avoid castration anxiety, erects an imaginary substitute – a fetish – to make up for the mother’s unsettling lack of penis. Greatly downplaying the role of the father in castration anxieties, Dadoun states that the image evoked in the mind of the child by the female sexual organs is that of the pre-Oedipal mother, the gaping hole that threatens to absorb everything, “thereby putting the subject in touch with his own terror of fusion and formlessness”. To counter the unpleasant feelings

triggered by the all-devouring penisless mother, “a sexualised phallic object” is constructed, an imaginary totem in which “one may perhaps [recognise] a familiar figure of the horror film, Count Dracula” (1989: 41). To Dadoun, who takes Murnau’s, Browning’s and Fisher’s vampires as case studies, Dracula’s main characteristic as a phallus lies in his illusory nature. Since he stands in for something absent, the vampire is there but, at the same time, not actually there, as demonstrated by the bloodsucker’s failing to appear in mirrors, and by the fact that it takes a “true phallus (the vertical penis-stake)” to triumph over “the false one (Dracula lying horizontal and inert in the coffin, the maternal receptacle)” (Ibid.: 56-57). Moreover, the cinematic vampire quite literally resembles a “walking phallus”, as best exemplified by Murnau’s *Nosferatu*, in which the “pointedness” of Count Orlok’s ears, shoulders, knees, nails and incisors is highlighted by his stiff postures of both cadaveric and sexual “rigidity” (Ibid.: 54-55).

Expanding on the above, “the protruding tower” of Count Orlok’s castle in the Carpathians has been termed an objective correlative of the vampire’s phallic nature and, indeed, in the film’s epilogue Murnau uses “the image of the leveled tower as a synecdoche for the end of the vampire’s threat” (Waller, 1985: 288). Phallic subtexts have been traced in Hammer’s Dracula cycle as well. For instance, in *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* (Terence Fisher, 1966), when the young hero draws a sword to defend his wife from newly-resurrected Dracula, the monster seizes it and effortlessly “snaps it in front of him”, a “clear demonstration” of both “who wields the greater sexual power” and castration anxiety (Worland, 2014: 282). Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* and Dadoun’s insights are brought together in Berenstein’s (1995: 236-239) psychoanalytic reading of the Universal *Dracula*, which explores the bloodsucker as “a familial icon” without trying to resolve “the fluctuation of parental roles” that characterises Lugosi’s character. The Count simultaneously and contradictorily occupies an Oedipal “paternal position” (separating Doctor Seward from his daughter Mina and taking Seward’s place as “the man who bids her do his will”) and a pre-

Oedipal “maternal position” (both Dracula and the pre-Oedipal mother are mysterious, engulfing figures associated with death and absence yet able to give birth).

Underlying the cinematic phallic Dracula is “a representation of woman as a being who frightens and repels because she is castrated” (Freud, 1963: 213). Inspired by the Freudian reflections about the uncanniness of the female body, Creed (1993) provides a different take on the vampire’s ‘monstrous femininity’, one that emphasises the castrating over the castrated aspect, i.e. the sharp teeth over the engulfing gap. Describing the cinematic bloodsucker as a terrifying “womb-gullet”, a *vagina dentata* à la Bonaparte rather than a frightening but ultimately reassuring phallic fetish, the scholar further connects the fear of castration to maternal bleeding and menstrual taboo, “the sight of woman’s blood confirm[ing] man’s fear of being eaten and castrated by the female genitals” (Ibid.: 111-112). Hence – drawing on the ideas of purity (Douglas, 2002) and abjection (Kristeva, 1982), and on psychoanalytic studies of the novel *Dracula* (Bentley, 1988; Griffin, 1988), Creed calls the Count a “menstrual monster” (1993: 62-66), even though the novel’s uncanny mother breastfeeding Mina from a blood-spurting wound and making her “unclean” for men to “touch” (Stoker, 1980: 254) gets a far less explicit screen treatment, at least until *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1992).<sup>4</sup>

Over the course of human psychosexual development, the vampire impersonates all the characters in psychoanalysis’ family drama: the oral-sadistic child, the terrible father and the nurturing/devouring, castrated/castrating “nightmère” (Williams, 1995: 96). A new character enters this polymorph play and the family drama turns into a sex-education scare tale when, after a latency stage supposedly characterised by the repression of incest desires and the absence of sexual thoughts, puberty marks the entrance of the child into genital sexuality. According to a study of “the unaffected and artless return of the vampire back into popular culture [that we see] most clearly in film” (Twitchell, 1985: 140), the bloodsucker becomes an ambivalent figure of fascination and dread for teenagers facing coming of age,

one that “plays out the ‘do’s’ and ‘don’t’s’ of adolescent sexuality explaining the soon-to-be-reproductive audience exactly how to avoid horrible mistakes” (Ibid.: 65). Since “the primary concern of early adolescence is the transition from individual and isolated sexuality to pairing and reproductive sexuality” (Ibid.: 68), the cinematic Dracula first of all functions as a naughty, oversexed teenager out for “carnal fun without responsibility” (Leatherdale, 2001: 170), “a big bad boy [who] must be punished and suffer” for his taking pleasure in ways other than the ‘normal’ intercourse bent on procreation: masturbation, the orality of pre-Oedipality, oral sex proper (Twitchell, 1985: 135). Secondly, and somewhat contradictorily, male and female vampires embody mature, experienced deflowerers who, in spite of being strangely desirable for the victims and secretly envied by human competitors, remain “horribly wrong” partners in that they represent an excessive, ‘abnormal’ sexual appetite (Ibid.: 136-137). Far from *démodé*, the psychoanalytic approach to vampire narratives as tales of teenage sexual awakening first theorised by Evans (1973; 1975) underlies the most recent attempts to account for the worldwide popularity of the *Twilight* novel and film sagas (2005-2008 and 2008-2012 respectively) (Bliss, 2010; Schwartzmann, 2010; Wolf, 2010; Hawes, 2010; Dowdle, 2010; Anastasiu, 2011; Mukherjea, 2011; Sutton & Benschhoff, 2012; Rana, 2014).

### **Sanguine economy, b(lo)ody politic**

The value of psychoanalysis as a tool to interpret human behaviour in general and cultural artefacts in particular has been repeatedly questioned over the decades. Since the inception of psychoanalytic studies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, doubts have been raised over the scientific validity of Freudian theories. Quotations such as “[T]he importance of incest in neurosis is naturally received with universal scepticism [...]. [...] We are driven to believe that this rejection is principally a product of the distaste which human beings feel for their early incestuous wishes, now overtaken by repression” (Freud, 1950a: 17) are an easy target for disbelievers, in that the dogma of repression seemingly makes psychoanalytic discourse a

matter of faith and a self-fulfilling prophecy. A second criticism levelled at Freudianism concerns its being a totalising discipline that relates a wide variety of phenomena – from neuroses to religion, morals, social organisation and art – to the eternal, universally-shared fears and desires of infantile sexuality, thus implying that the zeitgeist of a given historical period is useless to cultural researchers (Jameson, 2002). After a boom of psychoanalytic readings of popular horror fiction between the 1970s and the 1990s (the vampire-related part of which has been summarised in the previous subsection), criticism of Freudianism took hold with particular vehemence in horror film studies (Tudor, 1989; 2002; Carrol, 1990; 2004; Halberstam, 1995; Cohen, 1996; Freeland, 1996; Hutchings, 2004; Urbano, 2004; Weinstock, 2012; Dumas, 2014). As a reaction to psychoanalysis’ dogmatism, circularity, ultimate indemonstrability and lack of interest in specific socio-historical contexts, materialist approaches became more and more widespread among vampire scholars seeking to make their research less “paradoxically [...] timeless and anachronistic” (Hughes, 2009: 46).

It’s hardly surprising that Karl Marx’s historical materialism emerged as a key hermeneutical tool in vampire studies, as the passage between the oral prehistory and the official literary history of the vampire figure can be considered an instance of class struggle, with the peasant vampire of folklore making way for the bloodsucking noblemen created in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century by bourgeois writers such as Polidori, Le Fanu and Stoker. Even more crucially, if everyday speech has been connecting social parasitism and political/religious tyranny to bloodsucking at least since the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Dimic, 1984; Wilson, 1985; Frayling, 1991a; Davenport-Hines, 1998; Anonymous, 2000), Marx’s 1867 critique of political economy *Das Kapital* contains the most iconic indictment of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Western-European bourgeois ‘new order’ as vampiric. An avid reader of German shudder-novels and French horror tales in his free time, Marx resorts to the vampire metaphor throughout Volume 1 Chapter 10 of *Das Kapital* to describe capitalist Europe’s factory system, in which human beings are sucked dry of their lifeblood during back-breaking working shifts for the sake of

profit-making.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, as pointed out by Frayling (1991a), the comparison Marx's *Das Kapital* draws between the *corvées* imposed to peasants by Wallachian Boyard Vlad Tepes and the exhausting working day in modern factories might just be the first reference to Dracula in Western literature, predating Stoker of three decades.

The German philosopher's gothicisation of life under capitalism inspired several 20<sup>th</sup>-century readings of vampire fiction dealing with issues of class, political and national identity. Whilst often touching upon haemosexuality, Marxist literary theory typically eschews the psychosexual to tackle the political and socio-economic implications of bloodsucking: Polidori's, Le Fanu's and Stoker's vampires aren't familial icons, but predatory aristocrats exploiting their social subordinates (Senf, 1988; Punter, 1996a; b). Then, drawing on the relationship between the Gothic novel and the late-18<sup>th</sup>-century political turmoil first established by Sade (1988), in the execution of Carmilla and Dracula at the hand of bureaucrats and businessmen, one might read the "social supersession" of the aristocratic class that for centuries disposed of the flesh and blood of its subjects (serfdom, *droit du seigneur*, war) by virtue of its own blood right (dynasty, lineage, race and tradition) (Punter, 1996b: 17-18). Indeed, with the Industrial and the French revolution consolidating the economic and political power of the bourgeoisie (literally 'the town-dwellers' making money with trade and crafts, as opposed to nobility's unproductive 'castle-dwellers'), in the real world of 19<sup>th</sup>-century Western Europe there was less and less living space for people who act like "virtual corpse[s] during business hours" (Valdez Moses, 1997: 80). However, while the parasitic aristocracy of the Middle Ages was slowly but inexorably extinguishing, the middle class responsible for its demise struggled to fill the gap at the top of the social pyramid: "the King-Vampire" (Stoker, 1980: 329) is dead, long live the bourgeois vampire described in Franco Moretti's influential 1983 essay "The Dialectic of Fear".

According to Moretti, in spite of his title, Boyard Dracula rejects any form "conspicuous consumption", behaving like a "saver, an ascetic, an upholder of the Protestant

ethic". Bent on "accumulation" and therefore "impelled towards [...] an unlimited expansion of his domain", the King-Vampire is a "true monopolist", a solitary despot who tries everything in his power "to subjugate *the whole of society*", including "the last vestiges of the liberal era and [...] all forms of economic independence" (2005: 90-92). In the sociological design of the novel, such a recklessly-egoistical nobleman is naturally opposed by the representatives of the late-Victorian English bourgeoisie: Jonathan Harker & Co. – who have been building their fortune on the ideas of individual liberty and free trade – can't allow "the tyranny of feudal monopoly" to return into the modern world (Ibid.: 93). Yet, Moretti's reading is far more sophisticated than the "feudalism's death warmed up" (Baldick, 1987: 148) thesis. After rehearsing the Marxist bias against mass culture as an instrument of mystification that the economically- and culturally-hegemonic bourgeoisie uses to distort reality and divert people's attention from the injustices and contradictions of the capitalist system (Gramsci, 1975a; b; c; Adorno & Horkheimer, 2008; Adorno, 2011), Moretti proceeds to dismantle the dichotomy between feudal monopoly and bourgeois business ethics, "the great ideological lie of Victorian capitalism" (2005: 94). Monopoly isn't the past of competition, the Middle Ages of the Boyard rule: at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, competition itself can beget monopoly, as demonstrated by the fact that, under the guidance of Van Helsing, Harker & Co. form a trust to thrust Dracula out of business. Ergo, no matter how hard their false consciousness denies it, the Victorian bourgeois are capitalists seeking total domination just like the King-Vampire. As in the psychoanalytic readings of the vampire from the previous subsection, the Count here functions as a monstrous, external projection of his victims' innermost fears and desires: "This is symbolized by [bourgeois Harker] who [...] finds himself by chance in front of a mirror [with Boyard Dracula]. [Harker] looks at it and jumps: in the mirror is a reflection of his [own] face [only]" (Ibid.: 102-103).

As the tradition of historical materialism was imported from studies of English Gothic literature into studies of horror cinema, Murnau's *Nosferatu* and several other vampire movies



have been called a re-enactment of feudalism's death (Tudor, 1974; Crane, 1994). In particular, the lesbian or bisexual vampires from films like *Dracula's Daughter*, *Les lèvres rouges / Daughters of Darkness* (Harry Kümel, 1971) and Hammer's "Carmilla"-inspired *The Vampire Lovers* (Roy Ward Baker, 1970) and *Lust for a Vampire* (Jimmy Sangster, 1971) have been seen as the quintessential portrait of a rich, sterile, decadent aristocracy whose days are numbered (Case, 1991; Zimmerman, 2004). Yet, it's Moretti's idea of a bourgeois bloodsucker that tends to dominate academic discourses about cinematic vampires.

Since the terror tales and shudder-novels of German Romanticism crawl with "demonic or uncanny bourgeois (an advocate, a privy councillor, a professor of physics, a seller of spectacles)" playing "a baleful and destructive part" (Praver, 1980: 71), it's not surprising to find a correspondence between petty-bourgeois clerk Hutter and villain Count Orlok in Murnau's *Nosferatu*:

*Nosferatu* is the enactment of a deal, a bargain, an exchange [...]. A crucial scene makes this explicit: as the Count is about to sign the papers, [Hutter] accidentally (?) displays/exhibits the medallion which bears the image of Nina. *Nosferatu* grasps it, and it is this image which is exchanged between the men: it substitutes itself for the money that would otherwise seal the deal. In a business based on real-estate (like the film industry), *Nosferatu* acquires a view (of Nina: the house serves him as [...] an observation post) and [Hutter] gains social status (for having a Count as a client). If *Nosferatu* is [Hutter's] double, insofar as Nina acquires the lover that [Hutter] seems reluctant to be, the 'undeadness' of desire is shown to have social consequences – *Nosferatu* brings the plague, itself seen as the reverse-side of trade (Elsaesser, 1989: 36-37).

Therefore, the fact that "the same port that is the basis of Bremen's economy [...] allows *Nosferatu* and the plague easy access to the city" isn't at all ironic, as Waller (1985: 188) suggests, but a perfectly logical consequence of the Count's crypto-identity as bourgeois, free-trade-supporting, "totalizing monster" (Moretti, 2005: 84).

Such scenario is reprised in the remake of Murnau's silent classic, *Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht / Nosferatu the Vampyre* (Werner Herzog, 1979), which Waller (1985) views as a portrait of the rampant bourgeoisie. Real-estate agent Jonathan Harker leaves his "so well-

ordered, so neat and beautiful, so bourgeois” 19<sup>th</sup>-century hometown (Ibid.: 200, quoting Herzog), gets rid of his wife Lucy by offering her to Count Dracula and becomes a new kind of vampire, a ‘child of the night’ who can survive in the daylight. Contrary to his predecessor, a melancholic nobleman who only seeks darkness and solitude to ruminate his thoughts, undead Jonathan means business and, in the film’s final shot, sets off on horseback to conquer the world (“I have much to do... now!” are his last words). The same goes for the other triumphant bourgeois bloodsucker of the movie, Jonathan’s employer Renfield, who is last seen departing northward with an army of plague-carrying rats.

Uncanny affinities between the aristocratic villain and his bourgeois supposed nemesis have been noted in the Universal *Dracula* as well. Firstly, the Eastern-European Count enters British society with great ease, mingles effortlessly with the opera-loving bourgeoisie and moves around upper-class neighbourhoods undetected if “formally dressed”, as demonstrated by the scene in which the vampire, on his way to biting Lucy, passes next to an unsuspecting, deferential policeman (Ibid.: 87-88). As a matter of fact, the “mark of difference” of Lugosi’s Dracula lies in his foreign accent rather than being “inscribed in the body” (Gergely, 2012: 15), which initially makes him “a tolerated, if not welcome, guest” among London socialites (Ibid.: 96). Secondly, if Count Dracula relocates to England as part of a plan for world domination, the similarly weirdly-accented, middle-class foreigner Doctor Van Helsing is just as overbearing, autocratic and power-hungry, reciting lines like: “I must be master here, or I can do nothing!” (Auerbach, 1995; Bronfen, 2006; Erb, 2007).

The Marxist will to expose structures of false consciousness in works of popular culture also informs Hutchings’s (2003) analysis of vampirism and class dynamics in the Hammer *Dracula*. According to the scholar, Lee’s Dracula is no aristocratic relic from the backward, feudal East. Rather, he’s an up-to-date British bourgeois living in a cosy, country-house-like castle with his books and dominated bride, and quenching his thirst with the blood of his social inferiors. Theorised as a middle-class parable, the Hammer *Dracula* revolves

around a battle for power that taps into the film's national context of production and consumption. In fact, for Hutchings, *Dracula* draws a clear-cut distinction between "Carnivore" and "Herbivore" bourgeoisie that mirrors two different attitudes in 1950s England's middle class: to the former group belong the Count and Peter Cushing's well-spoken, authoritative, assertive, hyper-energetic Van Helsing, two "members of the upper- and middle-classes who believe that if God had not wished them to prey on all smaller and weaker creatures without scruple he would have not made them as they are"; to the latter group belong vampire-hunter *dilettante* Jonathan Harker and the Holmwood family, "the radical middle-classes – the [...] gentle ruminants [...] who look out from the lush pastures which are their natural station in life with eyes full of sorrow for less fortunate creatures, guiltily conscious of their advantages, though not usually ceasing to eat the grass" (Ibid.: 58-59, quoting a 1963 article by Michael Frayn). The class equilibrium is disrupted when Harker stakes Dracula's bride, forcing him to seek a replacement: bent on revenge, the "arch-Carnivore" (Ibid.: 59) gets rid of the foolish young man and starts preying on the women of the 'herbivore' bourgeoisie. Enter Van Helsing who, with his knowledge, dynamism and ruthlessness, battles the vampire to establish a new balance of power, eventually settling the score with Dracula on behalf of "consistently powerless" Arthur Holmwood (Ibid.: 76). Elements of bourgeois class warfare indeed punctuate most of the films in Hammer's Dracula cycle, from *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* (where the 'carnivorous' King-Vampire is resurrected by the blood of a helpless 'herbivore' Londoner, and disposed of by a commanding Van-Helsing surrogate with the assistance of a submissive bourgeois disciple) to *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* (Alan Gibson, 1973) (where the Count is a 1970s businessman who schemes for world domination in league/competition with the British *haute bourgeoisie*) (Pirie, 1977; 2008; Hudson, 2017).

Influenced by Moretti's (2005) capitalist monsterology and, possibly, by Hatlen's (1988) parallel between Stoker's villain and the late-Victorian English working class on the

basis of a common constant carnal appetite, Roth (2004) further explores issues of class struggle in the Hammer *Dracula*. This time, however, the focus is on the late-1950s British proletariat rather than the bourgeoisie:

Lee's portrayal of a virile vampire represents the power of sexual promiscuity in the late 1950s to subvert the traditional British class structure. Although *Dracula* is an aristocrat, the probable audience composition for [the Hammer *Dracula*] was more working-class than aristocracy, and audience members may have identified him as the hero. [...] His desire to get out of life what he thinks is rightfully his, all the while frustrated by the established order, is not a marked departure from the desires of the Angry Young Men [, the] proletarian critics of British class tradition and sexual mores [named after] the successful 1956 stage play, *Look Back in Anger* (Ibid.: 261-262).

Not coincidentally, from its inception in the late 1950s, Hammer horror has been dubbed "the real British Free Cinema", due to "its power of suggestion, its frenzy, its invitation to the voyage into the land of black wonders and imaginary eroticism" (Torok, 1961b: 49).

Moving from class struggle to issues of national and political identity, Stoker's *Dracula* has attracted scholarly attention for its year of publication: 1897 wasn't only the year in which Freud commenced his psychoanalytic researches, but also "bourgeois monarch" (Hatlen, 1988: 121) Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee Year, "taken by Lenin to mark the apogee of imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism" (Frayling, 1991a: 82). The decades between 1870 and 1900 were in fact a period of extraordinary colonial expansion for the British Empire in Africa and Asia (Daly, 1999). However, in spite of the fact that most of these colonies were retained until after World War Two, *Dracula* and other works of late-Victorian fiction such as H.G. Wells's 1897 bloodthirsty-alien fantasy *The War of the Worlds* have been thoroughly searched for evidence that the self-confidence of the rampant British bourgeoisie started to crumble long before the actual demise of the empire (Brantlinger, 1988). Specifically, Stoker's *Dracula* has been said to express "the anxiety of reverse colonization", i.e. *fin-de-siècle* England's fear of losing the role of 'master race' and becoming enslaved by a stronger, foreign power (Arata, 1997, expanding on the ideas of

“reverse imperialism” and “interracial sexual competition” mentioned in Senf, 1997 and Stevenson, 1988, respectively). Within a cultural framework heavily influenced by Charles Darwin’s notion of natural selection, the transnational King-Vampire – a beast whose virility, sexual prowess and fertility are symbolised by his “ability to produce literally endless numbers of offspring” (Arata, 1997: 467) – becomes a warrior bent on “*racial* conquest and domination” (Ibid.: 464) through the exchange of bodily fluids, thereby participating to the construction of a British national identity by personifying a scapegoat, an Otherness to be hated and expelled (Hatlen, 1988; Spencer, 1992).

A “blank screen onto which [...] dreams and fears [...] are imaginatively and sometimes surreptitiously projected” (Valdez Moses, 1997: 69), Stoker’s Dracula has been seen as embodying all kinds of foreign threats to late-19<sup>th</sup>-century London, from Jews (Auerbach, 1982; Zanger, 1991; Halberstam, 1995; Malchow, 1996; Davison, 2004) to Britain’s imperial rivals like Russia, Germany, France, the US and the disintegrating Ottoman Empire (Garnett, 1990; Dingley, 1991; Coundouriotis, 2000; Warren, 2002; Moretti, 2005; Skelton, 2005; Tron, 2005; Gibson, 2006; Kostova, 2007; Cain, 2009). The branch of Marxist scholarship informally known as the Irish Dracula has been the most assiduous in the attempt to ground the literary villain into class and imperialist dynamics in late-Victorian England. Here, particular attention is given to Stoker’s own experience as a “metrocolonial subject”, i.e. an Anglo-Irish Protestant with Celtic-Irish background who was born in Catholic Ireland, served as a petty clerk in Dublin Castle (the bulwark of England’s control over colony Ireland from the 12<sup>th</sup> century until the 1920s), then moved to *caput mundi* London to pursue a career as an assistant to English actor Henry Irving (Valente, 2002: 3-5). Irish-Dracula scholars have thus conceived of the Count as a figure characterised by the unsolvable ambiguity between the colonised and the coloniser position: a member of the landowning Protestant Anglo-Irish minority exploiting the Catholic peasant masses on behalf of the British Empire (Eagleton, 1995; Deane, 1998); a nationalist liberator of Catholic Ireland on an incognito mission in

England (Valdez Moses, 1997; Valente, 2002); an “ethnic outsider” who, like petty bourgeois Stoker, moves from the periphery to the centre of the empire and tries to fit in with “the wider ‘society of London’” (Valente, 2002: 38-39); a Catholic Irish *lumpenproletariat* arriving on English shores in a “coffin ship” to contaminate the purity of the English racial stock (Ibid.: 59-61).<sup>6</sup>

The conception of Dracula as a polluting “foreign body” (Hughes, 1997: 132) – a biological and political bogeyman sexually penetrating the human body and infiltrating a country’s body politic – is the master narrative of most vampire movies as well. Murnau’s Count Orlok leaves his crumbling Carpathian castle and brings to the happy and prosperous 1838 Bremen a plague that drains the life out of young people overnight: evidently, in *Nosferatu* as in late-Victorian Gothic, we are dealing with an “invasion narrative” in which sexual and political aspects intertwine (Hutchings, 2004: 45). Originally conceived as an indictment of World-War-One bloodbaths (Grau, 2001), from the late 1940s onwards *Nosferatu* has been read not only as an instance of shell shock cinema shedding light on the trauma of 1914-1918 mass killings (Kaes, 2009), but also as symptom of a deeper set of political and socio-economic anxieties afflicting the former German Empire as it was forcibly turned into the Weimar Republic after Germany’s defeat in the Great War. Count Orlok has been called a “tyrant” foreshadowing Nazi dictatorship (Kracauer, 1971: 77-79); a metaphor for a phantomatic threat to the German bourgeoisie’s racial stock and finances by Eastern Jews (Monaco, 1976; Koebner, 2003; Roberts, 2008; Kaes, 2009); an allusion to “the destructive impact of [post-war] inflation on various ‘middle class’ strata” (Huaco, 1965: 49) and to the possibility of a Communist revolution in the country (Kracauer, 1971; Roth, 1979). Ironically, a film so imbued with the Weimar zeitgeist was bashed by Marxist critics upon its 1922 Berlin premiere. In spite of the fact that, in its original publicity material, *Nosferatu* boasted to be “not just fun, not something to be taken lightly” (quoted in Skal, 2004: 88), the German leftist *intelligentsia* deemed the film guilty of escapism, “wrapping the worker [...] in

a supernatural fog through which he can no longer see concrete reality” (Ibid.: 88-89, quoting Marxist newspaper *Leipziger Volkszeitung*).

Whether *Nosferatu* is escapist or *engagé* remains open to debate. What will be made apparent in the rest of this subsection is that, from Kracauer (1971) onwards, xenophobia and political paranoia are the cornerstones of most analyses of cinematic vampire narratives. Contrary to the vampires of Slavic folklore, who “never ventured beyond their birthplace” (Auerbach, 1995: 16), Dracula and his offspring repeatedly go West, i.e. “where power is” (Ibid.: 6), to subjugate the self-proclaimed Free World in times of crisis. While possible connections between the inception of Hammer’s sci-fi and horror cycles and the disintegration of British Empire that started in the mid-1950s remain largely unexplored (Hutchings, 1993; Pirie, 2008; Hudson, 2017), the link between the vampire’s invasion of London depicted in Browning’s *Dracula* and the political and socio-economic situation in post-1929 US has been variously commented upon. For example, Lugosi’s Count has been called a “sanguinary capitalist” (Skal, 2001: 159), “an unconscious allegory of encroaching, paralyzing force, not unlike [Great] Depression itself” (Skal, 2004: 194-195). Other scholars connect Dracula to an authoritarian threat to US democracy in times of social unrest brought about by the stock-market crash (Bronfen, 2006) – a rather vaguely defined “monarch” bogeyman (Auerbach, 1995: 101, 112) or “tyrant figure” (Durnat, 1967: 94-95) that resonates with the American isolationism and distrust towards Europe that started in the aftermath of World War One and reached its peak with the Immigration Act of 1924 (Phillips, 2005; Erb, 2007; Gergely, 2012; Hudson, 2017). In particular, the Star-of-David-shaped medallion sported by Lugosi in *Dracula* has been interpreted as an instance of anti-Semitic stereotyping and scapegoating (Halberstam, 1995).

After the domestic box-office success of the Universal *Dracula* in the early 1930s, the King-Vampire would periodically return on American screens and in popular culture in general, especially during the last two years of World War Two and in the Cold-War climate

of the 1950s. In the former case, horror movies like *Son of Dracula* and *The Return of the Vampire* (Lew Landers, 1943), set in then-contemporary Southern US and London respectively, are considered anti-German propaganda films giving shape to the fear of Nazi infiltration within Anglo-American democratic institutions (Rasmussen, 1998; Abbott, 2007). In the latter case, *The Return of Dracula* (Paul Landres, 1958) – featuring a solitary Eastern-European subversive infiltrated by stealth into the healthiest Western society of all, suburban, middle-class America – has become the main example of the fear of ‘the red under the bed’ in vampire cinema (Murphy, 1979; Hendershot, 2001). Since the above World-War-Two and Cold-War vampire films share a “fascination with mind control”, a continuity has been noted between the Lugosi archetype and the vampiric invaders of the 1940s and 1950s, because they all are “defined less by [their] bloodsucking and more by [their] hypnotic control over others” (Hantke, 2004: 267).

No matter how blatant the foreign-invasion allegories, increasing energy is being devoted to problematise the traditional association of the transnational vampire with contagion and defilement of the youth of the nation-state, or at least to integrate such readings with possible hints to a subterranean critique of the dominant ideology. *The Return of Dracula’s* Dracula, for instance, has been recently

read as not only representing the threat of [...] Communism as he infiltrates this small Californian town [...] and begins to transform its citizens from within. [...] Dracula is himself escaping communist Romania, and it is the Romanian authorities that pursue him in association with American immigration officers and the church. Furthermore, when Rachel, a teenage girl clearly drawn to the rather exotic and artistic stranger, encourages him to [...] integrate with the community, he responds by asking her if the ‘price of your acceptance is for me to conform?’ In this manner, the film uses the vampire narrative to offer a complicated representation of 1950s America in which the threat of Communism is mirrored by the need to assimilate [into the American way of life]. (Abbott, 2007: 71-72)

**Unlike angels, vampires have sex<sup>7</sup>**

Each of the two previous subsections adopted a distinct approach. “Haemosexuality” made



use of a “transhistorical” approach “based firmly on the tenets of psychoanalysis” and seeking to access the unconscious, i.e. the “universalising dimension” of man’s “deep-seated and immutable psychological fears and anxieties” (Hutchings, 2003: 14-16), whereas “Sanguine economy, b(lo)ody politic” employed a “historicist” approach attempting to place a text “within the socio-historical context of its creation and initial reception” (Ibid.: 12). The present subsection combines the two approaches to account for the gender-related readings of vampire cinema that have been put forward from the 1970s onwards in the wake of the rise of feminism in the academia.

As for gender issues, vampire cinema scholars once again base their work on the conceptual framework laid out by studies of vampire literature, namely on a series of essays from the 1970s and 1980s (Demetrakopoulos, 1977; Senf, 1982; Johnson, 1984; Byers, 1988; Griffin, 1988; Roth, 1997; Craft, 1997) examining the novel *Dracula* as a reflection of the bourgeois gender politics in Victorian England, where “women were often second-class citizens who could neither vote, enter a University, nor choose a profession and who (if they were married) could not own property” (Senf, 1988: 84-85). Adopting – and sometimes freely adapting – psychoanalytic concepts such as repression, oneiric projection, orality, castration anxiety and the phallus, these socially- and politically-engaged analyses seek to expose the set of “relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women” (Heidi Hartmann, quoted in Kosofsky Sedgwick, 1993: 3). Maintaining that the universally-shared gynophobia and matricidal wishes outlined by Bonaparte (1971) and Dadoun (1989) turn into misogyny and gynocide under Victorian patriarchy, the essays draw a parallel between the three female vampires in castle Dracula, vampirised Lucy and Mina on the one hand, and the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century upper- and middle-class New Woman on the other. Their mouths furnished with phallic teeth, *Dracula*’s female vampires are seen as *vaginae dentatae* ready to unman Harker & Co., i.e. as fictional monstrous doubles of the *fin-de-siècle*

proto-feminist, the “assertive female” (Hughes, 2009: 130) struggling to achieve self-fulfilment in the private sphere of sexual relationships and in the public sphere of work through the “subversion of conventional Victorian gender codes” that divide humanity into active, “penetrative” males and passive, “receptive” females (Craft, 1997: 444-445).

Once located within its late-Victorian zeitgeist – one in which self-assertive “manly women” (Eltis, 2002: 452) were often lumped together with anarchists, Socialists, ‘decadent’ artists, homosexuals and ethnic minorities as conspirators bent on the subversion of the status quo (Dowling, 1979; Ledger, 1995) – *Dracula* is generally deemed an all-out patriarchal piece of literature. With the partial exception of Demetrakopoulos (1977), Johnson (1984), Brennan (1992), Case (1993) and Eltis (2002), commentators regard the novel as an attempt to appease men’s castration anxieties triggered by female emancipation, and to ‘keep women in their place’, by disposing of “wanton” (Stoker, 1980: 190) Lucy and Dracula’s daughters-brides via phallic staking, and by substituting the typewriter on hardworking Mina’s lap with a child (Gubern & Prat Carós, 1979; Astle, 1980; Senf, 1982; Dijkstra, 1986; Dworkin, 1987; Cranny-Francis, 1988; Bronfen, 1992; Spear, 1993; Craft, 1997; Pope, 1999; Rickels, 1999; Moretti, 2005). Then, if *Dracula* is seen through a feminist perspective mixing psychoanalysis and Marxism, the main question is that of who is the actual villain of the narrative – the Count or Van Helsing’s brotherly band. In fact, from an anti-patriarchal perspective, Dracula acts as “catalyst” whose bite empowers women to fulfil repressed sexual desires and rebel against their male oppressors (Auerbach, 1982: 24; Griffin, 1988: 141; Aguirre, 1990: 139; Garnett, 1990: 31-32; Boone, 1993: 77; Punter, 1996b: 22; Craft, 1997: 452; Dupeyron-Lafay, 2007: 67), while from a patriarchal stance, the vampire “represents a threat to the bourgeois family, monogamy, sexual restraint [that] must be ‘sterilised’” (Stott, 1992: 66-67). Whatever the case, all the above readings share the same premise:

The women [...] represent potential for transformation; they are the place through which threats to cultural stability can enter. The metaphor of entry is a sexual one, and

thus [...] ‘Woman’ must remain soul not body, a transcendent value not open to transformation – women must not become sexual. For the characters in the novel, sexual desire leads to and is mingled with horror (Boone, 1993: 83).

The same ambivalence towards the role of the monster in the narrative, and the same dread of sexuality, underlie Robin Wood’s 1979 essay “An Introduction to the American Horror Film”, a pioneering text in gender studies of horror cinema. Coeval with the rise of feminism in academia, and predating Roth’s (2004) analysis of the proletarian roots and appeal of Lee’s *Dracula*, the essay conflates Marxism and Freudianism for sexually- and politically-revolutionary purposes:

From Marx we derive our awareness of the dominant ideology [of bourgeois capitalism] as an insidious all-pervasive force capable of concealment behind the most protean disguises, and the necessity of exposing its operation [...]. It is psychoanalytic theory that has provided [...] the most effective means of examining the ways in which that ideology is transmitted and perpetuated, centrally through the institutionalization of the patriarchal nuclear family (Wood, 1985: 196).

According to Wood, who borrows the concept of “surplus repression” from Marcuse (2015: 35), patriarchy curbs human beings’ creative energies and revolutionary potential, and makes people “into monogamous heterosexual bourgeois patriarchal capitalists” through a relentless work of sexual repression that starts in the earliest infancy – a repression of excessive sexual energy, bisexuality, homosexuality, infant, teenage and female sexuality that leads to a sexual division of labour between active, self-assertive men and passive, submissive women, who copulate within the bound of marriage for reproductive purposes. In addition to the repression of alternative forms of sexuality, anything that white Western bourgeois civilization considers “Other” to itself (the proletariat, other cultures, ethnic minorities within the culture, alternative ideologies or political systems) is dealt with by direct physical, economic, legal and ideological oppression (Wood, 1985: 197-199). Therefore, if in horror fiction “the Monster” embodies a return of the repressed/oppressed threatening “the dominant social norms”, the vampire might be seen not merely as a scapegoat “to be hated and disowned”, but

also as a liberator fulfilling, albeit temporarily, “our nightmare wish to smash the norms that oppress us and which our moral conditioning teaches us to revere” (Ibid.: 205). For the scholar, this is shown most blatantly by Murnau’s *Nosferatu*, where, as in the novel *Dracula*, the “ultimate horror” lies in “the possibility of the arousal of female sexuality” (Wood, 1996: 373): Count Orlok incarnates a “terrible under-nature, precariously repressed, [that] awaits its chance to surge up and take over”, a “demonic alternative husband” whose bestial, non-normative oral sexuality “[Nina] must accept with ambiguous desire and revulsion” (Wood, 1979a: 45-46), eventually ending up dying of pleasure “so that patriarchy is left empty, without the ratification of the adoring woman to venerate the brave, strong, pure men” (Wood, 1996: 375).<sup>8</sup>

Writing in the early 1970s, Pirie (2008: 97-98) makes much of the same of the horror of the Hammer *Dracula*:

Dracula can be seen as the great submerged force of Victorian libido breaking out to punish the repressive society which had imprisoned it; one of the more appalling things that Dracula does to the matronly women of his Victorian enemies (in the novel as in [Fisher’s] film) is to make them sensual.

As a matter of fact, Fisher himself describes his *Dracula* as a morality play about “the attraction of the power of evil”, with the vampire embodying a sexual tempter preying upon married women’s “sexual frustrations” and dissatisfaction with their human husbands (quoted in Frayling, 2011: 124-125). Thus, Christopher Frank Carandini Lee – “this very charming, handsome man” (Fisher, quoted in Eyles, Adkinson & Fry, 1973: 14), “the tallest actor in the country and [...] not entirely British in appearance” (Lee, quoted in Frayling, 2011: 126) – proves to be the perfect choice to portray a ‘tall, dark stranger’ by whom “women were eager to be nipped” (Hammer’s executive producer Michael Carreras, quoted in Frayling, 2011: 126), the “irresistible host who is on the point of turning the cosy Victorian world upside down by transforming its women into ravening sexual animals” (Pirie, 2008: 100). In other

words, just like Stoker's novel, the Hammer film thematises female sexuality as a threat to social order from within, with demon lover Dracula catalysing women's desire to break free from the home (Waller, 1985) and the die-hard, all-too-strict Victorian patriarchal dichotomy between Madonna and Magdalen, i.e. between the angelic, spiritual, disembodied *femina domestica* who must 'suffer and be still' during reproduction-bent intercourse, and the devilish, corporeal, animalistic *femina sensualis* who actively pursues sexual pleasure (Vicinus, 1973; Trudgill, 1976; Auerbach, 1982; Griffin, 1988; Weissmann, 1988; Hurley, 1996). However, Fisher's rigid Manichaeism and "vividly moralistic attitude towards sex" (Pirie, 2008: 67) don't allow for the kind of sardonic ending brought to the screen by Murnau in *Nosferatu*: if the Hammer *Dracula* is a "struggle" between men "for the body of [...] Lucy and [...] Mina" (Hutchings, 2003: 66), "marriage guidance counsellor" Van Helsing (Frayling, 2011: 131), "the rationalist, the moralist who is trying to break an unholy pleasure" (Fisher, 2000: 75), does manage to safely return Mina to the open arms of bourgeois patriarchy.

Whilst reserving a very different treatment to its leading lady, the Hammer *Dracula* sequel *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* is said to share its predecessor's horror at, and **patriarchal** stance on, female sexuality:

Mina Holmwood [...] is transformed by the Count's activities from matronly plainness to rabid sensuality, but she manages to overcome the latter and finally [...] come to terms with her repressed desires. On the other hand, Helen [...] in *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* is too stiff and prudish to be able to withstand the eruption of libidinal energy which Dracula initiates, and her writhing body has to be held down and staked so that her soul can be liberated (Pirie, 2008: 68).

From the 1970s onwards, the scene depicting the staking of vampire Helen has become a crucial moment in feminist discussions of vampire cinema. Typically seen as a "gang-rape" (Praver, 1980: 257; Waller, 1985: 125; Auerbach, 1995: 129) akin to the 'surgery' performed on undead Lucy by Stoker's Crew of Light, over the years Helen's death has been understood as the quintessential image of patriarchal oppression, "the licensed torture of a woman"

(Auerbach, 1995: 129). Yet, as Hutchings remarks, recent “moralistic-reactionary” accounts of Hammer’s horror cinema “tend to forget that Hammer horror was not generally perceived as moralistic when it first appeared, and that the Hammer films themselves are in important respects more complex and ambivalent than they are sometimes made out to be” (2003: 96). In the much deplored scene of the staking of Helen, for example, “the image that should speak to us of the conquest of institutionalized good has a latent subversive content: it shows a roomful of males overpowering and symbolically violating a struggling, screaming female”, prompting the crucial question of “which is the real monster” (Prawer, 1980: 258). Moreover, if we consider Fisher’s Count as “an emanation of the anger, pride, and sexuality that lie dormant in the women themselves”, both *Dracula* and *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* might be read as “a dream of female self-possession” offering brief yet powerful “glimpses of exhilarated women”: *Dracula* “provide[s] an image of disobedience, showing us two women opening windows beyond the family and, in the guise of vampire victims, surging into themselves” (Auerbach, 1995: 124-125), while its sequel foregrounds “vampire Helen [...] as intelligent as the mortal, but [...] no longer prim and fearful”. Indeed, once ‘sexually liberated’ by Dracula’s bite and endowed with a new “powerful body”, she tells her brother-in-law’s wife Diana: “Come sister! You don’t need [your husband] Charles!” (Ibid.: 128).

The above readings of Fisher’s *Dracula* and *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* perfectly illustrate the idea that, as far as gender issues are concerned, the horror genre maintains a “dual relationship with society at large: to destroy the status quo on the one hand, to confirm it on the other” (Berenstein, 1996: 9). Browning’s *Dracula* is another key example of this duality: representing – as Stoker’s novel and Hammer’s *Dracula* cycle do – the patriarchal male’s fear of women becoming voracious sexual predators out of control, the film allows for the ‘conservative pleasure’ of the staking of the foreign sexual Other and consequent re-establishment of order only after the ‘subversive pleasure’ of the “entrée into illicit sexuality” has been fulfilled (Ibid.: 89). The latter is codified by horror star Lugosi himself as a

specifically-female pleasure:

According to Lugosi, women search for monstrous love and a means of escape from their everyday lives. They also hope for the brutal demise of mortal men. [...] Lugosi [...] describe[s] the vampire story as a tale of female transformation, a narrative of well-behaved women who fall under the spell of hypnotic creatures, respond with a good dose of aggression toward [the] mortal men [they supposedly love], and exhibit a remarkable degree of sexual allure (Ibid.: 89-90).

Although the exclusive focus on female pleasure is disputable (after all, John Harker does find vampirised Mina attractive, telling her how “wonderful” she looks “so... like a changed girl”), in Browning’s *Dracula* as in classical Hollywood horror in general, there seems to be a “sympathetic identification” – possibly a secret, subversive alliance – between the monster and the female, because patriarchal ideology codes them both as figures of “sexual difference” from the ‘normal’ male, “biological freak[s] with impossible and threatening appetites” (Williams, 1984: 87-88). To borrow a term from the literary *Dracula* criticism, Lugosi’s Count indeed acts as a catalyst for the transformation of shadow-heroine Lucy and heroine Mina. The former, a romantic young woman who doesn’t like ‘normal’ men like John Harker, ends up “feeding off, rather than feeding, small children”, enacting “a nightmare repudiation of woman’s primary role, that of the mother” (Dingley, 1991: 21). The latter, “one of those bewildered little girls who go around pale, hollow-eyed and anguished, wondering about things” (actress Helen Chandler, quoted in Skal, 2004: 179), becomes sexually active and far more lively after “Dracula’s authorising kiss” (Craft, 1997: 452), and enjoys some ‘abnormal’ oral sex before Van Helsing, “an excellent scientist, with Vatican connections [...], emblematic of the two chief patriarchal and dominant institutions of Western culture” (Demetrakopoulos, 1977: 104), eventually brings her back to her lawful husband-to-be as church bells ring.

Following a trend in literary *Dracula* studies that purports to show the very many ways in which the self-proclaimed forces of Good reproduce the vampiric villain’s violently-

possessive behaviour towards women (Byers, 1988; Tropp, 1990; Boone, 1993; Spear, 1993; Craft, 1997; Zanger, 1997; Punter, 2007; McKee, 2002; Prescott & Giorgio, 2005), some vampire cinema scholars have cast doubts on the idea that Lugosi's and Lee's Draculas are "a deconstruction of masculinity via masculinity" (Creed, 2005: 39), i.e. male catalysts that open up a possibility for the emancipation of repressed/oppressed females. In these readings, the King-Vampire isn't a liberator, but a mirror held up to patriarch bourgeois who treat "the female as a form of erotic currency constantly in transmission between one male and another" (Hughes, 2000: 106), depriving women of any agency. For example Freeland (2000: 143), after duly noting that transgressive and violent eroticism links the vampire's monstrosity to rebellion against the patriarchal institutions of religion, science, law and the nuclear family, asks: "Does [Dracula] simply take women from capitalist patriarchy back to feudal patriarchy, back into medieval and 'Eastern' harem?". The Universal Dracula's trip to England seems in fact to be motivated more by his desire to acquire another bride for his Transylvanian seraglio than by any concrete plan of world domination (Waller, 1985).

As for Hammer horror, Auerbach adds a healthy dose of scepticism to her own 'emancipated' reading of the Dracula figure from *Dracula: Prince of Darkness*, when she writes that vampire Helen's line "Come sister! You don't need Charles!" unleashes

the fury of humans and vampires alike: Dracula enters, snarling, blocking [Helen] access to Diana; Charles runs in and flings [Helen] to the floor, then escapes with Diana. [...] The forces of darkness and light converge against the vampire who told the woman that she didn't need her man (1995: 128).

With regard to the 1958 *Dracula*, Hutchings sees the film as tapping into Britain's anxieties over the mid-1950s consumerist ideology that, by foregrounding the woman as "the manager of an increased domestic consumption" and an essential money-earner "to sustain the consumption boom", strips "the male worker of his privileged status as head of the family and sole breadwinner" and condemns females to the impossible task of reconciling the often-



contradictory roles of (house)wife/sexual partner/mother/worker (1993: 55-56, quoting John Hill). Hence, the substantial identity of Dracula and Arthur Holmwood as monogamous bourgeois patriarchs who want their brides to obey orders and stay in the home, mute and disciplined (Hutchings, 2003). The identity of Lee's Dracula as just another patriarch seems to be confirmed by later films in Hammer's Dracula cycle such as *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave* (Freddie Francis, 1968), *Taste the Blood of Dracula* (Peter Sasdy, 1970) and *Dracula A.D. 1972* (Alan Gibson, 1972), in which the King-Vampire exploits young people's rebelliousness against traditional authority (relatives, police, the Church) in order to enslave them.<sup>9</sup> *Taste the Blood of Dracula*, in particular, has been taken as the ultimate example of a 'Totem and Taboo' scenario in which patriarchy is overthrown only to be immediately restored under another name: in the film, the

vision of the Victorian-Edwardian family is focused on an overbearing father secretly indulging his sexual aberrations while restraining his children's natural desires. The Dracula figure is subsumed into this scheme as a catalyst [...] who leads the children to patricide and sexual fulfilment with him as their master (Ursini & Silver, 1975: 129).

Whilst the debate over **the gender politics** of Universal and Hammer horror remains open-ended, the correlation between patriarchy and vampirism has been imported into studies of 21<sup>st</sup>-century vampire fiction as well, with feminist analyses of the love story between passive teenager Bella Swan and vampire 'control freak' Edward Cullen from the *Twilight* book and film sagas dominating academic discourse (Mann, 2009; McClimans & Wisnewski, 2009; Jeffers, 2010; Bliss, 2010; Schwartzman, 2010; Wolf, 2010; Hawes, 2010; Dowdle, 2010; Anastasiu, 2011; Mukherjea, 2011; Donnelly, 2011; Averill, 2011; Sutton & Benschhoff, 2012; Rana, 2014). As for classical Hollywood cinema's vampires and patriarchal ideology, what is certain is that, after the commercial success of Browning's *Dracula*, more than a decade must pass for Universal to change its winning plot premise, if not the "moralistic-reactionary" (Hutchings, 2003: 96) flavour of its finales. Rather than the usual battle among

powerful men for the possession of women who appear to “have no self-control nor will” (Tudor, 1989: 174), *Son of Dracula* shows a strong-willed woman plotting for the possession of weak, clueless men, thus bridging the gap between the 1910s and 1920s money-hungry vamp and actual female bloodsuckers:

*Son of Dracula* is the first film in which [the heroine] is no pallid example of Victorian repression, awakened to new sensual and spiritual experiences by a free-wheeling vampire. [Female protagonist Kay] is an intelligent woman unbound by conventional thought and mores even before [Dracula’s son] arrives on the scene (Rasmussen, 1998: 199).

In the end, order is re-established, and the subversive female duly punished (burnt as a witch) by a band of All-American men guided by a foreign scientist. Yet this four-minute happy ending hardly makes up for the previous seventy-five minutes, in which Kay seduces an all-too-gullible Dracula Jr. into giving her immortality and killing her old father so that she can inherit the family estate. Not to mention the fact that, once Dracula Jr. can be of no further use, vampire Kay successfully manipulates her childhood sweetheart to dispose of the Count.

A basic pattern of vampire narratives thus emerges: “When the community is attacked from outside [...] the external danger fosters solidarity within. When it is attacked from within by wanton individuals, they can be punished and the structure publicly reaffirmed” (Douglas, 2002: 173). Within this framework borrowed from anthropology, the present subsection has shown how feminist-influenced studies of vampire cinema turn the brotherly band from Freud’s *Totem and Taboo* into a homosocial band of bourgeois men bent on the sexual, social and political oppression of women, whom the horror film is said to portray as “abject being[s]” as part of an “ideological project [...] designed to perpetuate the belief that woman’s monstrous nature is inextricably bound up with her difference as man’s sexual other” (Creed, 1993: 83).<sup>10</sup>

Echoing studies of Le Fanu’s “Carmilla” (Veeder, 1980; Senf, 1988; Gelder, 1994; Auerbach, 1995; Botting, 1996; Davenport-Hines, 1998) – a novella in which a ‘queer’ female

vampire is destroyed for awakening ‘abnormal’ sexual feelings in a teenage girl who is being educated by her Victorian bourgeois father “only for [the] social and sexual function” of wife and mother (Senf, 1988: 51) – vampire cinema scholars have identified another threat to heteronormative patriarchy in lesbian or bisexual vampires such as Luna from *Mark of the Vampire*, Countess Zaleska from *Dracula’s Daughter*, Carmilla Karnstein from Hammer films *The Vampire Lovers* and *Lust for a Vampire*, Countess Bathory from *Les lèvres rouges*, Miriam Blaylock from *The Hunger* (Tony Scott, 1983), and other female vampires from little-known works like *Blood of Dracula* (Herbert L. Strock, 1957), *The Velvet Vampire* (Stephanie Rothman, 1971), *La novia ensangrentada / The Blood Spattered Bride* (Vicente Aranda, 1972) and *Vampyres* (José Ramón Larraz, 1974) (Gubern & Prat Carós, 1979; Tudor, 1989; Weiss, 1992; Creed, 1993; Krzywinska, 1995; Berenstein, 1996; Benshoff, 1997; Hanson, 1999; Russell, 1999; Zimmerman, 2004; Sweney, 2006; Weinstock, 2012; Craig, 2013; Cooper, 2014; Williamson, 2014).<sup>11</sup> Although a subject matter related more to queer studies than to gender studies proper, cinematic lesbian vampires are briefly considered here because they provide a striking parallel to the above discussion about the battle of the sexes in Universal’s and Hammer’s *Dracula* cycles. Feminist analyses of cinematic lesbian vampires are in fact characterised by the very same oscillation between **an anti-patriarchal and a patriarchal stance**. As perfectly summarised in a study of *Les lèvres rouges*, if the “lesbian vampire [of the 1970s] can be used to express a fundamental male fear that woman-bonding will exclude men and threaten male supremacy” in a decade that saw “the beginnings of an international feminist movement” (Zimmerman, 2004: 74-75), the heterosexual core of the lesbian vampire film remains unchanged:

lesbianism must be presented as an aberration. This is the function of the lesbian interlude in a pornographic film: the male viewer, excited by the promise of stepping in to separate two women and thus prove his superior prowess, is able to affirm both his sexual potency and his masculine superiority at the same time. When the lesbian is also a vampire, he has an added explanation for the attraction one woman might have for another. It is not he who is inadequate; he is competing with supernatural powers

[that must be destroyed] (Ibid.: 78).

### **Enter the Italian Dracula**

As made clear in the above subsections, Anglophone scholars interested in vampire figures have mainly studied Stoker's novel *Dracula* and its big-screen reworkings by Universal and Hammer. This is only natural, as these American and British vampire films have been enjoying a never-ending popularity ever since their premiere, thanks to numerous theatrical reruns, TV broadcasts and home-video releases. The exception that confirms the rule is Murnau's *Nosferatu*. Although little seen in its original form until recent times because of copyright issues raised by Stoker's widow in the mid-1920s (Skal, 2004), *Nosferatu* managed to avoid scholarly oblivion by virtue of its being analysed in Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler*, the pioneering 1947 book theorising movies as a reflection of the zeitgeist of a given country (see Chapter 1). Other reasons for *Nosferatu*'s popularity in the academia include its being considered the first vampire film ever made, and its association with the then-aesthetically-groundbreaking-and-hugely-influential, and now-critically-acclaimed, German Expressionist Cinema of the early 1920s.<sup>12</sup> The gap in Anglo-American studies of vampire cinema is therefore easy to identify: *Nosferatu* aside, there is a lack of scholarly consideration for non-American and/or non-British national declinations of the vampire metaphor.

Given that the worldwide box-office success of the Hammer *Dracula* triggered a vampire cinema production frenzy all over the globe throughout the 1960s and 1970s, with an estimated total of around 400 vampire movies coming from England, US, Mexico, Italy, France, Spain, West Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, South and South-East Asia (Ursini & Silver, 1975; Pirie, 1977; Murphy, 1979; Flynn, 1992; Browning & Picart, 2010) – most of which were originally released in theatres or broadcast on TV in English-speaking countries (Heffernan, 2004; Syder & Tierney, 2005; Hudson, 2014) and currently enjoy a wide availability on DVD and online – the vast neglect towards world-cinema vampires and their

cultural specificities on the part of Anglophone researchers is somewhat puzzling. Yet, as demonstrated for instance by Beugnet's (2007) essay about the intersections between France, its former colonies, Asia and Eastern Europe in contemporary vampire-themed French arthouse films, and by studies of commercial vampire movies from Sweden, Spain, Mexico, Russia, Turkey, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Pakistan, Bollywood, Nollywood, Tanzania, Hong Kong, South Korea and Japan (Tombs, 1997; Uhde & Uhde, 2003; Tumbocon, 2003; Hock-Soon Ng, 2009; Moreland & Pervez, 2009; Hudson, 2009; 2014; 2017; Stein, 2009; Schlegel, 2009; Stein & Browning, 2009; Gelder, 2012; Weinstock, 2012; Hutchings, 2014; Woodham, 2014; Abbott, 2016; Ajuria Ibarra, 2018; Aldana Reyes, 2018; Böhme, 2018; Syed, 2018), the cinematic vampires' Anglocentrism is being repeatedly put into question lately, and 'children of the night' from all over the world are increasingly becoming a matter of scholarly interest.

As for the 'Italian Dracula' (to adapt the nickname of the branch of Marxist scholarship investigating novel *Dracula's* Irishness), in English- and French-language journalism and academic literature about vampire cinema or horror cinema in general, Italian vampire films are mentioned only in passing, with the focus of attention being almost entirely on plot synopses and aesthetic appreciations of Riccardo Freda's and Mario Bava's 1956-1966 ventures into the Gothic (Hoveyda, 1961; Torok, 1961a; Villeneuve, 1962; Caen, 1962b; c; 1963; Romer, 1963; 1964; Eisenschitz, 1964; Doremieux, 1965; Perrot, 1965; Thirard, 1966; Douglas, 1967; Durgnat, 1967; Clarens, 1968; Gifford, 1969; Huss, 1972; Ursini & Silver, 1975; Pirie, 1977; Murphy, 1979; Prawer, 1980; Milne, 1981; Martinet, 1984; Lenne, 1985; Hogan, 1986; Newman, 1986a; b; c; d; Tudor, 1989; Flynn, 1992; Tohill & Tombs, 1995; Piselli & Morrocchi, 1996; 2005; McCallum, 1998, Erickson, 2000; Wells, 2000; Howarth, 2002; Del Valle, 2003; Lucas, 2007; Browning & Picart, 2010; Paul, 2010; Hughes, 2011; Koven, 2014; Worland, 2014). No reflectionist reading of the films is ever attempted in the above texts, although Italian Gothic horrors' often lurid subject matters and explicit depiction

of violence – especially, but not exclusively, against women – never go unnoticed.

It's only very recently that Italian horrors from the late 1950s to the 2000s (vampiric or otherwise) have started to be investigated in depth through the theoretical tools of psychoanalysis, Marxism and feminism. Naturally, psychoanalytic readings have discarded the cultural specificities of Italian horror to focus on supposedly-universal sexual anxieties (McDonagh, 1991; Jenks, 1992; Krzywinska, 1995; Reich, 2001; MacCormack, 2004; Mendik, 2015), while the more historicist-oriented readings have sought to study the genre as an industrial and cultural phenomenon relating to its coeval context of production and consumption. The latter approach, “largely [due to] the growing influence of Cultural Studies in academia” (Olney, 2013: 5), is best exemplified by Stefano Baschiera and Russ Hunter's 2016 edited collection *Italian Horror Cinema*, and by the homonymous 2017 issue of *Journal of Italian Cinema & Media Studies* – not to mention some essays about Italian horror included in journals, edited collections and monographs devoted to broader topics (Hunter, 2000; 2004; Günsberg, 2005; Landy, 2008; O'Brien, 2008; de Ville, 2010; Bini, 2011a; Goodall, 2012; Hunter, 2014; Church, 2015; Rigby, 2016; Vitali, 2016). However, even when historicist approaches have been employed, the influence of psychoanalysis via feminism has been dominant. For instance, other than occasional and all-too-vague references to Italian males' anxieties over the female emancipation triggered by the World-War-Two defeat and the late-1950s and early-1960s consumer capitalism, Günsberg's (2005) and Bini's (2011a) studies of Italian horror fail to clearly and strongly connect the films' unruly, phallic villainesses to the political and socio-economic context of post-war Italy. In sum, as yet there is no systematic, historically-grounded, English-language exploration of Italian vampires. This is precisely where the present thesis seeks to intervene with relation to the 1956-1975 period.

The above gap in knowledge doesn't concern the Anglophone academia only. In spite of the fact that Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler* became an instant cult book among Italian cinema circles (Pandolfi, 1949; Doglio, 1949; 1950) and long maintained its popularity and

authority (Laura, 1965; Peruzzi, 1972), Italian film critics and scholars have also been neglecting the reflectionist potential of “home-grown horror” (Anonymous, 1960c) figures. Emblematically, a 1957 review semi-seriously suggesting the suitability of Freda’s *I vampiri* to undergo a Kracauerian analysis (Anonymous, 1957a) remained unheeded for decades, as the Italian *intelligentsia* of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s – in accordance with the rationalist mindset outlined in Chapter 1 – focused on the heritage of neorealism and generally snubbed the horror genre (Di Chiara, 2009; Noto, 2016) or, at best, simplistically labelled all fantastic narratives as a form of regressive sadomasochism (Servadio, 1959; Mazzini Rizzo, 1961) and a cathartic working through of Cold-War-era fears of impending atomic disaster (Fruttero, 1960; De’ Rossignoli, 1961; Miotto, 1961; Eco, 1965; Batini, 1968). In particular, Italian Gothic horrors were dismissed by the then-contemporary Italian film press as “the feeble echoes of a catacombal, romantic decadentism that never took root in our country” (Anonymous, 1957a), **degraded cultural subproducts trying to cash in on successful foreign prototypes** (Fink, 1960; 1966; Zanotto, 1961; Brega, 1963). One left-wing critic even went as far as calling Freda’s *Caltiki il mostro immortale* and the horror-themed **“film ‘magliari’”** (**‘counterfeit-foreign films’**) that followed a “monster” growing “cancer-like” within the national film industry, threatening Italian cinema’s “economic-organisational autonomy” and “cultural autonomy” (Pirro, 1965: 38-39).

Although oblivious to highbrow issues of cultural politics and value, the makers of such critically-despised films agreed with the press on the foreignness, i.e. the imported and derivative nature, of Italian horrors. This is clearly shown by Freda’s anecdote from Chapter 1, and by a 1970s interview in which Bava states that, **before the late-1950s release of the Hammer *Dracula***, he “didn’t even know vampires existed. [...] Here [in Italy] we have the sun that chases everything away” (quoted in Pezzotta, 2013: 7). The latter quote is particularly significant, because it highlights one of the bulwarks behind the 1960s Italian *intelligentsia*’s dismissal and ridiculing of Italian-made Gothic horrors – the incompatibility between the

sunny atmosphere of the *bel paese* and horror stories such as vampire narratives. For instance, in the preventive-censorship report on the screenplay of Roger Vadim's "Carmilla"-inspired *Il sangue e la rosa*, state bureaucrats wrote that "the nebulous character" of the plot is more fitting to "a Nordic saga" than to "a story set in the sunny Italian climate" (ACS 3236-256, 1959), which echoes not only the Leopardi-Manzoni-Croce-influenced, pre-1950s reviews of fantastic films quoted in Chapter 1, but also Pirro (1965: 39) ("In the Italian landscape [...] it's impossible to imagine a truculent vampire story"), Anonymous (1969: 107) ("Can you imagine a story of horror and vampires set in Milan or Palermo? You can? Well, congratulations, you have a very good imagination") and many other texts identifying Northern Europe as the ancestral homeland of, and the ideal stage for, horror narratives (Fruttero, 1960; Batini, 1968).

Consequently, in their Italian-language monographs surveying the vampire myth in Europe and around the world, both Volta (1964) and Agazzi (1979) almost completely overlook the bloodsuckers of Italian genre cinema. Volta (1964) simply includes in the iconographic apparatus film stills from *I vampiri* and *Il sangue e la rosa*, without any further comment, while Agazzi (1979) very briefly mentions Paul Morrissey's *Dracula cerca sangue di vergine e... morì di sete!!!* in a filmographic appendix mostly consisting of Anglo-American movies. A detailed list of vampire films updated to 1961, including Italian efforts such as *I vampiri*, Steno's *Tempi duri per i vampiri*, Renato Polselli's *L'amante del vampiro*, Bava's *La maschera del demonio* and Giacomo Gentilomo's *Maciste contro il vampiro*, appears in De' Rossignoli (1961), a study of vampire lore, literature and cinema published at the height of the 'vampire craze' triggered by the Hammer *Dracula* in the Italian media sphere of the late 1950s and early 1960s (see Chapter 3). However, the author doesn't make much of the above films other than listing titles and providing often-incorrect plot summaries.

Only in recent times, after a long battle for the cultural legitimacy of genre films initiated by 1970s Italian cinephiles (Giacci, 1973; Lippi & Codelli, 1976; Mora, 1978),



vampires and the other monsters of Italian cinema began to attract scholarly attention in their native country, spawning essays in magazines and academic journals (e.g., Della Casa, 1990; 1997; Garofalo, 1997; Giusti, 1997; Pezzotta, 1997; 2014; Gomarasca, Pulici, Stellino et al., 2002; Gomarasca, Pulici et al., 2004; Fassone et al., 2009; Bisoni, 2014; Mariani & Venturini, 2014; Moccagatta, 2014), a comprehensive retrospective at the 2014 Festival Internazionale del Film di Roma, three Italian-language monographs (Di Chiara, 2009; Curti, 2011; Venturini, 2014), an annotated filmography in Italian (Della Casa & Giusti, 2014, expanding on Della Casa, 1990; 1997; 2000; 2001b) and two in English (Curti, 2015; 2017b, based on Curti, 2011).<sup>13</sup> A review of these texts is provided in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, where the industrial context and the gender, political and socio-economic implications of Italian vampire movies are examined in depth. What is crucial to note here is that, with very few exceptions, the existing literature concerns itself with vampire figures featured in horror movies, and devotes most of its attention to the female vampire-witches of the 1956-1966 Gothic horrors. Therefore, in its strive to provide a comprehensive portrait of Italian vampires and articulate the diverse, often-contradictory ideas they incarnated during the golden age of Italian genre cinema, the present thesis broadens the research field not only in terms of gender within Gothic horror productions, but also in terms of movie genre and year of production, taking into account Italian bloodsuckers of both sexes from the horror parodies of the ‘boom’ and ‘austerity’ years, from the 1960s pepla, and from the 1970s countercultural horror and erotic horror films.

### **Concluding remarks**

In this chapter, the current state of the ‘cinematic vampires’ field has been summarised by reviewing the principal themes in vampire studies according to the three main theoretical tools that have been used so far to make sense of vampire figures: psychoanalysis, Marxism and feminism. Borrowing insights mostly from studies of vampire folklore and literature,

from the 1970s onwards vampire cinema scholars have tended to see bloodsucking figures:

- as the uncanny (literally ‘unfamiliar-made-familiar’) return of the repressed sexual wishes of infancy and childhood. Here, as explained in the psychoanalysis-focused “Haemosexuality” subsection, the vampire is a universal symbol, and symptom, of human anxieties related to inter-familial sexual strife, expressing a dread of the father figure (in the Oedipal readings of the ‘Totem and Taboo’ kind) and a horror of the maternal body (in the pre-Oedipal readings centred around the ‘toothed vagina’ scenario).
- as bogeymen in invasion narratives concerned with the dialectics of class and nationalism-tinged imperialistic struggle. Here, as explained in the Marxism-focused “Sanguine economy, b(lo)ody politic” subsection, the vampire embodies a monstrous, polluting Other who uses sex to subjugate the members of a given community, be it a social class within the nation-state’s social body or a whole nation-state.
- as involved in the struggle for gender definition and domination within the framework of the Western bourgeoisie’s patriarchal order. Here, as explained in the feminism-focused “Unlike angels, vampires have sex” subchapter, which combines the psychoanalytic notion of sexual repression with Marxist insights about socio-political oppression, vampire narratives seem to maintain an ambiguous relationship with the patriarchal status quo, enforcing masculine domination over females while at the same time offering glimpses of strong, self-sufficient, aggressive femininity.

Since most of the above psychoanalytic, Marxist and feminist analyses of vampire cinema focus on Anglo-American movies, from the Universal *Dracula* of 1931 to the 2008-2012 *Twilight* film saga, this thesis seeks to provide an original contribution to knowledge by taking as its subject the cultural specificity of 1956-1975 Italian vampire cinema, with the aim of partially counterbalance the academic neglect towards world-cinema vampires. Some of the readings of Anglo-American vampire fiction discussed in the present chapter will return, in a more or less adapted fashion, in Chapter 4 and 5, where precise links between the Italian vampire films’ content and the socio-historical context of 1956-1975 Italy are drawn. The next chapter, Chapter 3, tackles Italian vampire cinema from an industrial perspective instead, pointing out the intertwining of national, international and transnational factors behind the birth, growth and waning of the vampire subgenre during the golden age of Italian genre cinema. Explaining why, where, by whom and how vampire movies were made, marketed, distributed, exhibited and consumed in Italy is in fact a fundamental preliminary step to

outline Italian vampire cinema's nationally-specific characteristics and understand its cultural instrumentalities, i.e. its functioning as a more or less distorted reflection of the then-contemporary Italian zeitgeist.

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<sup>1</sup> See Frayling (1991b: 388): “I have chosen ‘haemosexuality’ as the most apt general term to describe the sexual basis of the vampire relationship”.

<sup>2</sup> Vampires are very briefly mentioned by Freud (1950b: 59) himself.

<sup>3</sup> For the record, Jones does make a passing reference to the hugely-popular “film vampire” of the 1910s and 1920s (1931: 118), by which he means the vamp, the female golddigger popularised by “the daily speech of Hollywood” (Ibid.: 125), who never is portrayed as an actual bloodsucker.

<sup>4</sup> In Browning’s *Dracula* a line of dialogue informs the audience that the vampire opened a vein in his arm and made Mina drink; in Fisher’s *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* the “lurid nursing” (Craft, 1997: 458) is interrupted just before starting; *Dracula* (John Badham, 1979) very briefly stages the breastfeeding scene. On the pre-1990s mainstream media, only TV movies *Dracula* (Dan Curtis, 1974) and *Count Dracula* (Philip Saville, 1977) dare to dwell on what has been described as “a symbolic act of enforced fellatio” (Bentley, 1988: 29). For explicit depictions of Dracula being sucked in pornographic films, see Marks (2010).

<sup>5</sup> See Marx (1954: 224, 235, 245, 277, 285): “Capital is dead labour, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks”; “[According to official reports, workers] become prematurely old, and are certainly short-lived; they are phlegmatic and bloodless”; “The prolongation of the working-day beyond the limits of the natural day into the night, only acts as a palliative. It quenches only in a slight degree the vampire thirst for the living blood of labour”; “One set of masters, this time as before, secured to itself special seigniorial rights over the children of the proletariat [...], spinning silk ten hours a day out of the blood of little children who had to be placed upon stools for the performance of their work”; “the vampire will not lose its hold on [the worker] ‘so long as there is a muscle, a nerve, a drop of blood to be exploited’”. For the use of the vampire metaphor in other writings by Marx, see Baldick (1987).

<sup>6</sup> This national declination of the bloodsucker has been applied to another vampire tale of the Irish tradition, Le Fanu’s “Carmilla” (Davenport-Hines, 1998; Milbank, 1998; Sage, 2004; Smart, 2012; Ulin, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> See Moretti (2005: 103): “Vampires, unlike angels, do have sex”.

<sup>8</sup> For a similar reading that conceives of Nina as “the plaything of Hutter and the patriarchal society within which her repressed self is trapped” and Count Orlok as a sexual liberator, see Roberts (2008: 48-49). For *Nosferatu* as a critique of “bourgeois conventions and sentimentality”, see Dalle Vacche (1995: 32-33).

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of Hammer’s counterculture-era vampires as reinforcing bourgeois traditionalism, see Newland (2009).

<sup>10</sup> For a definition of ‘homosocial’, see Kosofsky Sedgwick (1993: 1): “‘homosocial’ is a word occasionally used in history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex”.

<sup>11</sup> The figure of the gay/bisexual/effeminate/feminised male vampire has been studied mainly in relation to Polidori’s “The Vampyre” (Frayling, 1991a; Gelder, 1994), Stoker’s *Dracula* (Howes, 1988; Auerbach, 1995; Krumm, 1995; Craft, 1997; Schaffer, 1997; Byron, 1999; Leatherdale, 2001), Browning’s *Dracula* (Berenstein, 1996; Freeland, 2000; Skal, 2001; 2004). Given Murnau’s “homosexual tendencies” (Eisner, 1973: 222), it’s surprising that the scene in which Count Orlok bites Hutter has received so little scholarly attention (Gubern & Prat Carós, 1979; Lenne, 1985; Koebner, 2003; Elsaesser, 2013; Jackson, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Some scholars consider the spectre from *Le manoir du diable / The Devil’s Castle* (Georges Méliès, 1896) as “the first celluloid vampire” (Murphy, 1979: 3-4; Abbot, 2007: 1), which is highly disputable because no bloodsucking takes place in Méliès’s *féerie*. As demonstrated by Rhodes (2010), the first big-screen transposition of Stoker’s *Dracula* is the currently-lost Hungarian movie *Drakula halála / Dracula’s Death* (Károly Lajthay, 1921), though the film’s advertising and 1924 novelisation don’t mention any biting and bloodsucking on the part of villain Drakula.

<sup>13</sup> Prior to the 2014 Festival Internazionale del Film di Roma, the biggest Italian retrospective to screen 1957-1966 Italian Gothic horrors and other examples of fantastic cinema ‘made in Italy’ was the one held in July 1976 at the Cappella Underground cinema in Trieste, during the 14<sup>th</sup> Festival Internazionale del Film di Fantascienza di Trieste (for its catalogue, see Lippi & Codelli, 1976). Apropos of the Trieste retrospective, the first book-length history of horror cinema in Italian language states: “[With its thirty-film program, the Trieste retrospective] made clear [...] the crucial importance of Italian fantastic cinema to study the development of the themes of Italian popular cinema” (Mora, 1978: 289-290).

### CHAPTER 3 - THE INDUSTRIAL CONTEXT

After the literature review, summarising the scholarly debates about vampire cinema and pointing out their almost exclusive focus on Anglo-American texts and contexts, the present chapter zooms in on the vastly-under-researched vampire cinema ‘made in Italy’ by approaching from an industrial perspective the crucial question of where the Italian specificity, or Italianness, of the thirty-five films contained in the corpus lies. The issue is less straightforward than it appears because of two reasons. Firstly, from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century well into the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the existence of an autochthonous horror narrative tradition in Italy – be it literary or cinematic, vampire-themed or otherwise – has been firmly rejected by the Italian *intelligentsia*, and by the Italian genre cinema practitioners themselves: horror stories are something foreign, an import goods (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 2). This is probably why, in view of their domestic release, a substantial amount of Italian horrors from the late 1950s onwards tried to mask, blur or mitigate their Italian origin through a wide variety of strategies such as setting the stories abroad; hiring foreign leading actors; using foreign-sounding pseudonyms for Italian producers, screenwriters, directors, cast and crew; constantly referencing foreign literary sources and films; making co-production and ‘joint participation’ agreements with other countries (Fofi, 1963; Pirro, 1965; Mora, 1978; Pitassio, 2005; Baschiera, 2016; Di Chiara, 2016b). Secondly, it shouldn’t be forgotten that “issues pertaining to the international circulation of films have long been central to critical debates about national cinemas” because, as a general rule, the “capital-intensive nature of the motion-picture industry requires films to reach a large (i.e., international) market if they are to recoup their production costs” (Syder & Tierney, 2005: 35).

Conscious that any attempt at defining the Italianness of a given movie must be aware of the producers’ “need to make films palatable to the widest possible audiences” (Shipka, 2011: 26), in recent times film scholars have increasingly been advocating a paradigm shift.

Namely, they have stressed the necessity to integrate the so-far-dominant ‘nationalist’ history of Italian cinema trying to identify movies and audiences as Italian, and evaluating them as the product of a national culture, with an international perspective taking into account the forced reorganisation of Hollywood studios after the 1948 Paramount Decree, European co-production agreements and the circulation of Italian films in the world market (Sorlin, 1996; Wagstaff, 1998; Bergfelder, 2000; Forgacs & Gundle, 2007; Baschiera & Di Chiara, 2010). Moreover, when dealing with the specific issue of vampire films’ nationality, one has to keep in mind that the vampire cinema boom that started in late-1950s Italy, as in the rest of the world, was triggered by the international box-office success of the 1958 *Dracula*, a movie financed by English company Hammer and its American ‘silent partner’ Universal, set somewhere in Mitteleuropa, made in England by British cast and crew reworking Irishman Stoker’s take on Eastern-European history and folklore. Given this overlap of national and transnational features – one that made the influential film magazine *Positif* declare that “fantastic films [...] totally defy national characterisations. Fantastic cinema is the only film genre that is truly international” (Torok, 1961a: 26) – the most effective way to start pinpointing the Italianness of some vampire movies made between the late 1950s and the mid-1970s could be that of investigating the films’ production history, as Hutchings has recently done with a few European co-productions in order to provide useful definitions of Swedishness (2014) and Eurohorror (2016) in an increasingly-globalised entertainment industry.

If the overall aim of this thesis is to put texts into context, identifying the cultural specificity of a neglected subgenre of Italian cinema, the first step is to sketch the industrial context in which the vampire movies to be analysed were made and consumed. Chapter 3 is therefore divided into two subsections: “The Italian film industry (1945-1985)” and “Italian vampire cinema (1956-1975)”. “The Italian film industry (1945-1985)” opens with an in-depth production history of *I vampiri*, which is generally considered the first Italian horror,

followed by an account of the 1958-1964 peplum boom, with its brief vital cycle of uncontrolled growth, market saturation, progressive depreciation, loss of quality and extinction. Both cases – an isolated commercial failure the former, a short-lived box-office ‘goldmine’ the latter – are in fact emblematic of the functioning of the post-war Italian film industry in terms of film financing, production and exploitation. Once the industrial context is established, and the concept of *filone*-filmmaking introduced as the serialised manufacturing of low-cost imitations of a given commercially-successful movie, “Italian vampire cinema (1956-1975)” details the success of Fisher’s *Dracula* in late-1950s/early-1960s Italy, and explains why, where, by whom and with which commercial results a series of vampire films were made by Italian production and/or distribution companies for about fifteen years.

### **The Italian film industry (1945-1985)**

The present chapter posits that filmic texts don’t exist apart from their broader economic context: a movie doesn’t pop up out of the blue but is manufactured within, and shaped by, an institutional and regulatory framework in which local and international factors intertwine. In this sense, an often-quoted tale by Riccardo Freda about the extemporaneous genesis of *I vampiri* can be quite instructive, if subjected to close scrutiny. Speaking in 1971, the Italian director stated that he started making horror movies

because of a bet. I was talking with two producers one day, [Ermanno] Donati and [Luigi] Carpentieri. I said that a film could be made in two weeks, and they replied that it was impossible. I insisted, so they phoned [Goffredo] Lombardo [, owner of production and distribution company Titanus]: they explained to Lombardo my proposal and asked if he wanted to distribute the film once it was finished. He accepted without much enthusiasm and I very quickly wrote a screenplay for *I vampiri*, which was shot in twelve days. Then I quit the job because I had an argument with the producers, and they completed the rest of the picture in two days. The movie was set in Paris but, thanks to the miniatures and tricks I created with cinematographer Mario Bava, we shot it in the courtyard of Titanus studio, in Rome (quoted in Cozzi, 1971: 27-28).

In the early 1990s, Freda repeated the anecdote almost word by word, insisting on the low-budget nature of the project: “I agreed to shoot the movie in about ten days, demanding only Gianna Maria Canale as lead actress, Mario Bava as cinematographer and Beni Montresor as production designer” (quoted in Della Casa, 1993: 60). What Freda perfected through countless interviews is the typical retrospective tale about the golden age of Italian genre cinema, in which skilled craftsmen do battle with the lack of money and time to break new ground (Faldini & Fofi, 1979; 1981). And of course, as in the American Western epics Freda had loved ever since his childhood (Freda, Fofi & Pistagnesi, 1981), there’s no happy ending to reward the heroic pioneers: “There was no audience for horror films at that time in Italy. We hired some ladies to scream their lungs out during a premiere screening of *I vampiri*, but it was a half-fiasco and we laughed about it a lot” (Freda, quoted in Pisoni & Ferrarese, 2007: 43).

Official figures confirm Freda’s version. According to the documents submitted to the Italian State Cinema Bureau by Donati and Carpentieri in order to obtain an Italian-nationality certificate for the film (ACS 2548-167, 1956), the production of *I vampiri* started in November 1956 with a twenty-day shooting schedule. The final budget was 142 million lire – 120 million for the shooting and 22 million for post-production and publicity.<sup>1</sup> Donati and Carpentieri’s company Athena Cinematografica and Lombardo’s Titanus invested 16 million each. Additional money came from a 50-million state loan, on which the producers asked an extra 25. Between April 5<sup>th</sup> 1957 and March 31<sup>st</sup> 1964, *I vampiri* collected only 125,261,726 lire (Rondolino & Levi, 1967: 128), while the top-grossing Italian movies first released in 1957 totalled 700-800 million at the domestic box office over the same period (Rondolino & Levi, 1967; Baroni, 1995; 1999). As for foreign distribution, between 1957 and the mid-1960s *I vampiri* circulated under various titles and in different cuts in France, West Germany, the US and even Cuba (Lucas, 2007; Curti, 2017a), but neither foreign box-office receipts nor documents relating to international distribution deals are currently in the public domain. Thus,



as it can be inferred from the ‘extemporaneous bet’ anecdote, Freda essentially involved Donati, Carpentieri and Lombardo in a market test: they gambled on something new – an Italian *film del terrore* – and, as far as we know, the experiment didn’t turn out a smash-hit anywhere. If the first horror ‘made in Italy’ was a lost bet, though, Athena Cinematografica and Titanus weren’t gambling big money. As remarked by Freda, *I vampiri* had all the key characteristics of a low-budget project: a tight shooting schedule, a crew of technicians expert at cutting costs, no expensive actors (top-billing Gianna Maria Canale, a fairly-popular sex symbol of Italian adventure cinema since 1948, was paid less than 8 million lire, more or less the same salary as the director). But in order to understand why Donati, Carpentieri and Lombardo poured 32 million cash into a movie whose main box-office appeal was the presence of Canale, and why they ended up laughing about its mediocre revenues, it’s necessary to describe the birth of the post-war Italian film industry as a state-subsidised, distribution-driven, rampantly-speculative business.

Preoccupied with declining audience figures in the US film market, since the end of World War Two Hollywood studios had started dumping hundreds of films from their backlist catalogues on the newly-deregulated Italian market, with the effect of precluding Italian films from any chance of wide domestic release.<sup>2</sup> The chain-reaction on almost all sectors of the Italian film industry was dramatic: very few screenings of Italian films, meagre box-office receipts and no profit-making for Italian producers, no capital to invest in filmmaking, a resultant crisis and vast unemployment in one of Italy’s most lucrative economic activities (Wagstaff, 1998). The same thing was happening in post-war France, to the point that, in 1946, Italy and France started signing a series of bilateral agreements aiming to “oppose American prevarication” (Freda, quoted in AAVV, 1995: 98) by pooling the two countries’ technical/artistic/financial resources and creating a single transnational film-market out of two separate national ones (Burucoa, 1995; Wagstaff, 1999; Bergfelder, 2000; Romanelli, 2016). Hollywood studios weren’t impressed by Italo-French co-production

agreements, or by similar business partnerships subsequently signed between Italy and West Germany, Austria and Spain: American companies simply kept flooding the European market with their movies, effectively maintaining a hegemonic position. This situation was denounced in a 1948 manifesto written by Italian film workers and critics. Besides accusing the Italian government of turning a blind eye to Hollywood's dumping policies and massive export of lire to the US, the document blamed the crisis on the inexistent bank credit for Italian film production (Quaglietti, 1980). In 1949, after the unrest of the various components of the Italian film industry had reached a boiling point, Christian-Democrat Undersecretary to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers Giulio Andreotti was able to pass two laws aiming at breaking the Hollywood monopoly and boosting Italian film production while "acquiring the maximum consensus among conflicting categories (exhibitors, distributors, producers, facility workers) in order to gain political control over Italian film production" (Basciera & Di Chiara, 2010: 31): law 448 of July 26<sup>th</sup> 1949, also known as 'leggina', and law 958 of December 29<sup>th</sup> 1949, also known as 'legge Andreotti'.

Relying heavily on Fascist-era legislation (Corsi, 2001), the system put in place in 1949 made "the Italian state [...] the biggest cinematograph in Italy" (Andreotti, quoted in Quaglietti, 1980: 78). Firstly, the two laws created a state-managed special fund for cinematography fed by a ten-year-fixed, 2.5-million-lira deposit to be paid on each foreign film over 1,000 meters that distribution companies wished to import and dub into Italian. Catching two birds with one stone, Andreotti managed to impose a restriction on Hollywood monopoly<sup>3</sup> and find the resources to provide the bank credit that Italian film workers were asking for. Secondly,

a special state commission was created in order to ascertain the nationality of the films shot on Italian territory. If a given film, in spite of foreign investments and the presence of foreign actors and technicians, was certified to be 'of Italian nationality', it could obtain two benefits: 1) the 'mandatory scheduling', as part of a 'national quota' mechanism according to which Italian films had to be screened in Italian theatres for at least 80 days per year; 2) state incentives to production under the form of tax refunds

(10% of the Italian box-office gross, plus an extra 8% for films that the state commission deemed artistically valid) (Di Chiara, 2009: 23).

This system “remained virtually unmodified until 1965” (Basciera & Di Chiara, 2010: 31): law 897 of July 31<sup>st</sup> 1956 simply unified the 1949 laws into a single text, substituting the guaranteed-10%-plus-eventual-8% tax refund with an automatic 16% tax refund, and increasing both the dubbing deposit (from 2.5 to 5.5 million) and the national quota (from 80 to 100 days). Moreover, according to Argentieri (1974), Quaglietti (1980) and Corsi (2001), the 1949 regulations even survived the end of Christian Democracy’s political hegemony as law 1213 of November 4<sup>th</sup> 1965 – informally named ‘legge Corona’ after Socialist Achille Corona, the Minister of Tourism and Cultural Activities of the first centre-left government in the history of the Italian Republic – shares with ‘leggina’ and ‘legge Andreotti’ an emphasis on state aids and automatic tax refunds (definitively fixed at 13% of the Italian box-office gross).

We can now begin to understand why Donati and Carpentieri, the owners of a tiny production company, were so easily convinced by Freda to back experiment in terror *I vampiri*. Not only the film was a low-budget effort but, according to the law, up to 60% of its budget could be covered by the state with money from the dubbing deposit of the over 200 foreign films imported every year in Italy from January 1<sup>st</sup> 1950 onwards. For the loan to be granted, however, the state required a *garanzia* (an assurance to recoup at least part of the investment), and it’s here that the role of Titanus becomes important. As stressed by Freda (quoted in Cozzi, 1971: 27), Athena Cinematografica didn’t contact Titanus’s head as a producer: “[Donati and Carpentieri] phoned Lombardo [...] and asked if he wanted to distribute the film once it was finished”. In other words, Donati and Carpentieri wanted first and foremost to secure their upcoming, unprecedented film a place on the domestic market via Titanus, one of Italy’s oldest and most established distribution companies, with plenty of business connections in France as well.<sup>4</sup> The equation is simple: striking a distribution deal

before production even starts means having a fair chance to recoup the production costs via box-office gross and pay back the state loan necessary to make the movie. What Athena Cinematografica was looking for, though, wasn't an affidavit. More concretely, Donati and Carpentieri wanted an advanced payment from the future distributor of their film, under the form of *minimo garantito*, i.e. a certain sum based on a rough, 'minimum estimate' of the net box-office receipts the movie would collect over the course of its two-or-three-year tour around Italy's theatres. And they got it, as testified by the expression "Titanus, minimo garantito" appearing in a financial plan submitted by Athena Cinematografica to the Italian State Cinema Bureau (ACS 2548-167, 1956): both a producer and a distributor, Lombardo almost certainly reckoned that financing a certified-Italian feature would give him the possibility to avoid paying the dubbing deposit on a foreign film he wished to import in the future, as the 'leggina' allowed for this dispensation and even legalised the 'dubbing fee-waiver' trade among film companies (Quaglietti, 1980; Corsi, 2001). Official documents report a 16-million cash investment by Lombardo followed by the concession of a 50-million state loan, which confirms what scholars have so far written about Italian genre cinema as a distribution-driven business in which "producers could obtain money in advance from distributors in exchange for domestic or foreign distribution rights; using these distribution rights as *garanzia*, producers could easily gain access to state credit" (Di Chiara, 2009: 25).

Finding a distributor willing to grant the *minimo garantito* and thereby asking for a state loan was only half of the producers' job. The other half consisted in demonstrating to the state commission created by the 'legge Andreotti' that the film was of Italian nationality, to obtain the mandatory-scheduling-and-tax-refunds benefits. The procedure to get an Italian-nationality certificate was more or less the same as the one to ask for a state loan. To access state credit Donati and Carpentieri had already submitted to the Italian State Cinema Bureau the following, mandatory documents: the screenplay of *I vampiri* (in order for government officials to enact *censura preventiva*, a preventive censorship discouraging the making of

movies that may clash against Christian Democracy's ideology);<sup>5</sup> the estimated budget; financial plans to cover said budget; the shooting schedule; a complete list of cast and crew with personal data and contracts thereof (a certain number of Italian workers had to be employed for the film to qualify as Italian); contracts for the rental of Italian film studios, dubbing facilities and film labs (a minimum number of days was required); contracts relating to possible foreign co-productions and domestic/international distribution agreements. After the film was greenlit by the state, shot, edited, dubbed and had obtained from the government-run Italian Censorship Office the permission to be publicly screened, the final step for Donati and Carpentieri to take was merely bureaucratic, namely submitting to the Italian State Cinema Bureau the cost statement for *I vampiri*, the public-screening permission and proof of first public screening in Italy via the designed distributor.

So upon *I vampiri*'s premiere on April 5<sup>th</sup> 1957, Athena Cinematografica obtained the nationality certificate for the first Italian horror movie, and accessed the mandatory-scheduling-and-16%-tax-rebates benefits. This isn't surprising. Aiming at making the various categories of the industry prosper only at the condition of focusing on light escapism, and avoiding explicit sexual content and political issues that would have hurt the Catholic principles and centre-right agenda of the ruling party, the highly-centralised 'Andreotti system', with its multiple layers of censorship, targeted the manifestly-critical, supposedly-defeatist works by alleged Communist-sympathisers such as auteur Vittorio De Sica (Argentieri, 1974; Quaglietti, 1980; Barattoni, 2013), while leaving genre cinema of all kinds a relative freedom, especially when movies were set in remote historical epochs and/or in foreign countries. Consequently, although ridiculed by state officials at the preventive-censorship stage for its adoption of the tritest clichés from "certain crude, unrefined, 19<sup>th</sup>-century British and French popular literature" (ACS 2548-167, 1956), *I vampiri*'s screenplay was approved and the finished film was passed uncut by the Italian Censorship Office as

VM16 (forbidden to people under the age of sixteen) (NO 23894, 1957), thus confirming that, after 1949,

for an adventurous though inexperienced producer it became very easy to make [genre] movies, also because Italian cinema could count on many well-trained professionals skilled at containing costs. Once a picture had been sold in advance to a distributor, it was relatively easy for its producer to access the governmental loan fund. Then, as a rule, the producer actually made the movie using about half of the original estimated budget, keeping the rest as his wages; the distributor was left to face the uncertainties of the market (Baschiera & Di Chiara, 2010: 31).

In view of this state-patronised anti-risk cushion and the producers' tendency to "generate profits not by investing money, but by subtracting it from the film's budget" (Bizzarri, 1957: 1380), Freda's 'bet' anecdote and its 'we all laughed so hard about it' coda can finally be put into the right perspective and *I vampiri* defined as a minor, low-risk speculation rather than a brave, if unsuccessful, enterprise: in Italy both small producers like Athena Cinematografica and big companies like Titanus would be encouraged to invest in film production for purely-financial reasons, as "tax refunds on box-office receipts always assure a minimum margin of profit, even if the film barely manages to cover its production expenses" (Corsi, 2001: 53). Indeed, an issue of cultural magazine *Il ponte* contemporary to the Italian premiere of Freda's film featured an essay titled "Cinema without an industry (economic history of the past twelve years)", heavily criticising the 1949 laws for handing Italian film production over to companies owning nothing but their names, speculators who make films without risking anything from their own pockets:

In the 1954-1955 season, the impressive number of 200 Italian film production companies has been recorded: a real 'pulverisation' of the productive sector. Basically, [...] a production company was born for each new film to be made. Between 1953 and 1954, everybody wanted to 'play the game', and perhaps they managed to produce one movie, but then they stopped: these initiatives lacked financial, industrial and commercial solidity. In the 1954-1955 and 1955-1956 seasons, 100 companies produced only one film (not one film in each season, but one film during the two seasons) (Bizzarri, 1957: 1377-1379).

Given its domestic flop, *I vampiri* remained an isolated case for more than two years. The production of horror-themed films in Italy didn't catch up until after the international release of the Hammer *Dracula*, whose box-office success made six Italian/Italo-French vampire movies rush into production between spring 1959 and summer 1960: horror parody *Tempi duri per i vampiri* and five horrors proper – *L'amante del vampiro*, *Il sangue e la rosa*, *Il mulino delle donne di pietra*, *La maschera del demonio* and *L'ultima preda del vampiro*.<sup>6</sup> However, contrary to *I vampiri*, the producers of these films wanted not only to test the Italian market while safely speculating on *minimo garantito*, state loans and tax refunds, but also hoped to do big business in the international market successfully opened up by Hammer. This attempt to play in the major league can't be understood without explaining the notion of *filone*-filmmaking as exemplified by the late-1950s/early-1960s peplum boom, and detailing the national and international mechanisms that made the 1950s a crucial decade in the history of the Italian film industry – the moment in which it began going international and conquering its niche in the seemingly-impenetrable US market after neorealist one-time hits *Roma città aperta* / *Rome, Open City* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945) and *Riso amaro* / *Bitter Rice* (Giuseppe De Santis, 1949) (Wagstaff, 1998).

Once again, the starting point is the mid-1940s. Ever since the end of World War Two, the US domestic film market had been shrinking, due to TV competition and the emergence of new forms of leisure (Conant, 1976; Guback, 1976). All this, “combined with the drop in Hollywood's largest export market (the UK, from which Hollywood was taking 25% of its receipts), meant that Italy (which gradually replaced the UK as the largest European market) became a progressively more important export market for the Americans” (Wagstaff, 1998: 74). Indeed, we have seen how Hollywood majors tried to monopolise Italian screens via dumping between 1945 and the early 1950s. Meanwhile, the anti-trust 1948 Paramount Decree forced US producers-distributors-exhibitors Twentieth Century-Fox, MGM, Paramount, Warner Bros. and RKO to let go of their theatre chains, making it harder for their

films to find a stable place on the domestic market. Hollywood majors therefore became increasingly concerned about the high costs of studio-shooting and post-production, and decided to focus their financial efforts on making a few star-filled, spectacular films on the cutting edge of technology like war, Biblical and western epics (far more expensive than run-of-the-mill genre production, but granting secure, exorbitant revenues worldwide), leaving the production of genre-oriented B-movies to small, independent companies, whose output majors could always decide to exploit from the distribution side (Conant, 1976; Guback, 1976; Lincoln, 1976). With the aim of maximising profits by keeping production costs as low as possible, American B- and TV-movie companies soon started to more or less literally outsource their genre film production in foreign countries such as England, where taxes, labour and facilities were cheaper compared to the US (Eyles, Adkinson & Fry, 1973; Hutchings, 1993; Heffernan, 2004; Meikle, 2009; Hudson, 2017), and so did Hollywood majors in Italy, beginning in 1951 with MGM's epic *Quo Vadis* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1951) (Balio, 2000; Corsi, 2001).

The year and the choice of Italy are hardly surprising: lengthily negotiated by the Christian Democrats and the Motion Picture Association of America, a “special norm” was approved in 1951, forbidding “the export of 50% of the gross made in Italy by every foreign film, thus forcing Hollywood majors to invest part of their income in Italian film productions”, Italian film distribution and other works of national interest such as buildings and infrastructures (Baschiera & Di Chiara, 2010: 31).<sup>7</sup> Investments in Italian cinema proved to be so lucrative for American companies facing the shrinking of US domestic market and post-Paramount-Decree restructuring that they continued well into the 1970s, even if the gross-export ban was permanently lifted in 1963, when the MPAA obtained the full liberalisation of the Italian market, the second biggest market in the world for number of tickets sold throughout most of the 1950s and 1960s and, between the mid-1950s and the late 1970s, for number of active movie theatres (Quaglietti, 1980; Balio, 2000). Basically, ever



since the early 1950s, American companies understood that any investment in film production in Italy could be recouped with interest simply by finding local business partners through whom Andreotti's loan-and-tax-refunds system could be accessed (de Grazia, 1998). Investing in the distribution of Italian films in Italy and abroad was also convenient for US companies and created profitable production-distribution synergies:

American distributors in Italy use successful 'national' films as a 'driving force' for the success of their whole film catalogue: in 1958-1959, for instance, Warner Bros.'s highest-grossing film in Italy is [Italo-French co-production] *Europa di notte / European Nights* (Alessandro Blasetti, 1959). Italian and other European film industries make up for Hollywood's decrease in film production with their own films, co-produced at low cost. Exports are 'encouraged' by the prestige of Italian art films [often partly financed by American production companies] (Wagstaff, 1999: 859).

The consequences of the penetration of American capital in film distribution in Italy are analysed further below, when the late-1970s crisis of the Italian film industry is discussed. What is crucial, now, is to establish the impact of Hollywood's 1950s runaway productions on the development of Italian genre cinema, and the role American companies played in its internationalisation. The inception of the 'Hollywood on the Tiber' in 1951 had a devastating effect on the productive sector of the Italian film industry, at least initially. Constrained by the blocked-gross regulation and attracted by the possibility of exploiting well-equipped studios, cheap labour and a good climate for location shooting all year round (Conant, 1976; Guback, 1976; de Grazia, 1998; Balio, 2000), *Quo Vadis* and other American runaway productions began to "occupy Cinecittà" for very long periods "with an unprecedented number of technicians and extras, totally disproportionate for Italian standards", thus causing "a generalised rise in film production costs" that made it extremely difficult for Italian producers to shoot films in Italy. In the long run, though, this rise in production costs proved beneficial, in that it "forced Italian producers to [...] choose projects conceived not only for the domestic market, but also for foreign markets". Indeed, "the more serious among Italian producers" learned a lot from Hollywood's technical lesson and industrial workflow, and employed

American blocked capital “for ambitious projects aiming at making Italian cinema known internationally, as a producer of both art-films and spectacular, highly-entertaining commercial movies” (Corsi, 2001: 67-69).

However, as noted by Ghigi (1977) and Di Chiara (2016a), the consecration of Italian cinema in the world market as a provider of spectacular entertainment didn't come with lavish A-pictures like Technicolor epic *Ulisse / Ulysses* (Mario Camerini, 1954), produced with American capital by Ponti-De Laurentiis for the Italian company Lux and featuring Kirk Douglas and Silvana Mangano (Dino De Laurentiis's wife and an international star since the 1949 release of *Riso amaro*). Rather, it came with 300-million-lira quickie *Le fatiche di Ercole / Hercules* (Pietro Francisci, 1958), produced by tiny Italian company OSCAR with money from Italian producers-distributors Galatea and Lux, mostly obtained through the *minimo garantito* and state-credit mechanisms already described for *I vampiri*. Shot in Eastmancolor and Dyaliscope by cinematographer Bava, and starring an American bodybuilder with no acting experience, Francisci's poverty-row version of *Ulisse* proved extraordinarily successful, both in Italy and the US: “in the so-called *mercato di profondità*”, i.e. the low-ticket-fare *seconda* and *terza visione* theatres located in Italy's metropolitan peripheries and small villages, “the film made 700 million lire in a relatively short period”, while thanks to the international contacts of Galatea, *Le fatiche di Ercole* was sold for “a relatively low price” to Embassy Pictures's head Joseph Levine, who redubbed it and turned it into a 12-million-dollar hit “by investing in a publicity campaign of massive proportions”. The great performance of the Italian film on the US market “brought to an alliance between medium-size American companies and Italian genre cinema” (Di Chiara, 2016a: 55-56).

The ingredients of peplum – the “low-budget superspectacle formula” (Spinazzola, 1985: 324-325) able to “guarantee high box-office revenues proportional to low production costs” (Ghigi, 1977: 735) – had been found. Thematically, after a series of historical or mythological films with female protagonists epitomised by *Fabiola* (Alessandro Blasetti,

1949) and *Teodora, imperatrice di Bisanzio / Teodora, Slave Empress* (Riccardo Freda, 1954), there was a return to the muscleman films of the 1910s and 1920s popularised all over the world by the adventures of Maciste and other *forzuti* (Spinazzola, 1965a; Newman, 1986a; Giordano, 1998; O'Brien, 2014). On the production side, there was the employment of 1950s Italy's pool of skilled writers, directors and technicians, recycling in assembly-line circumstances plots, actors, extras, studio sets, natural sceneries, costumes, props and even footage – the shooting process dramatically sped up by the Italian common practice of post-shoot dubbing (Della Casa & Giusti, 2013). On the financing side, Italian producers could count on *minimo garantito*, on state patronage, on European co-productions and now, after the success of *Le fatiche di Ercole* in the US, on “American distributors willing to buy films cash, sight unseen, on a one-off, fixed-price basis, under the form of advance money, before the film was actually shot” (Di Chiara, 2016a: 57). As for distribution, a distinction needs to be made between Italian, European and American markets. On the domestic market, pepla exploited the huge network of inexpensive-admission-fare *seconda* and *terza visione* theatres reaching even the remotest Italian villages and their massive, working-class, low-income public hungry for colourful, spectacular entertainment, so that the commercial life of each movie could be prolonged up to five years after its premiere in the pricey *prima visione* theatres located in large city-centres (Spinazzola, 1963). On the European market, muscleman films were especially popular among French *cinéphiles* (Della Casa & Giusti, 2013; O'Brien, 2014), while on the American market they drew the interest of both TV-syndicators hungry for colour programming and small/medium-size neighbourhood theatres and drive-ins, whose owners had been facing “a chronic shortage of product for much of the year” due to the post-Paramount-decree “curtailment of production from the major studios [...] combined with the studios' practice of ‘bunching’ major releases together at the late summer and holiday seasons” (Heffernan, 2004: 65).

Aiming to take advantage of the above, after *Le fatiche di Ercole* dozens of pepla were rushed through production and into distribution by Italian companies of all sizes, from the unprofessional ‘vultures’ described by Bizzarri (1957) to long-standing firms Lux and Titanus (Ghigi, 1977; Della Casa 1986; 1989; Salotti, 1986). As reported by Spinazzola (1965a), the majority of the eighty-something historical-mythological films made and released in Italy between the 1957-1958 season and the 1962-1963 season made more than 300 million lire at the domestic box office, enough money to break even and start making profits, even without the money from foreign distributors. The production of pepla definitively stopped in 1965, after all possible combinations of scenarios and characters had been exhausted by over-production during 1964, the most productive year in the history of the Italian film industry to date (De Giusti, 2008). At the same time, by 1965 pepla had lost their grip on the international public due to over-supply, and the already-low production costs had to be cut so much by producers in order to make a profit on shrinking foreign pre-sales, *minimo garantito* and state loans that it was no longer possible to guarantee a well-crafted product to interest audiences in the first place.

From *Le fatiche di Ercole* onwards, the whole Italian film industry has been mostly based on the intensive exploitation of a given commercially-successful film, Italian or otherwise, by creating dozens of low-cost imitations – slight variations on the themes established by the “originary film” (Klein, 2011: 4) quickly adding up to create a *filone* (literally ‘a gold lode’). That is to say, a short-lived cycle of films displaying macroscopic similarities in plots, characters, settings, actors and so on (Micciché, 1989; Totaro, 2011; Kannas, 2017). Indeed, from 1958 until the mid-1980s, the “pattern of Italian commercial cinema reveals an overlapping succession of generic cycles” piggy-backing on popular trends (Newman, 1986a: 20). Besides peplum, there was a plethora of: *spogliarello* movies, i.e. compilations of stripteases and other variety numbers, launched by the 1959 success of Blasetti’s *Europa di notte* among the bourgeois audiences of *prima visione* theatres located in

the industrialised cities of Northern Italy (Ris , 1964; Pirro, 1965; Spinazzola, 1985; De Berti, 2016); **post-Hammer-Dracula Gothic horrors** and vampire films especially (see next subsection); shockumentaries   la *Mondo cane* (Paolo Cavara, Gualtiero Jacopetti, Franco Proserpi, 1962), another box-office hit thanks to Northern Italy’s urban bourgeoisie (Spinazzola, 1985); sombre, gunfight-filled spaghetti westerns and slapstick, fistfight-filled fagioli westerns, launched by surprise smash-hits *Per un pugno di dollari / A Fistful of Dollars* (Sergio Leone as Bob Robertson, 1964) and *Lo chiamavano Trinit ... / They Call Me Trinity* (Enzo Barboni as E. B. Clutcher, 1970) respectively (Newman, 1986c; Wagstaff, 1992; Frayling, 1998; Fisher, 2011); cheap spy movies **imitating the James-Bond saga** (Newman, 1986c; Della Casa, 2000; Diak, 2014); *decamerotici*, i.e. sex comedies set in the Middle Ages, produced by the dozen after the huge commercial success of *Il Decameron / The Decameron* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1971) and *I racconti di Canterbury / The Canterbury Tales* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1972) (Bertolino & Ridola, 1999; Nakahara, 2004; Castoldi, 2005b; Manzoli, 2012); and a whole series of gialli, *poliziotteschi*, nazisexploitation, demonic-possession, cannibal and zombie movies, creature features, macaroni combat and, again, a few muscleman films **after *Conan the Barbarian* (John Milius, 1982) proved to be a worldwide hit** (Mora, 1986; Newman, 1986d; Della Casa, 1990; Tohill & Tombs, 1995; Curti, 2013; Mendik, 2015; Baschiera, 2016; Platts, 2017).

The reasons behind this progressive “metamorphosis of genre cinema into *filoni* cinema” (Pitassio, 2005: 36) should be clear by now. Firstly, the relatively-easy access to state credit via *minimo garantito* made most Italian producers simple organisers of made-to-order films distributors thought would sell well (Lo Foco, 1984; Della Casa 2001a; Pitassio, 2005). Contextually, as the majority of Italian producers were speculators making profits before shooting began by subtracting money to the film’s budget, all the economic risk fell upon distributors (Bizzarri, 1957; Lo Foco, 1984; Ventavoli, 1992; Baschiera & Di Chiara, 2010), who were thus even more motivated to finance movies of established appeal on the

public.<sup>8</sup> Secondly, thriving on tax refunds on domestic box-office gross offered to certified-Italian films, Italian distributors-financiers and producers-organisers were encouraged to play it safe and follow well-tested formulas, so that their film would at least break even on its domestic market. Thirdly, both the informal ‘joint participations’ with US companies and the formal co-production agreements between Italy and various European countries allowed for the extension of the Andreotti system to the international film industry, giving Italian producers-organisers plenty of opportunities to creatively finance movies by addressing foreign distributors and their specific needs. Finally, as both serious producers and adventurers learned from the ‘Hollywood on the Tiber’ experience, it was always better to exploit leftover sets and props from an A-picture through several B-movies instead of just one, as assembly-line work, serial standardisation and constant recycling made economies of scale possible (Mora, 1986; Della Casa 2001a; Menarini & Noto, 2005).

From a numerical point of view, the institutional and regulatory framework put in place in 1949 by Andreotti boosted Italian film production over the next quarter of a century, in synergy with European co-productions and American investments. The goal of making more than 100 Italian films in one year without resorting to European co-production agreements was reached quite soon, in 1951, and again in 1952, 1953, 1954, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, and uninterruptedly from 1967 to 1980 (the all-time record of 203 ‘100% Italian’ films was set in 1976). If we take both ‘100% Italian’ films and co-productions into account, from 1951 to the mid-1960s, Italian film production figures rose steadily, peaking in 1964 with 290 movies made (155 co-productions) (Nowell-Smith, Hay & Volpi, 1996: 158-159). The only perceptible drops were recorded in 1955-1956, undoubtedly due to the climate of uncertainty regarding the extension of the 1949 laws (Quaglietti, 1980; Corsi, 2001), and in 1965, when production fell from 290 to 203 films (109 co-productions) (Nowell-Smith, Hay & Volpi, 1996: 158-159) as a reaction to both the over-production of the previous year and the lengthy parliamentary negotiations leading to the approval of the ‘legge Corona’ in

November 1965. From the mid-1960s until 1976 included, Italian film production maintained itself over the '200 films made' line every year, with a peak of 280 (111 co-productions) in 1972 (Ibid.: 159), when two *filoni* boomed at the same time – the *decamerotico* and the fagioli western. However, all the historians of Italian cinema quoted so far agree that, from 1949 to 1976 included, the productive sector of the Italian film industry experienced an economic bubble fed by state aids and foreign investments. The proliferation of *filoni* is a case in point. Apparently a sign of extraordinary growth, at closer inspection the production boom proved to be nothing but the trading of long-term industrial planning for immediate gain via rampant speculation: “between 1953 and 1959 there were 391 production companies active in Italy, 265 of which [...] were born and died around a single project, to try their luck with an all-in bet” (Corsi, 2001: 65). As the 1965 ‘legge Corona’ extended the 1949 system indefinitely, throughout the peplum, the Gothic horror, the spaghetti western, the superspy, the giallo and other *filoni* booms, the pulverisation and the precariousness of the productive sector first noted by Bizzarri (1957) were confirmed to be “an inborn, intrinsic characteristic of the Italian film industry, [...] even if the people hiding behind the names of the various companies always were more or less the same”, going bankrupt and changing business name to avoid paying creditors (Corsi, 2001: 65).

The cynical, rapacious approach to film production as a gold-rush-like exploitation of legislative immobility and passing fancies in both the Italian and the world market is perfectly summarised in a 1969 interview with Bava – a man who, as a technician and film director, made at least one movie for every existing genre, except pornography. When asked if he was optimistic or pessimistic about his future in the Italian film industry of the 1970s, he replied that he was simply content with surviving: “I am a pessimistic... optimist. At worst, I’ll just have to change movie genre. What matters to me is to last...” (quoted in Castelli & Monego, 1969: 50). Yet, a few years after Bava’s optimistic statement, the bubble broke. From the 237 movies (34 co-productions) made in Italy in 1976, production dropped to 165 units (23 co-

productions) in 1977; from 165 to 143 units (24 co-productions) in 1978; from 143 to 103 units (24 co-productions) in 1981; from 103 to 89 units (8 co-productions) in 1985, stabilising from that moment on around an average 110 movies per year, co-productions included (Nowell-Smith, Hay & Volpi, 1996: 159-160). Leaving aside the massive drop in co-productions that started in the first half of the 1970s and considering figures relating to ‘100% Italian’ films only, two facts immediately stand out: 119 films were made in Italy both in 1978 and 1952, and throughout the 1980s and 1990s the Italian film industry could hardly put together 100 films per year. That is to say, production-wise, from the late-1970s onwards the Italian film industry has regressed to pre-*filoni* levels.

This productive crisis – which led, in the 1980s and 1990s, to a drastic curtailment in the production of genre films other than comedies featuring popular TV entertainers – has been variously explained by scholars. Typically, their starting point is the steady decline in movie-theatre attendance that began in 1956, after the Italian all-time record of 819 million tickets sold was reached in 1955 (Quaglietti, 1980: 252). If the decline in attendance – mainly due to Italians beginning to spend their free time with TV and forms of entertainment other than cinema (and to spend their money on consumer durables rather than leisure) (Spinazzola, 1985; Wagstaff, 1999; Corsi, 2001; Manzoli, 2012) – wasn’t immediately matched by a decline in total box-office receipts, it’s because, from 1957 onwards, the movie-ticket price was constantly raised by exhibitors in the attempt to compensate for the gradual loss of spectators. Quaglietti (1980: 252) provides compelling data: while the number of tickets sold dropped from the 790 million of 1956 to the 319 million of 1978, box-office receipts went from 116 billion lire in 1955-1956 to 375 billion in 1975, as the average ticket price skyrocketed from the 142 lire of the mid-1950s to the 706 of the mid-1970s. However, the constant price rise quickly exceeded the Italian inflation rate, to the point that, in less than twenty years,



exhibitors reached the ‘point of anelasticity’ of the price/demand ratio. When, starting in 1975, the number of spectators began to decrease at the rhythm of 100 million people per year, every ‘compensation’ became impossible and the vertiginous increase in ticket prices caused by the exhibitors’ panic turned against exhibitors themselves, and against the Italian film industry as a whole (Corsi, 2001: 119).

In fact, since Italian film production was generally financed by distribution via *minimo garantito*, the post-1975 contraction in exhibitors’ profits, with its estimated loss of 32 billion lire between 1976 and 1977 alone in spite of substantial increases in ticket price, determined a contraction in production investments by distributors and therefore a decrease in the overall number of films made (Quaglietti, 1980; Lo Foco, 1984).

Writing from a Marxist, anti-imperialistic perspective, some commentators integrate the above by shifting attention from the decrease in cinema attendance and panicked reaction of exhibitors to the monopolistic aims of Hollywood majors over the Italian film market. According to Contaldo & Fanelli (1979), the infiltration of US capital in film distribution in Italy, which officially started with the 1951 MPAA-Christian Democracy special agreement, led over time to the striking of a series of partnership deals between American distributors and Italian exhibitors to secure the exploitation of American films at all levels of the Italian market. Following a marketing strategy dictated by the Hollywood conglomerates of the early 1970s, starting with the Italian release of *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972) in September 1972, the owners of the biggest theatre chains in Italy made it so that the most probable box-office hits of a given season (namely Hollywood blockbusters, controversial European auteur cinema and films featuring popular Italian comedians – most of which were distributed, and oftentimes partly or entirely financed, by American companies) were put into circulation for a very short time-span and only in *prima visione* theatres. Since this ‘film event’ marketing strategy allowed for arbitrary price alterations up to 2,000 lire per ticket and brought about a very rapid recoup of initial investments, by the mid-1970s all the new, most anticipated films were exploited intensively in the *prima visione* circuit for one season only,

rather than extensively from the *prima visione* to the low-ticket-fare *mercato di profondità* over the course of many years. As a consequence, starting from the mid-1970s, *seconda* and *terza visione* theatres lost a significant part of their already-shrinking audience to the *prima visione* colossuses. Deprived of both A-pictures and well-crafted B-movies, which had become an exclusive of *prima visione* exhibitors (who got them via partnership agreements with prominent distributors-financiers), the movie theatres of urban peripheries and small villages came to depend on no-budget, very low-quality, purely-speculative *filoni* exploits, until *seconda* and *terza visione* screening venues either closed down or were taken over by theatre-chain owners, refurbished and turned into *prima visione* theatres. In such oligopoly/monopoly conditions, the most powerful (mostly American) distributors-financiers active in Italy decided to focus their productive efforts on “big-investment movies”, causing “an enormous increase in the average cost of filmmaking and consequently curtail[ing] autarchic, low-cost productions” (Ibid.: 74). The simultaneous disappearance of *terza visione* theatres and of countless small- and medium-size production companies making low-budget films for the *mercato di profondità* seems to be the reason behind the decrease in production for the year 1977, and behind the withering of Italian genre cinema during the following decades.

### **Italian vampire cinema (1956-1975)**

November-December 1956 saw the shooting of *I vampiri* and **Hammer's *The Curse of Frankenstein* (Terence Fisher, 1957)**, with the Italian release of the former predating by a month the British release of the latter. Meanwhile, **in the US, Universal's pre-1948 horrors began to be broadcast to syndicated TV by Columbia in a highly-successful package known as Shock Theater** (Clarens, 1968). October-November 1957 saw **the Mexican release of *El vampiro* (Fernando Mendez, 1957)**, produced by Mexican actor Abel Salazar to exploit the **domestic success of Frankensteinian rip-off *Ladrón de cadáveres* / *The Body Snatcher***

(Fernando Mendez, 1956), and the shooting of both *El ataúd del vampiro* (Fernando Mendez, 1958) and the Hammer *Dracula*. For these reasons, 1956 and 1957 are seen as the landmark years of a “Gothic revival” that took place on the two shores of the Atlantic and involved Italian and Mexican film production companies, Hammer and its Hollywood ‘silent partners’ Warner Bros., Universal and Columbia, soon joined by American International Pictures, which inaugurated its Poe cycle in 1959-1960 with *The Fall of the House of Usher* (Roger Corman, 1960) (Worland, 2014). Contrary to the Mexican and Anglo-American film industries, churning out horror movies on an assembly-line basis ever since 1956-1957 (Meikle, 2009; Vitali, 2016), the Italian film industry didn’t immediately join the trend: lacking a horror-hungry national audience and the international perspectives opened up by *Le fatiche di Ercole* in 1958, *I vampiri* remained an isolated incident for more than two years, to the point that, as the Italian film press of the early 1960s (Anonymous, 1960c; f; Fofi, 1963) and all horror scholars from Mora (1978) to Di Chiara (2016b) remark, it’s more appropriate to consider Fisher’s *Dracula* as the actual progenitor of 1960s Italian Gothic horror cinema.

The Hammer *Dracula*’s co-financier and worldwide distributor Universal submitted the movie to the Italian Censorship Office on November 7<sup>th</sup> 1958, under the title *Dracula il vampiro*. The censorship commission reviewed the film on the very same day (which was extremely unusual given the bureaucrats’ busy schedules) and denied it the public-screening permission “because the movie contains scenes, events and sequences that are truce, repugnant and shocking” (NO 28085, 1958). As it was its right, Universal appealed the ban, stating that *Dracula* had already been “screened in several countries around the world without creating any particular sensation in the audiences” and was in no way different from “other similar films” approved for public screening in Italy (Ibid.). As for the second claim, the reference probably was to *The Curse of Frankenstein*, released in Italy by Warner Bros. to critical indifference and a moderate public success, after having been approved without cuts

in October 1957 (NO 25288, 1957). Following the November 7<sup>th</sup> 1958 ban, Universal negotiated with the Italian Censorship Office cuts for thirty meters of film:

Delete the scene in which Dracula enters the library, screaming; tone down the scene in which Dracula shoves the vampire woman to the ground; tone down the scene in which Dracula sleeps in his coffin; delete the close-ups of the vampire woman in her coffin; tone down the killing and transformation of the vampire woman; tone down the killing of Lucy in her coffin; tone down the scene in which Dracula attempts to bite the Doctor; tone down Dracula's final disintegration (NO 28085, 1958).

Upon the execution of the above, on November 19<sup>th</sup> 1958, the movie was granted the public-screening permission: just like *I vampiri* and *The Curse of Frankenstein*, *Dracula* was deemed dangerous for minors and therefore rated VM16.

An in-depth look at *Cinematografia d'oggi* – a government-friendly Italian trade paper published from the late 1940s to the late 1970s – allows us to get a sense of the cultural climate surrounding horror movies in late-1950s Italy. The September 1958 issue hosts the article “‘Films del terrore’ in order to beat TV?”, one of the first reflections on the Anglo-American Gothic revival of the 1950s from an industrial point of view. In it, Italian film industry people and Italian State Cinema Bureau officials are warned that, as a reaction to the post-war shrinking of the US film market, **Hollywood has made an agreement with Hammer and is planning to flood “screens all around the world” with a “wave” of movies showing horrifying images that TV can't show** (Anonymous, 1958). Under this light, the demands to cut seemingly harmless footage of Lee pushing a woman to the ground and lying in a coffin can be seen as something more than just the work of overzealous Christian Democrats concerned about wife-beating and the sanctity of Catholic funerary rituals. In all likelihood, by butchering a huge international moneymaker, the Italian government wanted to send out to powerful American distributors the message that sensationalist *films del terrore* weren't welcome, and to discourage local imitations of **the Anglo-American horror wave**. In addition, a review in the December 1958-January 1959 issue of *Cinematografia d'oggi* advises Italian

exhibitors against renting *Dracula*, as “the acting performances, the dialogues and colour photography are of no use to this undoubtedly-terrifying film” (Anonymous, 1958-1959). A more emphatic urging for Italian exhibitors and moviegoers of Roman Catholic religion to stay away from Fisher’s movie came from the Vatican film censorship office:

*Dracula* is made with superficiality and ostentation of bad taste. It’s difficult to see in a single film so many horrible things, disgusting scenes, sadistic and superstitious acts; all this in a morbid atmosphere that not even the blatant ingenuousness and absurdity of the plot manage to mitigate. Forbidden to all (Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, 1959a).

Faced with Christian Democracy’s veiled threats and the Vatican’s open ostracism, Universal organised the Italian premiere of *Dracula* two weeks before Christmas, from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 1958, in two well-known *prima visione* theatres in Rome – one located in the heart of the city (Metropolitan Cinema) and one in a popular neighbourhood just outside the old-town centre (Capitol Cinema). Albeit generally received with scathing comments by Italian critics of all religious/political credos, mainly highlighting the film’s vulgarity and technical deficiencies (Ghelli, 1959; Fink, 1960), *Dracula* proved to be a box-office success during its premiere week (Di Chiara, 2009) and started its tour around the country in early 1959. Since the Vatican ban would prevent the film from being screened in thousands of parish cinemas and provincial theatres owned/run by devout Catholics, the commercial exploitation of *Dracula* probably took place in the pricey, urban industrial circuit of *prima* and *seconda visione* theatres rather than in the deep market. Sustained by a creative advertising campaign adorning cinema foyers with candles, black drapes, funeral garlands and a cardboard coffin (De’ Rossignoli, 1961), *Dracula* “earned about 600 million lire, ranking as the 28<sup>th</sup> highest-grossing film at the Italian box-office in the 1958-1959 season” (Pezzotta, 2014: 35) and launching a ‘vampire craze’ that took the Italian media sphere by storm.

Firstly, in the wake of *Dracula*’s release, newspapers started nicknaming any sex offender, burglar and juvenile delinquent a vampire (De’ Rossignoli, 1961). As for

periodicals, by late 1960 virtually every magazine had published at least one article on vampirism, the specific subject dependant on the publication's area of expertise. For instance, showbiz monthly *Sipario* featured an article about youth gangs inspired by vampire movies and horror comics (Magli, 1959), while in medical magazine *Progressi di terapia* there was an article on physician Polidori, author of "The Vampyre" (Anonymous, 1960d). In this cultural climate "radio drama *Vampiro*", featuring vampires being staked and dying screaming, was broadcast "twice over the course of just two months" on Italian State Radio (De' Rossignoli, 1961: 347). On the much more popular, and closely-controlled by censorship, Italian State Television, monsters could only be played for laughs, so "comedians Ugo Tognazzi and Raimondo Vianello parodied Dracula during prime-time variety show *Un due tre*" (Ibid.: 348). This was followed by veteran superstar of the Italian showbusiness Renato Rascel performing a vampire skit during quiz show *Il musicchiere*, as part of the promotional campaign for Steno's comedy of terrors *Tempi duri per i vampiri* (Della Casa & Giusti, 2014). The Italian music industry immediately jumped on the horror bandwagon too, thanks to composers Bruno Martino and Bruno Brighetti, who authored several tongue-in-cheek horror-themed songs (Magazù, 1960). In particular, Martino's *Dracula cha-cha-cha* became a hit during summer 1959, spawned a 1960 French version and featured prominently in the soundtrack of both *Tempi duri per i vampiri* and Rome-set Hollywood drama *Two Weeks in Another Town* (Vincente Minnelli, 1962) (Curti, 2015). As for variety theatre, in 1959 a revue called *Un juke-box per Dracula* was put into production by Vianello's touring company and achieved great success (Anonymous, 1960a). Similar shows subsequently popped up in almost every theatre and music hall around the country, and even in night clubs of *spogliarello*-movie fame (De' Rossignoli, 1961). But nowhere was the Italian 'vampire craze' evident as in the publishing and film industries, that often joined forces to make money out of the horror trend.

As noted by Pezzotta (2014) and Camilletti (2018), in 1959 and 1960 Italian publishers flooded the market with horror literature, and especially with vampire stories. In July 1959 Milanese colossus Longanesi printed a new translation of Stoker's *Dracula*, updating the Italian editions of 1922 and 1945 (see Chapter 1). Although avoiding any reference to Hammer on the cover and in the preface, the title of the Longanesi edition was *Dracula il vampiro*, the one chosen by Universal for the Italian release of Fisher's film. The same thing happened in May 1966, when small, Milan-based publishing house Sugar reprinted the 1945 edition of Stoker's *Dracula*, put a picture of Lee on the cover and called the book *Dracula il Principe delle Tenebre*, a literal translation of the title of Fisher's *Dracula: Prince of Darkness*, released in Italy in early 1966 as *Dracula, Principe delle Tenebre* (in January 1966 Longanesi had already reprinted its 1959 edition under the old title *Dracula il vampiro*). In 1960 three horror anthologies were published, among which was established Milanese publisher Feltrinelli's *I vampiri tra noi: 37 storie vampiriche*, edited by Ornella Volta and Valerio Riva, and boasting a preface by filmmaker Roger Vadim in an attempt at cross-promoting Vadim's in-the-making "Carmilla"-inspired *Il sangue e la rosa*. The trend continued into the 1960s, with book-length studies such as Emilio De' Rossignoli's *Io credo nei vampiri* (printed by improvised publisher Luciano Ferriani in 1961) and Volta's *Il vampiro* (published by Sugar in 1964, after the success of the original French-language edition of 1962), and horror anthologies such as *Frankenstein & Company: prontuario di teratologia filmica*, edited by Volta and published by Sugar in 1965. Moreover, "the success obtained at the Italian box-office by Fisher's *Dracula* in early 1959 [...] convinced a few 'adventurous' small publishers based in Rome" and already active in the war, crime and sci-fi genres "to print horror-themed pulp novels and distribute them in newspaper stands all over Italy" (Cozzi & Bissoli, 2012: 9-10). Such pulp novels were penned by Italian writers under English, German or French pseudonyms and tended to cannibalise the works of the renowned foreign authors translated and published by Milanese colossuses Mondadori, Rizzoli,

Longanesi and Bompiani. As a result, the *KKK* and *I racconti di Dracula* series were born, in June 1959 and December 1959 respectively.

The *KKK* series, which kept publishing horror-themed novels once or even twice a month until March 1972, was the brainchild of Marco and Alfonso Vicario, owners of film production and distribution company Atlantica Cinematografica, and journalist Leonia Celli, who, through their connections in the film business, started acquiring the screenplays of the foreign horror films to be distributed in Italy in the early 1960s. The deal was simple: the publisher got horror scripts for free from film distribution companies and sold novelisations of such screenplays; in return, film distributors obtained free pre-release advertising for their movies on the cover of the novels. Perhaps not coincidentally, the initial retail price of a *KKK* issue was 150 lire, just like the average film-ticket price in 1959-1960. The novelised films weren't many though<sup>9</sup> and, besides the odd short story collection or novella by Poe, Stevenson, Wilkie Collins, Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Robert Bloch, the vast majority of *KKK* novels were horror potboilers (many of them featuring vampires) by Rome-based writers disguised under foreign-sounding aliases and getting from the Vicarios 60,000 lire per manuscript (Cozzi & Lombardi, 2013). On the other hand, the *I racconti di Dracula* monthly series, which went on until 1981, published only original novels penned by Italian writers under foreign pseudonyms earning 55,000 lire per manuscript. As the title implies, the main subjects were vampires, together with witches, ghosts, mad scientists and serial killers. According to the series' publisher Antonino Cantarella, a Sicilian baron with experience in film production, the pulp novels targeted commuters travelling by train, hence the cheap price (120 lire) and length-limit (125 pages) (Cozzi & Bissoli, 2012).

Given the horror trend, another small Roman publisher, Editoriale Nova, decided to break new ground and import the horror genre into the then-flourishing *fotoromanzo* industry. Born to an immediate success in 1947, the *fotoromanzo* is a comic book of sorts, telling a story through written text (in captions and balloons) and black-and-white or colour images (a



series of photographs specifically taken to match an original script, or stills taken from an existing movie). Whether based on an original script or adapting existing films, the plots of 1940s and 1950s *fotoromanzi* invariably revolved around star-crossed lovers, exotic adventures, biographies of saints and patriots (Sullerot, 1977; Anelli, 1979; De Berti, 2000; Bravo, 2003). As throughout the 1950s “producing a *fotoromanzo* story to be printed in black-and-white cost less than 500,000 lire” (Anelli, 1979: 86-87), in February 1961 Editoriale Nova’s editor-in-chief Umberto Paolessi and journalist Giorgio Boschero – the latter also active as a writer for *I racconti di Dracula* under the pseudonym Joe H. Bosk (Cozzi & Bissoli, 2012) – launched a *fotoromanzo* series with colour covers and black-and-white pictures called *Malìa* (‘evil spell, charm’), entirely devoted to horror stories and sold in newspaper stands for 100 lire per issue. Initially *Malìa* dealt mainly with vampire narratives written and photographed by the in-house editorial team. However, to cut the already low black-and-white *fotoromanzo* production costs, agreements with Italian film distributors were soon struck and Editoriale Nova started using plots and stills from American, Mexican, British, French, Spanish and Italian horrors or thrillers dating from the 1940s to the mid-1960s (Appendix A).<sup>10</sup>

Naturally, in the wake of the Hammer *Dracula*’s success, Italian and American distributors started importing in Italy as many foreign vampire films as possible. The Italian Censorship Office reacted by issuing a few bans, with the result of preventing the most low-budget vampire exploits from circulation because “the Italian distributors of foreign B-movies” like *The Leech Woman* (Edward Dein, 1960) didn’t have “enough financial means to appeal the pronouncement”, recut their movie and have it reviewed a second time (Curti & Di Rocco, 2014: 78). In a period in which very old films like the 1941 *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* were being re-released (see ads in late-1958/early-1959 issues of *Cinematografia d’oggi*), the less wealthy among Italian distributors circumvented state bans by unearthing Italian-dubbed prints of horror-themed Hollywood B-movies from the 1940s and re-releasing them under

new titles containing the buzzword ‘Dracula’.<sup>11</sup> The foreign 1950s and 1960s vampire films approved for public screening were all forbidden to minors, generally after the removal of truculent shots from trailers [*The Return of Dracula*; *Curse of the Undead* (Edward Dein, 1959); *The Brides of Dracula* (Terence Fisher, 1960)] and, in some cases, from the movies themselves (*The Return of Dracula*; *Dracula: Prince of Darkness*), as the Italian Censorship Office was against graphic depictions of staking (NO 29018, 1959; NO 31205, 1960; NO 33224, 1960; NO 46568, 1966). It’s thus that *Tempi duri per i vampiri* – the first attempt by Italian film producers to cash in on the Hammer *Dracula* – wasn’t a horror proper but used Gothic clichés for laughs according to a tradition of parodic takes on macabre subjects that, in Italian cinema, dated back at least to Eleuterio Rodolfi’s 1916 *Preferisco l’Inferno* (see Chapter 1).

If *I vampiri*’s most fantastic and gruesome scenes were discarded by the producers and substituted with a police-investigation subplot (see Chapter 1), the screenwriters of *Tempi duri per i vampiri* went even further in the rejection of straightforward horror. Aware of the meagre receipts gathered by Freda’s film on the domestic market, they decided to parody Hammer’s box-office hit, moving the bloodthirsty sexual predator from Mitteleuropa to the *bel paese* and adding singer and vaudeville/film actor Rascel’s slapstick antics, which were repeatedly proven successful at the Italian box office throughout the 1950s, most recently in gangster-film parody *Rascel-fifi* (Guido Leoni, 1957) and war-movie parody *Rascel marine* (Guido Leoni, 1958). As a matter of fact, ever since the commercial success of *Fifa e arena* (Mario Mattoli, 1948) – a parody of *Blood and Sand* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1941) starring Rascel’s fellow-vaudeville-star Totò – it became a common strategy for Italian film producers to hire theatre comedians (e.g., Tognazzi, Vianello and Walter Chiari in the 1950s, and Franco Franchi and Ciccio Ingrassia in the 1960s and early 1970s) to parody Italian or foreign box-office hits (D’Amico; 1985; Menarini, 2001).

Adopting the Ultrascope-Ferraniacolor-Technicolor format, and appropriating elements from the typically-Italian ‘summer holiday’ comedy subgenre (featuring bikini-clad beauties in gorgeous Italian sceneries and centred on characters “looking for love, or at least a fling”) (Fullwood, 2015: 76),<sup>12</sup> *Tempi duri per i vampiri* went into production in spring 1959, with a sixty-two-day shooting plan including location shoot in the Italian Riviera. Film direction was entrusted to Steno, who could boast a long experience in movie parodies as a writer of 1942 seminal horror parody *C’è un fantasma nel castello* (see Chapter 1) and the aforementioned *Fifa e arena*, and as a writer and director of sci-fi parody *Totò nella Luna* (Stefano Vanzina as Steno, 1958). The estimated budget of *Tempi duri per i vampiri* was 257 million lire, which Italian production companies CEI-Incom, Mountflour Films and Maxima Film planned to cover with a state loan of 140 million and a cash investment of 117 million (CEI-Incom also was the film’s distributor and the owner of the studio where interiors were to be shot). As the male lead producers cast Rascel for 30 million, while recently-risen international horror star Lee and *Le fatiche di Ercole*’s female lead Sylva Koscina were hired for 3 and 3.5 million respectively, in the small roles of vampire Baron Roderico of Bramfürten and a rich tourist. The idea was that of making a timidly-transnational product, as testified by the producers’ investment-recoup plan: Italian box-office receipts and tax refunds would grant a minimum income of 250 million, and selling the film abroad would yield a minimum return of 40 million (ACS 3149-243, 1959). Whilst little is known about foreign sales,<sup>13</sup> the plan certainly worked on the domestic market, as *Tempi duri per i vampiri* ended up costing less than 192 million (post-production included) and was a hit in the *prima visione* circuit between October 1959 and January 1960 (Anonymous, 1960e), which led to another horror parody being rushed into production by CEI-Incom, *Il mio amico Jekyll / My Friend, Dr. Jekyll* (Marino Girolami, 1960), starring Vianello and Tognazzi.

A sustained production of vampire-themed Italian horror films started in late 1959, when Bruno Bolognesi’s tiny, improvised production company Consorzio Italiano Films

decided to make *L'amante del vampiro* to capitalise on *Dracula's* success in Italy and around the world. As reported by screenwriter Ernesto Gastaldi (1991; Appendix D), *L'amante del vampiro* cost around 40 million lire and was financed through *minimo garantito* (probably by Lazio-based regional distributors, given *Dracula's* success during its premiere week in Rome in December 1958). Additional money was brought by actors Walter Bigari and Gino Turini on the condition that they would play leading roles. The casting of French actress H  l  ne R  my suggests that Bolognesi either pre-sold or hoped to sell the movie in France, where Fisher's *Dracula* was enjoying both a huge box-office success and critical praise among cin  phile circles (Boullet, 1962; Caen, 1962a; Le Bris, 1962a; b; Tavernier, 1963). *L'amante del vampiro* was shot over the course of three weeks in December 1959, with a cast including friends and lovers of director Renato Polselli and the production team (Gastaldi, 1991). Given the shoestring budget, cast and crew never set foot on the Istituto Nazionale Luce sound stage mentioned in the opening credits (Appendix D), and spent three weeks living in the very same real-life location where they were shooting interior scenes, Palazzo Borghese in Ardena – a cost-cutting strategy that would soon become typical of the Gothic horror *filone* (Curti, 2015).

Indeed, *L'ultima preda del vampiro* was produced in summer 1960 by Nord Film Italiana under very similar circumstances. Written and directed by *I vampiri's* co-scenarist Piero Regnoli, the film used Palazzo Borghese interiors as both set and accommodation, and recycled props, artistic and technical cast from *L'amante del vampiro*. In its application for the Italian-nationality certificate, the production company declared a four-week shooting schedule and an estimated budget of 50 million lire covered by the Italian distributor's *minimo garantito* (20 million), by cash investments from Nord Film Italiana (7 million) and by an unspecified financier (15 million). The rest came from Regnoli (4.75 million), Bigari (1 million) and production managers Umberto Borsato and Tiziano Longo (2.3 million) in exchange for a share of the future profits. In the end the film cost about 37 million (post-

production included) (ACS 3389-276, 1960), more or less the salary that Rascel got to star in *Tempi duri per i vampiri*.

Between PolSELLI's and Regnoli's ultralow-budget efforts, three much more professional vampire films were made in Italy in the wake of *Dracula*'s international success: *Il sangue e la rosa* (put into production in November 1959), *Il mulino delle donne di pietra* (shot in February-March 1960) and *La maschera del demonio* (shot over the course of an alleged six weeks in spring 1960). With a budget of 340 and 161 million lire respectively (post-production and publicity excluded), *Il sangue e la rosa* and *Il mulino delle donne di pietra* were Italo-French co-productions aiming at crafting a spectacular product to be distributed internationally. Specifically, "Carmilla"-inspired *Il sangue e la rosa* was a fifty-fifty co-production between Rome-based Documento Film and French producer Raymond Eger, with Documento Film's 170 million mainly coming from a 93-million *minimo garantito* by Paramount (which took care of distribution in Italy) and from 62-million-worth pre-sales to foreign distributors (ACS 3236-256, 1959). Shot at Cinecittà studios and in the Roman countryside, the movie boasted the screenwriter-director who was married to Brigitte Bardot and made her an international sex symbol with worldwide box-office hit *Et Dieu... créa la femme / ...And God Created Woman* (Roger Vadim, 1956); scope and Technicolor photography; Hollywood actor Mel Ferrer and a lesbian-tinged vampiric ménage between popular actress Elsa Martinelli and Vadim's second wife Annette Stroyberg (Anonymous, 1960b). Similarly transnational but less lavish a production, *Il mulino delle donne di pietra* made use of Eastmancolor photography (a process much cheaper than Technicolor), widescreen ratio and a cast of Italian, French and German talents to tell a story mixing *I vampiri*'s scientific vampires, the mad sculptor from *Mystery of the Wax Museum* and *House of Wax*, the mad surgeon from *Les yeux sans visage* and Hammer's Gothic atmospheres.<sup>14</sup> 30% of the total budget came from French investors, who paid for French actors and location shooting in the Netherlands (Di Chiara, 2016b), while the rest of the money came from cash

investments by Italian production company Vanguard Film and its associates, plus a 40-million *minimo garantito* and 20 million given on credit by the Cinecittà studios where the film was shot (ACS 3241-256, 1959).

On the contrary, Bava's directorial debut *La maschera del demonio* was a '100% Italian' production – its title probably meant to echo *House of Wax's* and *The Curse of Frankenstein's* Italian-release titles *La maschera di cera* and *La maschera di Frankenstein*. The first treatment penned by Bava, titled "Il Viji" and dated September 1<sup>st</sup> 1959, called for a faithful adaptation of Nikolaj Gogol's 1835 short story "The Viji", but over the course of many revisions the original evil gnome was turned into a female vampire-witch and the plot changed accordingly, until it bore very little resemblance to Gogol's tale (Gomasca, Pulici et al., 2004). The film was produced by tiny production company Jolly Film and producer-distributor Galatea, which after the success of its B-movie *Le fatiche di Ercole* had been specialising in pepla and low-cost rip-offs of successful foreign genre films, including Freda's sci-fi/horror hybrid *Caltiki il mostro immortale*, an imitation of *The Quatermass Xperiment* (Val Guest, 1955), *X the Unknown* (Leslie Norman, 1956) and *The Blob* (Irvin S. Yeaworth Jr., 1958) made for a mere 110 million lire (post-production and publicity included) (Venturini, 2001). As a result, *La maschera del demonio* was shot in black and white at Titanus studio rather than in colour at the more prestigious Cinecittà studios like *Il sangue e la rosa* and *Il mulino delle donne di pietra*. Yet, *La maschera del demonio* was made less quickly and less cheaply than usual for Galatea's and Bava's standards: for the sake of perfecting dolly shots, widescreen compositions and lighting, the production granted the debuting director an extra week of shooting and the initial budget of 100 million lire (post-production and publicity included) was raised to 145 (Ibid.). Such money came from a 65-million cash investment by Galatea (60 million were *minimo garantito* by Italian distributor UNIDIS), on top of which an 80-million state loan was requested (ACS 3302-265, 1960).

After the Italian Gothic horror production boom of 1960, colour triptych *I tre volti della paura* and black-and-white supernatural love story *Danza macabra* were the only vampire-themed horror movies from the 1960s that enjoyed a decent budget. Planned as a seventy-three, 333-million-lira co-production between Italy (100-million cash from Emmepi Cinematografica and Galatea, plus a 160-million state loan) and France (Galatea's French subsidiary Société Cinématographique Lyre), *I tre volti della paura* was actually made for about 206 million (post-production and publicity excluded) (ACS 4206-390, 1962), while eighty-two Italo-French co-production *Danza macabra* cost 190 million lire (post-production and publicity excluded), with 44 million by Parisian company Leo-Lax Film, a 50-million *minimo garantito* from Italian distributor Lux and an investment by producer Giovanni Addessi (ACS 4215-392, 1963).<sup>15</sup> In both cases, the biggest cheques were written to rent facilities and equipment, and to hire well-known foreign actors (Boris Karloff and Mark Damon for *I tre volti della paura*; Barbara Steele and Georges Rivière for *Danza macabra*), while the shooting process was heavily based on artisanal skills leading to massive time and cost savings. *I tre volti della paura*, for instance, was almost entirely shot in Titanus studio and its episode *I Wurdalak*, adapting Aleksey Konstantinovich Tolstoy's 1839 vampire novella *La famille du Vourdalak*, recycled the crypt-set from *La maschera del demonio* (Pezzotta, 2013). *Danza macabra*, on the other hand, exploited existing sets from a comic period film of Addessi's that had been finished before schedule, and it was shot at breakneck speed over the course of fifteen days using multiple-camera setups for each scene (Caen, 1965; Fazzini, 2004).

All the other vampire-themed horror movies from the 1960s – *La strage dei vampiri*, *L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock*, *La cripta e l'incubo*, *Il mostro dell'Opera*, *Amanti d'oltretomba* and *La vendetta di Lady Morgan* – followed the Polselli-Regnoli mode of production instead. That is to say, they were financed mainly through *minimo garantito* and rented the cheapest Italian film studios only to obtain the Italian-nationality certificate, while

the films were actually shot in real-life locations. Costing 96 and 141 million lire respectively (post-production included), *L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock* and *La cripta e l'incubo* are the most expensive films in the group, undoubtedly because the former made use of Steele, Robert Flemyng and Technicolor photography, and the latter cast Lee in a 12-million supporting role.

*L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock* is another collaboration between Freda and producers Donati and Carpentieri, who in the early 1960s had renamed their company Panda Cinematografica and had started making pepla (Di Chiara, 2009). Given Alfred Hitchcock's enormous popularity in Italy, due to the broadcasting of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* on Italian State Television since January 1959 and the Italian release of world-wide hit *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) in the 1960-1961 season, Donati and Carpentieri commissioned Gastaldi the script for a Hitchcockian-thriller-cum-necrophiliac-twist and hired Freda to direct it as fast as possible in a Roman villa (Curti, 2017a). According to the film's financial plan, the budget consisted mostly of *minimo garantito* from distributor Warner Bros. (75 million), plus 35 million from "banks, suppliers, associates and third parties" (ACS 3923-339, 1962).

"Carmilla"-inspired *La cripta e l'incubo* was a seventy-thirty Italo-Spanish co-production that exploited the appeal of horror star Lee to obtain a substantial *minimo garantito*, and then proceeded to relegate him in a minor role to keep the budget as low as possible. Indeed, according to *La cripta e l'incubo*'s financial plan, most of the money came from a deal with Italian distributor Imperialcine and from a cash investment by Italian production company MEC (ACS 4351-419, 1963), which was also a regional film distributor and could therefore obtain advance money from its partner-theatres. With this money and the Spanish quota, the film was shot with great economy "on an existing natural set, in and around the Castle Piccolomini in Balsorano, [...] cast and crew also accommodated in the [...] manor in order to cut costs" (Curti, 2015: 129).



Adopting MEC's strategy, regional distributor Carlo Caiano founded production company Emmeci Cinematografica and tried to persuade the Italian State Cinema Bureau to greenlight a European co-production to finance his son Mario's *Amanti d'oltretomba*, starring Steele reprising her double role of ingénue and vengeful ghost from *La maschera del demonio*. Upon several rejections, Emmeci Cinematografica eventually resigned to have the movie shot at breakneck speed in Villa Parisi in Frascati, on a cash investment of 81 million (post-production and publicity included) (ACS 4857-524, 1965).<sup>16</sup> Made in the same year, *La vendetta di Lady Morgan* cost a little more (86 million, post-production and publicity included) (ACS 4960-548, 1965), was almost entirely shot in and around Castle Chigi in Rome and ended up being the one and only film tiny company Morgan Film produced during its brief existence. The other two vampire-themed horror films – Mercur Films' *La strage dei vampiri* and Nord Industrial Film's *Il mostro dell'Opera* – were both produced by regional distributors and shot in spring-summer 1961, for 52 and 62.5 million respectively (post-production included) (ACS 3736-317, 1961; ACS 3590-300, 1961).<sup>17</sup> As usual, inexpensive film studios were hired but hardly, if ever, used because the former movie was shot in and around a real-life castle in Lazio, while the latter, a fusion of the Hammer *Dracula* and Gaston Leroux's 1909-1910 novel *The Phantom of the Opera*, was mostly shot in a real-life theatre in Umbria.

In order to maximise profits in times of 'vampire craze', the widely-popular vampire figure was appropriated by several pepla, and by Mario Amendola's *Sexy proibitissimo*, one of the last *spogliarello* movies attempting to exploit the extraordinary box-office success of *Europa di notte*. To pepla, the vampire-as-aristocratic-tyrant figure offered a perfect villain to set against people's heroes Ercole (*Ercole al centro della Terra*; *Ercole contro Moloch*), Maciste (*Maciste contro il vampiro*; *Maciste e la regina di Samar*) and the like (*Roma contro Roma*). On the other hand, *Sexy proibitissimo* – a follow-up to *Sexy proibito* (Osvaldo Civirani, 1963) financed by Gino Mordini with a 118-million investment (post-production

included) (ACS 4285-407, 1963) – tried to inject new lifeblood in the repetition compulsion of female stripteases by featuring Dracula and other classic monsters, in a mixture of horror and erotic dances already pioneered by *L'amante del vampiro* and *L'ultima preda del vampiro*.

As for pepla specifically, SPA Cinematografica's *Ercole al centro della Terra* borrowed its title from *Journey to the Center of the Earth* (Henry Levin, 1959) and, inspired by *Tempi duri per i vampiri*, paid Lee 3.4 million lire to play the small role of a bloodthirsty usurper from Hades. Thanks to the combined appeal of horror star Lee and the huge popularity of muscleman films in Italy and abroad, the film secured a 107-million advance from Italian and German distributors, and was subsequently shot, edited, dubbed and launched with great economy, for a total 169 million (17.4 of which went to English bodybuilder Reg Park for playing Ercole) (ACS 3611-302, 1961). *Ercole al centro della Terra* was to be titled *Ercole contro i vampiri* (Continenza & Tessari, 1961), but film company Ambrosiana Cinematografica registered the title *Maciste contro il vampiro* first and then managed to shoot and release a vampire-themed peplum before SPA Cinematografica. *Maciste contro il vampiro* made up for the absence of Hammer's Dracula by casting American Gordon Scott – the popular 1950s Tarzan – as Maciste (12.3 million), and by greatly investing in a Middle-East-like setting inspired to *Il ladro di Bagdad / The Thief of Bagdad* (Bruno Vailati, Arthur Lubin, 1961). *Maciste contro il vampiro* cost 330 million (post-production included), covered by *minimo garantito* (from distributor Dino de Laurentiis, in whose state-of-the-art Dinocittà studios the film was partly shot), deferred payments to Italian and Yugoslavian suppliers and a hefty state loan (Ambrosiana Cinematografica asked for 260 million in its 450-million financial plan) (ACS 3546-295, 1961). The other three vampire-themed pepla were all made for about 160 million each (post-production and publicity included): Gordon-Scott-vehicle *Ercole contro Moloch* and *Maciste e la regina di Samar* were seventy-thirty Italo-French co-productions (the Italian part of the budget mainly

came from *minimo garantito* and foreign pre-sales) (ACS 4374-424, 1963; ACS 4548-460, 1964), while Galatea – the company that found the peplum ‘gold lode’ in 1957-1958 and was bound to disappear with the production crisis of 1964-1965 (Venturini, 2001) – patched *Roma contro Roma* together with footage from its previous pepla and a plot centred on political conspirators worshipping a vampire goddess (as usual for Galatea, money mostly came from Italian distribution and state credit) (ACS 4412-433, 1963).

In 1966 the production of vampire-themed films (horror or otherwise) stopped in Italy, to be resumed only in 1969. Besides the general decrease in Italian film production after record year 1964, this was once more due to the intertwining of national and international factors. As for national factors, the hypothesis that the Italian government used its powers to prevent vampire movies from being made is to be discarded. Firstly, no vampire film was ever denied the permission to be shot at the preventive-censorship stage. Although much derided by state officials for their lack of originality and verisimilitude, all the Italian vampire movies that asked for the Italian-nationality certificate and/or state loans were greenlit, including Alberto Cardone and Marco Masi’s *Il teschio del vampiro*, a blatant speculation on a 20-million *minimo garantito* whose shooting never took place (ACS 4120-373, 1963). If comments on excessively-gruesome screenplays were made, as in the case of *Il mulino delle donne di pietra*, a reassuring letter signed by production delegates was enough to remove objections and get the shooting started (ACS 3241-256, 1959).<sup>18</sup> Secondly, as far as the Italian Censorship Office was concerned, only *L’amante del vampiro* – the first, non-parodic **Dracula rip-off** – was hindered, as the state granted Polselli’s film a VM16 rating only after the removal of “all the close-ups of the vampire”, which were judged “truce and repugnant” (NO 31701, 1960). *Tempi duri per i vampiri* and the vampire-themed pepla got an all-ages-admitted rating, like almost every parody and muscleman film that preceded them. The other vampire films were simply rated as forbidden to minors (VM16 if the film was made before 1962; VM14 or VM18 after a new rating system was implemented in April 1962). Cuts were

asked only in relation to female nudity,<sup>19</sup> which would have happened to any movie in 1950s and early-1960s Italy, regardless of genre and country of origin, while prints of Italian films destined to foreign markets were allowed to be much more sexually explicit, as shown by the French versions of *L'ultima preda del vampiro* and *Danza macabra* (Piselli & Morrocchi, 1996). In view of all this, the national factors behind the interruption of Italian-vampire-film production from 1966 to 1969 should be sought in market dynamics rather than in state intervention.

Since in the post-1949 Italian film industry distribution normally fed production, the analysis should start from box-office figures.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Italian Censorship Office rating</b>	<b>Vatican censorship rating</b>	<b>Release period (distributor)</b>	<b>Box-office gross in lire</b>
<i>I vampiri</i>	VM16 (NO 23894, 1957)	AR [contains morally-dangerous elements, fully-mature adults only] (Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, 1957)	April 1957 - March 1964 (Titanus)	125,261,726 (Rondolino & Levi, 1967: 128)
<i>Tempi duri per i vampiri</i>	All ages admitted (NO 30310, 1959)	E [Forbidden to all] (CCC, 1959b)	October 1959 - March 1964 (CEI-Incom)	530,445,618 (Ibid.: 151)
<i>L'amante del vampiro</i>	VM16 (NO 31701, 1960)	E (CCC, 1960a)	May 1960 - March 1964 (Rome International Films)	104,590,561 (Ibid.: 156)
<i>Il mulino delle donne di pietra</i>	VM16 (NO 32613, 1960)	E (CCC, 1960b)	August 1960 - March 1964 (Cino Del Duca)	159,588,021 (Ibid.: 164)
<i>La maschera del demonio</i>	VM16 (NO 32584, 1960)	E (CCC, 1961a)	August 1960 - March 1963 (UNIDIS)	137,673,316 (Ibid.: 173)
<i>Il sangue e la rosa</i>	VM16 (NO 33435, 1960)	E (CCC, 1961c)	January 1961 - March 1964 (Paramount)	207,228,361 (Ibid.: 168-169)
<i>L'ultima preda del vampiro</i>	VM16 (NO 33364, 1960)	E (CCC, 1960c)	November 1960 - March 1964 (Film Selezione)	72,193,134 (Ibid.: 221)
<i>Maciste contro il vampiro</i>	All ages admitted (NO 35277, 1961)	S [not recommended] (CCC, 1961b)	August 1961 - March 1964 (De Laurentiis)	495,006,611 (Ibid.: 187)
<i>Ercole al centro della Terra</i>	All ages admitted (NO 35906, 1961)	A [adults only] (CCC, 1962b)	November 1961 - March 1964 (Imperialcine)	397,623,049 (Ibid.: 185)

<i>La strage dei vampiri</i>	VM16 (NO 36600, 1962)	E (CCC, 1962a)	February 1962 - March 1964 (Mercur)	36,205,638 (Ibid.: 219)
<i>L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock</i>	VM18 (NO 37710, 1962)	S (CCC, 1962c)	June 1962 - March 1964 (Warner Bros.)	139,011,326 (Ibid.: 219)
<i>Sexy proibitissimo</i>	VM18 (NO 41062, 1963)	E (CCC, 1964b)	October 1963 - June 1965 (Atlantis Film)	180,729,236 (Ibid.: 244)
<i>Ercole contro Moloch</i>	All ages admitted (NO 41880, 1963)	AM [morally-mature adults only] (CCC, 1964a)	December 1963 - June 1965 (Euro International Films)	254,599,067 (Ibid.: 259)
<i>I tre volti della paura</i>	VM14 (NO 40988, 1963)	E (CCC, 1963)	August 1963 - March 1964 (Warner Bros.)	103,503,195 (Ibid.: 248)
<i>Roma contro Roma</i>	All ages admitted (NO 42091, 1964)	AR (CCC, 1964c)	February 1964 - June 1965 (Cineriz)	102,285,381 (Ibid.: 266)
<i>Danza macabra</i>	VM18 (NO 40624, 1963)	E (CCC, 1965b)	February 1964 - June 1965 (Globe Films International)	100,673,013 (Ibid.: 257)
<i>Maciste e la regina di Samar</i>	All ages admitted (NO 43266, 1964)	A (CCC, 1965a)	June 1964 - ? (Atlantis Film)	219,721,000 (Baroni, 1995: 128)
<i>La cripta e l'incubo</i>	VM14 (NO 42808, 1964)	S (CCC, 1964d)	May 1964 - June 1965 (MEC)	49,127,896 (Rondolino & Levi, 1967: 257)
<i>Il mostro dell'Opera</i>	VM18 (NO 43135, 1964)	E (CCC, 1968)	June 1964 - ? (Nord Industrial)	7,476,000 (Baroni, 1995: 139)
<i>Amanti d'oltretomba</i>	VM18 (NO 45399, 1965)	E (CCC, 1965c)	July 1965 - December 1965 (Emmeci)	20,559,000 (Rondolino & Levi, 1967: 272)
<i>La vendetta di Lady Morgan</i>	VM14 (NO 45744, 1965)	E (CCC, 1966)	December 1965 - ? (INDIEF)	61,000,000 (Baroni, 1995: 162)

Evidently, only genre movies in which vampires were a surplus attraction in an already-tested winning formula became a commercial success, i.e. managed to gather box-office receipts that – after taxes, exhibitors' and distributors' shares – exceeded production costs: Rascel-star-vehicle parody *Tempi duri per i vampiri*, spogliarello movie *Sexy proibitissimo* and pepla (with the exception of *Roma contro Roma*, which was released when the *filone* was already waning due to oversupply). As for vampire-themed horror films, none managed to replicate the 600-million-lira success of the Hammer *Dracula*. *L'amante del vampiro*, *L'ultima preda del vampiro* and *L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock* might have turned out to be slightly

profitable on the domestic market but, if this actually happened, it was due more to the meagreness of production investments than to the greatness of box-office returns. All the other horrors failed to break even and make profit upon their release on the Italian market (the second biggest film market in the world, it's worth remembering). The case of *Il mostro dell'Opera* – submitted to the Italian Censorship Office and released in 1964, but shot in spring 1961 under the title *Il vampiro dell'Opera* (ACS 3590-300, 1961) – sums it up pretty well. With its belated release due to the producers' financial problems, title change and box-office fiasco, the film shows that, after the 1959-1961 'vampire craze', Italian audiences' "interest in Dracula's makeshifts had waned [and] native bloodsuckers did not take root: Dracula worked much better as a trademark" for the *KKK*, *I racconti di Dracula* and *Malia* series (Curti, 2015: 135), as the butt of the joke in I Gufi's cabaret shows (Camilletti, 2018) and *Carosello* advertising (e.g., in Fattori and Cacciari's 1965 short *L'ispettore Bramiè: La fine del vampiro*), as a stage costume for beat/rock band I Corvi, or as an occasional villain in the 1964-1974 comic-book series *Satanik*.<sup>20</sup>

True, in most cases the producers-organisers of vampire-themed Italian horror films had already made their profit by appropriating part of the *minimo garantito* and state loans. Not to mention the fact that financial risk was often cushioned via European co-production agreements and, in the Andreotti system, producers of certified-Italian films could count on tax rebates on domestic box-office receipts for extra earnings. Yet, the key question posed by the above box-office data remains: why distributors kept on feeding the production of vampire-themed horror films if, ever since *I vampiri*, such movies repeatedly proved at best mediocresly successful at the Italian box office? Given the films' production history previously outlined, one could say that distributors-financiers were gambling little money since the *minimo garantito* corresponds to the minimum amount of net box-office receipts that a distributor expects to make from a given film. However, from the businessman's point of view, this kind of speculation involving products with limited appeal on the domestic market

– and excluded from Italian State Television (see Chapter 1) and the vast parish cinema circuit – was quite risky, as distributors-financiers had to wait years for their films to pass from *prima* to *terza visione* theatres in order to finally get low box-office receipts and therefore very little tax refunds from the state.<sup>21</sup>

To paraphrase what has been written about the Gothic horror *filone* as a whole (Pironi, 1977; Mora, 1978; 1986; Troiano, 1985; 1989; Della Casa, 1990; 2000), within the context of the Italian film industry, the 1960s vampire-themed Italian horrors were a marginal phenomenon in terms of number of films made, and inconsequential in terms of box-office receipts. Contrary to pepla, *spogliarello* movies and, after 1964, spaghetti westerns – which sold countless tickets in both Italy and the world market – Italian horrors were “domestic films made for export” (Di Chiara, 2016b), in view of their release in continental Europe (mainly Francophone and German-speaking countries) (Curti, 2015) and in the American drive-in circuit and syndicated TV (Heffernan, 2004). In the latter case, *La maschera del demonio* was a trailblazing movie. Picked up for North-American distribution by AIP executives after a promotional screening in Rome, Bava’s directorial debut was shortened, redubbed and rescored by AIP, and released in the US as *Black Sunday*, in February 1961, in the wake of the success of Fisher’s *Dracula* and Roger Corman’s Poe cycle (Lucas, 2007). After having quickly become AIP’s highest-grossing film of the season, *Black Sunday* led to several production-distribution agreements being struck between the American company and Galatea. In fact Galatea later financed *I tre volti della paura* with money from AIP’s subsidiary Alta Vista Film Productions (Arkoff, 1995; Curti, 2015), and it’s possible that AIP was also behind *Roma contro Roma*.<sup>22</sup> More generally, the US success of the late-1950s Hammer Gothic and *Black Sunday* encouraged American independent distributors and TV syndicators to buy at fixed price (and oftentimes rework) *I vampiri*, *L’amante del vampiro*, *Il mulino delle donne di pietra*, *L’ultima preda del vampiro*, *La strage dei vampiri*, *L’orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock*, *La cripta e l’incubo*, *Danza macabra* and other non-vampiric

Italian horrors (Heffernan, 2004; Curti, 2015) – one-off payments in dollars providing Italian producers-organisers and distributors-financiers with ample margins for profit given the exiguity of production costs (Pirro, 1965).

This is exactly what kept Italian Gothic horrors (vampire-themed or otherwise) alive from the early 1960s to the half of the decade, and also the main reason why Italian producers repeatedly cast English-speaking, internationally-bankable stars such as Lee and Steele. After 1965, when in view of ever-shrinking profits AIP decided to end its Poe cycle and Hammer's 1966 *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* failed to become a worldwide smash-hit like its 1958 predecessor, Italian Gothic horror producers saw a contraction in their foreign end markets and production was halted. In Italy, the waning interest in Gothic horror on the Anglophone market contributed to the disappearance of both Galatea, at the forefront of fantastic cinema ever since 1957-1958, and the *Malia* series, which between 1961 and 1966 had published several *fotoromanzi* based on AIP's Poe cycle and on Italian 1960-1965 Gothic horror exploits (Appendix A).<sup>23</sup> Finally, as Curti (2011) remarks, by early 1966 *Per un pugno di dollari*'s extraordinary domestic gross and very good sales in Spain and West Germany convinced Italian production and distribution companies of all sizes to dive into another *filone*, the spaghetti western.

The production of vampire films involving Italian companies restarted in 1969 with Italo-Spanish-West-German *Il Conte Dracula*, a self-proclaimedly faithful adaptation of Stoker's novel starring Lee and made just before Hammer's *Scars of Dracula* (Roy Ward Baker, 1970) (Lee, 2003). After that, six Italian films tapping into the vampire mythology would make use of co-production agreements in order to cushion financial risks, pool artistic resources and provide a fairly-spectacular product that could sell well in both continental Europe and the Anglophone market: *La corta notte delle bambole di vetro* (Italy, Yugoslavia, West Germany), *Nella stretta morsa del ragno* (Italy, France, West Germany), *La notte dei diavoli* and *Le vergini cavalcano la morte* (Italy, Spain), *L'uomo che uccideva a sangue*



*freddo* and *Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!* (Italy, France). As production data for certified-Italian films made after 1965 aren't in the public domain (see Chapter 1), a definite production history of 1969-1975 Italian vampire cinema can't be written. However, since in *Il Conte Dracula*, *Le vergini cavalcano la morte* and *L'uomo che uccideva a sangue freddo* the director is from the co-production partner's country and the film is mostly or entirely shot abroad, with little or no artistic/technical personnel of Italian nationality, it's safe to assume that the financial support of Italian companies was less than 50% of the total budget. In the case of *L'uomo che uccideva a sangue freddo*, the Italian production company was distribution colossus Medusa (hence, probably, a production investment under the form of *minimo garantito*), while the Italian production companies of *Il Conte Dracula* and *Le vergini cavalcano la morte* had very little means, survived for a couple of years only and made very few films, mostly shoestring-budget spaghetti westerns or gialli in co-production with Spain. Considering that *La corta notte delle bambole di vetro*, *Nella stretta morsa del ragno* and *La notte dei diavoli* were directed by an Italian, and taking into account the presence of Italians in cast and crew, it seems reasonable that Italian financial investment was at least 50% of the entire budget.<sup>24</sup>

As reported by Curti (2017b), production-wise *Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!* was quite unique a case. Following the *succès de scandale* of *Trash* (Paul Morrissey, 1970) upon its Italian release in early 1972, Carlo Ponti invited Morrissey to Cinecittà to improvise a Frankenstein movie and a Dracula one, to be shot back-to-back in 3D over the course of seven weeks, on a total budget of 700,000 dollars coming from Ponti and his French associates. The movies were shot from March to May 1973 by Morrissey and his tutor Antonio Margheriti, respectively credited as 'technical director' and 'director' in the Italian prints of the films for reasons relating to the obtaining of Italian-nationality certificates. For technical issues, only the Frankenstein movie was shot in 3D, on existing sets from Italo-American low-budget horror *Lady Frankenstein* (Mel Welles, 1971), while

*Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!* recycled much of its twin-film cast, crew, props and costumes, and also made use of Villa Parisi, a classic set/accommodation of the 1960s Gothic *filone*.

As for the ‘100% Italian’ vampire films of the 1970s, budgets were either low (*Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza*, which probably secured a decent *minimo garantito* from Titanus by choosing a parodic register and by casting in the title role Lando Buzzanca, a star of 1970s sexy comedy/*commedia all’italiana* hybrids) or, in the majority of cases, close to non-existent (*La notte dei dannati; ...Hanno cambiato faccia; L’amante del demonio; Il prato macchiato di rosso; Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel Trecento...; Il plenilunio delle vergini*). For instance, made at the beginning of the decade that saw “the ever-increasing inflation of early-1960s Italy” (Di Chiara, 2016b: 40) reach its peak, *...Hanno cambiato faccia* allegedly cost a mere 50 million lire and was financed by director Corrado Farina and other members of cast and crew united in the cooperative Filmsettanta (Appendix B), as the 1965 ‘legge Corona’ granted benefits to movies financed by the film workers themselves (Torri, 1989). Not to mention *Il prato macchiato di rosso*, a project whose financially-precarious, scraped-together nature is attested by obtrusive, plot-embedded product placements for Chivas Regal and winemaker Testa.

Following the 1960s Italian Gothic horror tradition, these six shoestring-budget, ‘100% Italian’ films made little or no use of the cheap studios they hired, preferring to shoot and accommodate cast and crew in real-life locations such as villas owned by friends (*...Hanno cambiato faccia*) (Farina, 2016), or Castle Piccolomini and Palazzo Borghese (*Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel Trecento...; Il plenilunio delle vergini*), already used in the previous decade as the accommodation/set of *L’amante del vampiro, L’ultima preda del vampiro, La cripta e l’incubo, Metempsyco / Tomb of Torture* (Antonio Boccacci as Anthony Kristye, 1963) and *Il boia scarlatto / Bloody Pit of Horror* (Domenico M. Pupillo as Max Hunter, 1965). Indeed, vampire films from the 1970s not only cast 1950s-1960s stars on the

wane (Lucia Bosé, Rossano Brazzi, Mickey Hargitay, Nino Castelnuovo, Mark Damon, Sylva Koscina, Pierre Brice), but were also made by the same people who pioneered Italian Gothic horror in the 1960s. *L'amante del vampiro*'s director Polselli wrote, produced and directed *Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel Trecento...* via his production-distribution company GRP. Paolo Lombardo, the director of *L'amante del demonio*, had been one of the screenwriters of *Il mostro di Venezia / The Embalmer* (Dino Tavella, 1965), while his assistant Marco Masi is the same person who wrote *Il teschio del vampiro* in 1963 and, possibly, several *Malìa* issues under the pen-name M. Masi. Mixing Stoker's 1914 posthumous short story "Dracula's Guest" with references to the Nibelungs saga and William Peter Blatty's 1971 best-seller *The Exorcist*, *Il plenilunio delle vergini* was directed by Luigi Batzella (formerly an actor in *La strage dei vampiri*) and its production managed by retired actor Bigari and by Ralph Zucker, "an American citizen of Jewish origin [...] who in 1958 tried his luck in Italy" (Curti, 2015: 149) and ended up producing a few films, among which *5 tombe per un medium / Terror-Creatures from the Grave* (Domenico M. Pupillo as Ralph Zucker, 1965) and *Il boia scarlatto*, both starring Bigari. As in the previous decade, belt-tightening was the rule: no-budget *L'amante del demonio* – produced by Dick Randall and Harry Cushing of *Lady Frankenstein* fame mainly because Cushing was infatuated with actress Rosalba Neri (Curti, 2017b) – used either natural or almost-completely-undressed sets, and didn't bother darkening day-for-night scenes in post-production, while *La notte dei dannati* was shot back-to-back with erotic drama *Erika* (Filippo Walter Ratti as Peter Rush, 1971) (same production company, crew, leading actors, interiors) and recycled Carlo Savina's soundtrack for 1969 Italo-Spanish comedy/thriller *Malenka la nipote del vampiro*.

Italian box-office figures varied wildly, as shown by the table below. Yet, they never got close to those of the top moneymakers of the 1970s (Rondolino, 1975; 1976; 1977; Baroni, 1996), not even when vampire films were distributed by established companies like

Medusa and Titanus, granting access to the highly-lucrative, oligopolised/monopolised *prima visione* circuit of the 1970s.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Italian Censorship Office rating</b>	<b>Vatican censorship rating</b>	<b>Release period (distributor)</b>	<b>Box-office gross in lire</b>
<i>Il Conte Dracula</i>	VM14 (NO 62939, 1973)	III [Morally controversial, ambiguous] (Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, 1974)	September 1973 - August 1975 (INDIEF)	83,751,000 (Rondolino, 1975: 160)
<i>La notte dei dannati</i>	VM18 (NO 58702, 1971)	IV [Gravely offensive to Catholic doctrine and morals] (CCC, 1973a)	September 1971 - August 1975 (King)	80,170,000 (Ibid.: 123)
<i>...Hanno cambiato faccia</i>	VM18 (NO 57934, 1971)	IV (CCC, 1972a)	July 1971 - August 1975 (Garigliano)	26,190,000 (Ibid.: 122)
<i>La corta notte delle bambole di vetro</i>	VM14 (NO 58956, 1971)	IV (CCC, 1972c)	October 1971 - ? (Overseas Film Company)	181,249,000 (Baroni, 1996: 58)
<i>Nella stretta morsa del ragno</i>	VM14 (NO 58787, 1971)	III (CCC, 1971)	August 1971 - August 1975 (Panta Cinematografica)	228,636,000 (Rondolino, 1975: 123)
<i>La notte dei diavoli</i>	VM14 (NO 60050, 1972)	IV (CCC, 1972b)	April 1972 - August 1975 (regional distribution)	136,383,000 (Ibid.: 141)
<i>L'amante del demonio</i>	VM18 (NO 59307, 1971)	IV Inaccettabile licenzioso [Unacceptable, licentious] (CCC, 1975d)	January 1972 - August 1975 (regional distribution)	60,260,000 (Ibid.: 132)
<i>Le vergini cavalcano la morte</i>	VM18 (NO 62852, 1973)	IV Inaccettabile negativo [Unacceptable, offensive to human dignity and Christian principles] (CCC, 1975b)	Summer 1973 - ? (regional distribution)	45,798,000 (Baroni, 1996: 112)
<i>L'uomo che uccideva a sangue freddo</i>	VM14 (NO 61865, 1973)	IV Inaccettabile licenzioso (CCC, 1975a)	February 1973 - August 1975 (Medusa)	675,365,000 (Rondolino, 1975: 176)
<i>Il prato macchiato di rosso</i>	VM18 (NO 61372, 1972)	Inaccettabile aberrante [Unacceptable, perverse] (CCC, 1976)	March 1973 - ? (regional distribution)	32,205,000 (Baroni, 1996: 93)
<i>Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel Trecento...</i>	VM18 (NO 60795, 1972)	IV Inaccettabile negativo (CCC, 1975c)	January 1973 - August 1975 (regional distribution)	45,732,000 (Rondolino, 1975: 173)

<i>Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!</i>	VM18 (NO 64499, 1974)	Inaccettabile negativo (CCC, 1975f)	63 days in the 1975-1976 season (Gold Film)	32,161,000 (Rondolino, 1976: 87)
<i>Il plenilunio delle vergini</i>	VM18 (NO 62028, 1973)	IV (CCC, 1973b)	March 1973 - August 1975 (regional distribution)	81,630,000 (Rondolino, 1975: 165)
<i>Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza</i>	VM14 (NO 67018, 1975)	Inaccettabile licenzioso (CCC, 1975e)	280 days in the 1975-1976 season (Titanus)	201,147,000 (Rondolino, 1976: 86)

Predictably, the highest-grossing film was *L'uomo che uccideva a sangue freddo*, distributed by a prominent company and featuring huge star Alain Delon. Since official production data are unavailable, it's impossible to establish which movies were commercially successful. At the same time, a comparison with the Italian box-office receipts of the vampire films from the 1960s can't be made, given the vertiginous increase in ticket prices described in the previous subsection. However, some hypotheses on the consumption of such films can be brought forward by dividing the movies into two categories, according to their marketing strategy.

1969-1975 Italian vampire films were either straightforward horrors (in which case they harked back to late-1950s and early-1960s vampire movies) or hybrids mixing the vampire myth with genres/*filoni* that were popular in the late 1960s and early 1970s. 'Nostalgic' horrors weren't many: *Il Conte Dracula* (a poverty-row imitation of early Hammer Gothic), *Nella stretta morsa del ragno* (a colour remake of *Danza macabra*), *La notte dei diavoli* (a feature-length remake of *I Wurdalak*, the vampire-themed segment from *I tre volti della paura*, with occasional references to Romero's hit *Night of the Living Dead*)<sup>25</sup> and *Le vergini cavalcano la morte* (a fictionalised Báthory biopic mixing *I vampiri* with Hammer's female-vampire cycle of the early 1970s).<sup>26</sup> Conceived for a transnational Euro-American market just like their 1950s-1960s antecedents, *Il Conte Dracula*, *Nella stretta morsa del ragno*, *La notte dei diavoli* and *Le vergini cavalcano la morte* premiered in Italy between summer 1971 and autumn 1973, that is to say after both the Italian release of Hammer's 1968-1970 Dracula movies *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave*, *Taste the Blood of*

*Dracula* and *Scars of Dracula*, and an early-1970s Italian re-release of horror classics like *Mystery of the Wax Museum*, *House of Wax*, Fisher's *Dracula* and *Dracula: Prince of Darkness* (Castelli, 1970a; b). In this cultural environment, it's likely that in Italy *Il Conte Dracula*, *Nella stretta morsa del ragno*, *La notte dei diavoli* and *Le vergini cavalcano la morte* gathered their modest receipts among horror aficionados that first discovered the genre in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Indeed, 1969 saw both a brief renaissance of the horror *fotoromanzo* (e.g., the 1970-1971 *Suspense* and *Wampir* series, based on classical-Hollywood, Hammer, AIP, Mexican and Italian Gothic horrors) (Appendix A) and the birth of one of the first 'horror (sub)culture' magazines published in Italy, monthly *Horror*, which kept publishing only until October 1972, but on whose pages – alongside historical articles on Universal monsters, German Expressionism, Gothic literature and Hammer – a critical cult of Freda (Cozzi, 1971), Bava (Castelli & Monego, 1969; Cozzi, 1970-1971) and Margheriti (Cozzi, 1970) was started.<sup>27</sup>

As for the 'hybrid' vampire films, *Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!* and *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* mixed vampire lore with comedy, as it became quite popular all over Europe after *Dance of the Vampires* (Roman Polanski, 1967) [e.g., de Ossorio's *Malenka la nipote del vampiro*, *Gebissen wird nur nachts / The Vampire Happening* (Freddie Francis, 1971), *Old Dracula* (Clive Donner, 1974), *Tendre Dracula / Tender Dracula* (Pierre Grunstein, 1974), *Dracula père et fils / Dracula and Son* (Édouard Molinaro, 1976), *Las alegres vampiras de Vögel* (Julio Pérez Tabernerero, 1976), *Tiempos duros para Drácula* (Jorge Darnell, 1976) and *El jovencito Drácula* (Carlos Benpar, 1976), *El pobrecito Draculín* (Juan Fortuny, 1977)]. If in *Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!* references to Polanski and his oeuvre went as far as casting him in an uncredited cameo, Lucio Fulci's decision to tell the story of a laughable Brianza-based Dracula might have had more to do with the hope to repeat the success of horror parodies *Young Frankenstein* (Mel Brooks, 1974) and *L'esorciccio / The Exorcist: Italian Style* (Ciccio

Ingrassia, 1975) at the Italian box office (Albiero & Cacciatore, 2004) than with the desire to pay tribute to the Polish director.<sup>28</sup>

While *La corta notte delle bambole di vetro* combined Polanski's *Rosemary's Baby* (the satanist conspiracy) with the Argento-like giallo *filone* (an American abroad investigates on a series of murders), ...*Hanno cambiato faccia*, *L'uomo che uccideva a sangue freddo* and *Il prato macchiato di rosso* injected exploitation with the political engagement of post-1968 European auteur cinema via the vampire-bourgeoisie equivalence.<sup>29</sup> *La notte dei dannati*, *L'amante del demonio*, *Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel Trecento...* and *Il plenilunio delle vergini*, on the other hand, used vampirism as an excuse to string together softcore sex scenes, bringing to the extreme consequences the mix of bloodsucking and eroticism displayed in Hammer's late-1960s/early-1970s vampire films (the 1970-1971 Karnstein trilogy especially), in the Jean Rollin 1968-1971 vampire tetralogy, in Francis's *Gebissen wird nur nachts*, in Kümel's *Les lèvres rouges*, in *Vampyros Lesbos* (Jesús Franco Manera as Franco Manera, 1971), and in widely-read 'adults only' Italian comic-book series *Jacula* (1969-1982) and *Zora la vampira* (1972-1985).

It's not by chance that, among the 1969-1975 Italian vampire movies, *La notte dei dannati*, *L'amante del demonio*, *Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel Trecento...* and *Il plenilunio delle vergini* were the only ones facing serious issues with the Italian Censorship Office, in spite of a more relaxed approach to female nudity and heterosexual lovemaking on the part of state officials after 1968. *La notte dei dannati* and *Il plenilunio delle vergini* were ordered to tone down lesbian scenes (the latter was also asked to remove the shots in which the male lead kisses the lower parts of Countess Dracula) (NO 58702, 1971; NO 62028, 1973), while *L'amante del demonio* was ordered to cut 181 meters of film, to eliminate any hint of heterosexual anal intercourse and tone down an orgy scene (NO 59307, 1971). *Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel Trecento...* obtained a public-screening permission only in appeal, after an initial ban due to the "incoherent series of sadistic sequences meant to

stimulate the lowest sexual instincts by mixing exasperated cruelties and degenerate eroticism” (NO 60795, 1972) – a scathing review echoed by Vatican censors, who labelled the movie a “senseless [...] porno-horror” (Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, 1975c). Moreover, it’s not by chance that lesbian-themed *Nella stretta morsa del ragno* and the four erotic horror films listed above were advertised in ‘adults only’ Italian magazines of the time like Rome-based publishing house EDI.GRA.F.’s *Cinesex*, *Cinestop* and *BigFilm*, where sensationalist plot synopses were accompanied by several pictures of naked actresses, often taken from scenes shot for the export market only (e.g., Anonymous, 1971; Giustiniani, 1971; Baviera, 1972; Santevri, 1972).<sup>30</sup> In fact, in view of the new trends in horror cinema set between the late 1960s and the early 1970s by *Night of the Living Dead*, *Rosemary’s Baby*, *L’uccello dalle piume di cristallo* and *The Exorcist*, the place of Italian vampire films in the domestic and the world market came to depend solely on female nudity, on simulated sex scenes and on the possibility for distributors and exhibitors to insert hardcore footage (Curti, 2017b), until production was halted in 1975, about one year after Hammer finally ended its dragging Dracula cycle with wuxia-horror sans Lee *The Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires* (Roy Ward Baker, 1974).

### **Concluding remarks**

This chapter has first of all explained the functioning of the post-war Italian film industry from the mid-1940s to the mid-1980s, dwelling on the national, international and transnational factors behind the development of *filone*-filmmaking, i.e. the serialised manufacturing of low-cost imitations of a given commercially successful movie. These factors include:

- laws approved by the Italian Parliament, e.g. the ‘leggina’ and the ‘legge Andreotti’ of 1949 (modified only slightly in 1956 and 1965);
- co-production agreements between Italy and other European countries like France, Spain and West Germany;



- the 1951-1963 special agreements signed by the Italian government and the Motion Picture Association of America;
- the existence in Italy of a huge movie-theatre network covering the entire country, and of distributors willing to invest in production through the *minimo garantito* mechanism;
- plenty of Italian film workers expert at low-budget shooting.

Within the framework of *filone*-filmmaking, the staple of Italian genre cinema, Chapter 3 has then focused on the financing, production, marketing, distribution, exhibition and consumption of the Italian vampire subgenre, which sprouted in the aftermath of the Hammer *Dracula* worldwide box-office success in 1958-1959 and grew throughout the 1960s and early 1970s by piggy-backing on various trends in both the Italian and the international market. This work of placing the corpus of films to be studied into its industrial context has been of paramount importance to highlight the national hybridity of Italian vampire cinema, subjected as it was to commercial and ideological pressures both locally and globally. The following two chapters of the thesis, Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, will show how – in spite of the imitation of foreign templates and the great reliance on profits coming from distribution on the international market described in Chapter 3 – Italian vampire films tap into, and more or less distortedly mirror, Italy's then-contemporary socio-political and cultural milieu.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Venturini (2014: 104), the original 97-million budget had to be increased “due to the choice of shooting in CinemaScope”.

<sup>2</sup> The import of American films in Italy had ceased on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1939, after a dispute between the Italian Fascist government and Hollywood majors over state monopoly (Quaglietti, 1991; Corsi, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Yet, as Quaglietti (1980) astutely remarks, by the end of the 1940s Hollywood majors’ backlogs were almost exhausted and monopolising Italian screens through dumping was no longer possible anyway.

<sup>4</sup> The casting of renowned French actor Antoine Balpêtré in the small role of the mad scientist proves that the producers thought of selling *I vampiri* on the French market from the very beginning.

<sup>5</sup> Preventive censorship on treatments/screenplays was introduced by Italy’s centrist government in 1919-1920 (Argentieri, 1974; Bonsaver, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> A sixth horror movie was made in Italy in 1959-1960, *Seddok, l’erede di Satana*. Though a Jekyll-and-Hyde adaptation trying to cash in on the *succès de scandale* of Italo-French medical thriller *Les yeux sans visage / Eyes Without a Face* (Georges Franju, 1960), the screenwriters couldn’t help referencing the widely-popular vampire myth in the dialogues.

<sup>7</sup> It’s important to stress that this special norm was a “law outside the law” (Treveri Gennari, 2011: 58), having nothing to do with European co-production regulations: “the flows of American capital and personnel to Italy were defined as ‘joint participations’, an ambiguous term encompassing any kind of artistic and financial exchange, whether legal or illegal”. Consequently, “it’s impossible to know exactly how much money American companies actually invested in Italy” (Corsi, 2001: 69).

<sup>8</sup> Even when part of the budget consisted of money actually invested by the producers themselves, the idea was to “go only for safe bets”, because most production companies were so small that could only make one film at a time, and were therefore unable to “cover loss-making productions with the proceeds of profitable ones” (Wagstaff, 1992: 250).

<sup>9</sup> Only nine, in fact: *The Black Sleep* (Reginald LeBorg, 1956), *The Vampire* (Paul Landres, 1957), *El vampiro*, *The Return of Dracula*, *The Revenge of Frankenstein* (Terence Fisher, 1958), *The Mummy* (Terence Fisher, 1959), *Doctor Blood’s Coffin* (Sidney J. Furie, 1961), *The Sadist* (James Landis, 1963) and *The Gorgon* (Terence Fisher, 1964). Most of these novelisations fail to credit their source, or claim to have inspired the film instead of being inspired by it.

<sup>10</sup> Italy’s first horror *fotoromanzo* series was discontinued in February 1967 because the late 1960s saw an increase in paper and printing costs that expelled small publishers from the market (Anelli, 1979), and because of the progressive waning of the ‘vampire craze’. As signalled by Piselli & Morrocchi (1996) and Curti (2015), early Italian horrors also occasionally appeared in *fotoromanzo* series targeting a generalist audience: *I vampiri* appeared under the title *Quella che voleva amare (I vampiri)* on issue 31 of *I vostri film* (August 1958), *Il mulino delle donne di pietra* on issue 75 of *Super Star* (December 1960), *L’amante del vampiro* in the *Astro* series...

<sup>11</sup> An exemplary case is Kenton’s *House of Dracula* from 1945, first approved for all audiences by the Italian Censorship Office in December 1948 under the title *La casa degli orrori* (NO 4783, 1948): in 1961 regional distributor All’Insegna Mediterranea rented out a print of *House of Dracula* to various exhibitors in and around Naples, changing the original Italian title to *Dracula nella casa degli orrori*. Since the new title hadn’t been approved by the Italian Censorship Office, a governmental investigation followed, leading to the distribution company being fined. The title *Dracula nella casa degli orrori* was eventually used for a *fotoromanzo* adaptation of *House of Dracula*, in issue 30 (July 1963) of the *Malia* series.

<sup>12</sup> In Italy the ‘summer holiday’ comedy subgenre blossomed in the late 1940s and early 1950s with *L’imperatore di Capri* (Luigi Comencini, 1949), *Domenica d’agosto* (Luciano Emmer, 1950) and *Bellezze a Capri* (Adelchi Bianchi, 1951), then thrived in the late 1950s and early 1960s with films like *Vacanze a Ischia / Holiday Island* (Mario Camerini, 1957), *Racconti d’estate / Love on the Riviera* (Gianni Franciolini, 1958), *Brevi amori a Palma di Majorca* (Giorgio Bianchi, 1959), *Tipi da spiaggia* (Mario Mattoli, 1959), *Avventura a Capri* (Giuseppe Lipartiti, 1959), *Costa Azzurra* (Vittorio Sala, 1959), *Ferragosto in bikini* (Marino Girolami, 1960), *Scandali al mare* (Marino Girolami, 1961), *I Don Giovanni della Costa Azzurra / Beach Casanova* (Vittorio Sala, 1962), *Una domenica d’estate / Always on Sunday* (Giulio Petroni, 1962), *Diciottenni al sole / Eighteen in the Sun* (Camillo Mastrocinque, 1962), *Peccati d’estate* (Giorgio Bianchi, 1962), *Veneri al sole* (Marino Girolami, 1964), *Spiaggia libera* (Marino Girolami, 1966) and *Ischia operazione amore* (Vittorio Sala, 1966).

<sup>13</sup> *Tempi duri per i vampiri* circulated on US TV in an English-dubbed, abridged version titled *Uncle Was a Vampire*, as part of a 1962-1963 film package put together by Embassy Pictures (Heffernan, 2004). Le Bris (1962c) states that Steno’s film opened in Paris in August 1962, distributed by Procidis.

<sup>14</sup> According to the preventive-censorship report, the screenplay of Giorgio Ferroni’s film combines “scientific giallo” *Les yeux sans visage* with “a *Dracula*-like atmosphere” (ACS 3241-256, 1959). Indeed, *Il mulino delle donne di pietra* showcases a mill that may come from Fisher’s *The Brides of Dracula*, whose shooting started in

late 1959. However, ever since the opening scene, Ferroni's main point of reference is Dreyer's *Vampyr*, one of the most-frequently-cited classics in Italian vampire cinema (*I vampiri*; *L'amante del vampiro*; *L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock*; *Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel Trecento...*).

<sup>15</sup> Official documents account for an intricate production history. Addessi's production company Vulsinia Film went bankrupt in 1963 and changed its name, leading French investors to release the 44 million for *Danza macabra* with great delay. How Addessi managed to initially finance the film on his own, and whether or not *Danza macabra* really cost 190 million, is unknown. It's possible that Addessi spread the cost of other 1962-1963 films of his on *Danza Macabra*.

<sup>16</sup> With the help of Alberto Grimaldi's Produzioni Europee Associate, the Caianos first put together a 100-million seventy-thirty Italo-Spanish co-production project, which was rejected for lack of Spanish actors in the cast. Then, they organised a 150-million seventy-thirty Italo-German co-production project, which was rejected as "a feigned co-production" (ACS 4857-524, 1965). At the same time, the original title *Orgasmo* (Caiano & De Agostini, 1964) was changed into the less explicit *Amanti d'oltretomba* ('Lovers from beyond the grave'), echoing the title of issue 10 (November 1961) of the *Malia* series, *L'amante d'oltretomba*.

<sup>17</sup> According to Fassone et al. (2009: 13), "*La strage dei vampiri* was financed by actor Walter Bigari with a friend from Pesaro and other people", which is what happened with *L'amante del vampiro* and *L'ultima preda del vampiro*. As a matter of fact, *L'amante del vampiro*, *L'ultima preda del vampiro*, *La strage dei vampiri* and *Il mostro dell'Opera* were all made between December 1959 and summer 1961, with frequent overlaps in cast and crew, which suggests some kind of "productive connivance" between the films (Gomarasca, Pulici, Stellino et al., 2002: 43). This could be possible, as the name of the production company of *L'ultima preda del vampiro* (Nord Film Italiana) sounds similar to that of the production company of *Il mostro dell'Opera* (Nord Industrial Film) – the latter being based in Biella (ACS 3590-300, 1961), the hometown of Gastaldi, who is credited as a screenwriter in both *L'amante del vampiro* and *Il mostro dell'Opera* (Appendix D).

<sup>18</sup> Such letter wasn't even necessary for *La maschera del demonio* and *Amanti d'oltretomba*, which were both given the benefit of doubt in spite of their screenplays being bashed, respectively, as "so full of witches, vampires, skeletons, ghosts, murders and corpses that [the Hammer] *Dracula* plays like a children's show in comparison" (ACS 3302-265, 1960) and "the product of a sick imagination, full as it is of recurrent, obsessive obscenities" (ACS 4857-524, 1965). The preventive-censorship report for *I tre volti della paura*, in which the film's "original literary inspiration" is praised for "dignifying" horror-cinema conventions (ACS 4206-390, 1962), suggests that, in principle, state officials were less contemptuous towards movie adaptations of horror literature.

<sup>19</sup> Producers were forced to cut shots featuring bare breasts from *Il sangue e la rosa* (NO 33435, 1960) and *L'ultima preda del vampiro* (NO 33364, 1960). Predictably, "close-ups of exposed bosoms" and dance moves mimicking the sexual intercourse were ordered to be removed from *Sexy proibitissimo* (NO 41062, 1963), while almost 100 meters of kissing, caressing and peeping up skirts were excised from *La vendetta di Lady Morgan* (NO 45744, 1965).

<sup>20</sup> For detailed information about *Satanik* and other *fumetti neri* ('black comics', i.e. the comic books for adults launched by the *Diabolik* series in November 1962, about the criminal and amorous exploits of male and/or female supervillains), including their ties to Italian horror cinema, see Hunt (2004; 2016) and Castaldi (2010).

<sup>21</sup> *La vendetta di Lady Morgan* was even denied access to the mandatory-scheduling-and-tax-rebates benefits, as one Italian State Cinema Bureau official found the film "macabrely stupid and stupidly macabre", went on a one-man crusade against it in summer 1966 and had it declared unworthy of state support due to "absolute lack of artistic, cultural and spectacular qualities" (ACS 4960-548, 1965).

<sup>22</sup> American investments in *I tre volti della paura* and *Roma contro Roma* don't appear in ACS 4206-390 (1962) and ACS 4412-433 (1963), for reasons explained in Endnote 7. Yet, Bava's horror triptych starred AIP's leading men Karloff and Damon, while both *I tre volti della paura* and *Roma contro Roma* were released theatrically and on syndicated TV in the US by AIP (Venturini, 2001; Heffernan, 2004; Pezzotta, 2013). Bava confirms that during the shooting of *I tre volti della paura* his actual bosses were AIP executives in Faldini & Fofi (1981).

<sup>23</sup> As for the *KKK* and *I racconti di Dracula* series, which would remain in business until 1972 and 1981 respectively, from around 1963 their stories started more and more to deal with sex crimes and serial killers rather than Gothic paraphernalia (Cozzi & Bissoli, 2012; Cozzi & Lombardi, 2013), testifying to the fact that the 'vampire craze' in Italy ended even before Hammer put the 1966 *Dracula*-sequel into production.

<sup>24</sup> Little is known about the production of *La corta notte delle bambole di vetro* and *La notte dei diavoli*. According to director Aldo Lado (quoted in Švábenický, 2014), the former was produced by Italian auteur cinema producer Enzo Doria, who found Yugoslavian partners to obtain the permission to shoot in Eastern Europe (very few scenes were shot in Italian studios, which were rented just to obtain the Italian-nationality certificate). Slovenia-set *La notte dei diavoli*, on the other hand, was shot in Italy "in five weeks, in late 1971 and early 1972, near the Bracciano lake" (Curti, 2017b: 76). More information is available on *Nella stretta morsa del ragno*: in the late 1960s Antonio Margheriti teamed up with then-retired producer Addessi and German actor-producer Peter Carsten to cash in on the spaghetti western trend, and made *E Dio disse a Caino... / And God*

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*Said to Cain* (Antonio Margheriti as Anthony Dawson, 1969), starring Carsten and Klaus Kinski. After the box-office fiasco of the Margheriti-Carsten co-production *L'inafferrabile invincibile Mr. Invisibile / Mr. Superinvisible* (Antonio Margheriti as Anthony M. Dawson, 1970), Margheriti found himself in financial troubles and was convinced by Addressi to direct *Nella stretta morsa del ragno*, a colour remake of *Danza macabra* starring Carsten and Kinski among others (Lippi & Codelli, 1976; Palmerini & Mistretta, 1996).

<sup>25</sup> In both *Night of the Living Dead* and *La notte dei diavoli* a little girl attacks and kills her mother, and the titular monsters (explicitly called the “living dead” in one scene of *La notte dei diavoli*) assault a person driving a car (Curti, 2017b). The title *La notte dei diavoli* (‘The night of the devils’) sounds like an innuendo to Romero’s debut, as the titles *La notte dei dannati* (‘The night of the damned’) and *La corta notte delle bambole di vetro* (‘The short night of the glass dolls’) perhaps are.

<sup>26</sup> The title *Le vergini cavalcano la morte* (‘Virgins ride death’) references the Italian-release title of the Hammer production *Countess Dracula* (Peter Sasdy, 1971), *La morte va a braccetto con le vergini* (‘Death walks arm in arm with virgins’). Moreover, one of *Le vergini cavalcano la morte*’s screenwriters was Alessandro Continenza, who had already contributed to late-1950s and early-1960s Italian vampire cinema by co-writing *Tempi duri per i vampiri* and *Ercole al centro della Terra*.

<sup>27</sup> Curated, among others, by future horror and giallo filmmakers Pier Carpi and Luigi Cozzi, the first issue of *Horror* came out in December 1969, published by Milan-based Sansoni Editore. The year 1969 is all but coincidental: in early 1969 made-for-TV Gothic mini-series started invading Italian State Television, spearheaded by *Jekyll* (Giorgio Albertazzi, 1969) and *Geminus* (Luciano Emmer, 1969) (Curti, 2011; 2017b).

<sup>28</sup> The screenplay of *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* (Fulci & Avati, 1975) includes a sequence parodying *The Exorcist* that was never shot, and in the finished film Ingrassia, director and protagonist of *L'esorciccio*, appears in a small role as a witch doctor. In Fulci’s movie there are only two noticeable references to Polanski’s oeuvre: a gag showing homosexual vampire Sperandeu being rejected by the heterosexual protagonist (a nod to *Dance of the Vampires*) and the ending in which said protagonist contemplates his monstrous child (a nod to the final scene of *Rosemary’s Baby*).

<sup>29</sup> As written by Della Casa & Giusti (2014), the producers of *La corta notte delle bambole di vetro* initially thought of naming the film *La corta notte delle farfalle* (‘The short night of the butterflies’) because Argento’s 1970-1971 smash-hits had an animal in the title. This is probably why the title of Margheriti’s remake of *Danza macabra* was changed from *E venne l'alba... ma tinta di rosso* (‘And dawn came... but tinged red’) (Unknown, 1971) to *Nella stretta morsa del ragno* (‘In the firm grip of the spider’). In all likelihood, sometime prior to the Italian premiere, *Il prato macchiato di rosso*’s original title *Vampiro 2000* (Ghione, 1972) and *L'uomo che uccideva a sangue freddo*’s original title *Terapia d'urto (Traitement de choc)* (Jessua & Curel, 1972) were changed to piggy-back on Italo-German giallo *Sette orchidee macchiate di rosso / Seven Blood-Stained Orchids* (Umberto Lenzi, 1972) and Italian giallo *La bestia uccide a sangue freddo / Asylum Erotica* (Fernando di Leo, 1971) respectively.

<sup>30</sup> In Italy *L'amante del demonio*, *La notte dei dannati*, *Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel Trecento...* and *Il plenilunio delle vergini* also circulated ‘uncut’ as erotic *fotoromanzi*, in *Cinesex* issue 43 (July 1971), *BigFilm* issue 20 (October 1971), *Cinesex Mese* issue 1 (January 1973) and *Cinestop Attualità* issue 12 (May 1973) respectively (Curti, 2017b). For an in-depth study of ‘adults only’ publications in 1960s and 1970s Italy’s media sphere, see Maina (2011).

## CHAPTER 4 - GENDER READINGS

After having laid out the current academic debate about vampire fiction (see Chapter 2) and outlined the national, international and transnational context of Italian vampire cinema's financing, production and exploitation (see Chapter 3), the thesis moves on to explore the cultural specificity of the vampire metaphor in Italy. This chapter deals with gender issues in the Italian post-war society as reflected by 1956-1975 Italian vampire cinema. Conceiving of gender identity as "the social meanings that sex assumes" (Butler, 1993: xv), i.e. the result of political, socio-economic and cultural negotiations between groups of people with different ideologies and agendas, what follows analyses vampire narratives' archetypal characters and the dialectical relation between the basic opposing poles they incarnate (good/bad, normal/abnormal, perpetrator/victim, master/slave, sexual/asexual, active/passive) as part of a struggle for gender definition and domination.

Chapter 4 is divided into two subsections mirroring the basic gender split in post-war Italy. The aim of the first subsection, "The female vampire", is twofold: to summarise existing literature conceiving of Italian female vampires as *femmes fatales* reflecting male anxieties about female emancipation, and to problematise the so-far-monolithic portrait of female bloodsuckers as simplistically villainous. Importantly, vampire women aren't only power-hungry sexual predators that **misogynistic narratives** put to death as a punishment for attempting to subvert the patriarchal status quo, but also empathy-inducing characters caught between rebellion and hyper-identification with traditional values – victims returning from the grave to seek revenge against their male oppressors, and tragic lovers dreaming of a monogamous heterosexual relationship that looks strangely similar to marriage. The second subsection, "The male vampire", ventures into the hitherto-uncharted territory of Italian male vampires. It investigates how, within a rigidly-moralistic, Catholic framework where "horror [...] functions as a punishment for a forbidden desire" (Pezzotta, 1997: 27), the male vampire

acts as a champion of traditional masculinity, as best expressed by the Italian popular saying “Man is a hunter, woman is a temptress” (Gramsci, 1975a: 73). The vampire subgenre’s ideology, here, is to be connected to reparative or compensative strategies trying to reassure Italian males of their gender leadership in times when women began challenging traditional gender roles first by entering the public sphere of work and politics *en masse* and then by organising themselves in combative feminist collectives.

### **The female vampire**

As explained in Chapter 3, from the second half of the 1950s onwards the business plan of Italian genre cinema practitioners was to make low-cost, Italian-nationality rip-offs reaping the benefits of the domestic legislation while appealing to the international market. Together with Italy’s scant heritage of literary horrors, the parasitic dynamics of *filone*-filmmaking explain why most 1956-1975 Italian vampire movies imitate foreign hits, starting from Fisher’s *Dracula*. In many cases, however, such “cinema of imitation” (Baschiera, 2016) didn’t produce slavish plagiarisms, but more or less creative variations on the templates established by foreign vampire films. Indeed, in spite of Italian vampire cinema’s imported and derivative nature, ever since the late 1960s historians of the horror film have identified some elements of Italianness in Italian Gothic horrors, namely the centrality of female characters and the influence of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century melodrama on movie plots (Clarens, 1968; Mora, 1978; 1986; Troiano, 1985; 1989). These seminal suggestions came to dominate current academic discourses about Italian horror, as best exemplified by the thematic analyses of the Gothic *filone* put forward by Pezzotta (1997; 2014), Della Casa (2000; 2001b), Di Chiara (2009) and Curti (2011; 2015). From Mora (1978: 292), in particular, the four scholars borrow the premise that, instead of focusing on male monsters and male stardom like Universal and Hammer, Italian Gothic horror “takes as its central figure [...] the woman” as the “catalyst of a moral monstrosity” connected to the typically-melodramatic themes of “sin, guilt and evil (all



of them sexually connoted)". Pezzotta (1997; 2014) and the others then proceed to map their assumptions onto the thirty-something horror films made in Italy between 1956 and 1966 and, true to the Manichean "logic of the excluded middle" that Brooks (1995: 18) sees as the key feature of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century melodramatic imagination, split Italian Gothic horror's leading ladies into irreconcilable opposites: hyper-sexed, proactive villainesses (wicked human beings, vampires, witches, ghosts or a combination thereof) and chaste, passive damsels in distress – the two mutually-exclusive archetypes generally marked via different hair colour.

Focused on *I vampiri*, *Il mulino delle donne di pietra* and *La maschera del demonio*, the most extensive analysis of the Italian female vampire to date is Di Chiara's (2009). Combining semiotics and structuralist anthropology, the author conceives of vampire-themed Italian horror cinema as a sexual morality play that somewhat differs from the Hammer *Dracula*'s template. Instead of a 'four-sided triangle' in which demon lover Dracula, ineffectual husband Holmwood and marriage guidance counsellor Van Helsing do battle for the body of a sexually-frustrated housewife (see Chapter 2), Italian vampire movies bring to the screen a 'melodramatic triangle' in which a bachelor must choose between the socially-forbidden, hedonistic, non-procreative sexuality of a beautiful female vampire and the socially-prescribed, marital, procreative sexuality of a good-looking, but rather frigid, angelic virgin. Since the former type of sexuality is explicitly associated to the sterility, non-normativity and 'unnaturalness' of necrophilia, gerontophilia, bestiality and lesbianism, the male protagonist's choice ultimately falls on the latter, and the female vampire is rejected, fought and purged from society. Within this narrative trajectory, Di Chiara (2009) stresses the key role of detection: a riddle in that she seems young, beautiful and good but is not, the monstrous female is a two-faced, deceitful being to be investigated and publicly unmasked before justice is done in the grand finale. The most notable examples are decrepit Báthory imitator Duchess Marguerite Du Grand from *I vampiri* and two-century-old vampire witch Princess Asa Vajda from *La maschera del demonio*, masquerading as attractive debutante

Gisèle and twenty-one-year old, God-fearing ingénue Katia Vajda respectively. Eventually, the villainesses' cover is blown, and Marguerite and Asa meet their end after undergoing the very same accelerated-aging metamorphosis at the hand of cinematographer Bava – a special effect that Freda (quoted in Lourcelles & Mizrahi, 1963: 23) praised for effectively making the “inner putrefaction of the character” visible to the audience.

The pre-ending scene from *La maschera del demonio* in which, after mistaking Asa for Katia, dashing hero Gorobec accidentally sees what lies underneath the woman's cloak is even more revealing of the Italian vampire subgenre's attitude towards femininity. In a striking parallel with canto XIX of Dante Alighieri's *Purgatorio*, where the veils covering the body of an attractive siren are torn to expose a disgustingly stinking belly, Asa's lovely appearances are shown to be a mere cover for a pile of bones and rotten viscera. What Yavneh (2001: 110) writes about the *antica strega*, i.e. the ‘old witch’, of *Purgatorio* can be transposed word-for-word to the old witch of *La maschera del demonio*: in a work “concerned with the ‘vanitate’ of the flesh and its allures [...], the Siren's foul belly makes her a figure [...] for the threat of [...] female sexuality” and “the menace of a desire that refuses to look beyond the corporeal” (in both Dante's poem and Bava's film the siren is contrasted to the *donna santa*, the ‘saintly woman’ who is just as beautiful, but *onesta*, pure, incorporeal).

In sum, having to negotiate between commercial imperatives (the need to boost ticket sales through sex and violence) and state and religious censorship bodies forbidding the portrayal of evil under attractive appearances, vampire-themed Italian horrors of the late 1950s and early 1960s work out a representational code based on a careful mixture of allure and punishment. In compliance with Pope Pius XII's 1955 ruling that cinematic depictions of “the struggle against evil and even evil's temporary victory” are admissible if they “lead to a deeper understanding of life, of the right path to take [...] in judgements and actions” (quoted in Valli, 1999: 47), transgression is brought to the screen as embodied by the “teratomorph” (Di Chiara, 2009: 75), “non-canonic” (Pezzotta, 2014: 36) sexuality of the female vampire



only to be violently sanctioned at the end, so that the heteronormative status quo can be reaffirmed, typically via the marriage between the male protagonist and the damsel in distress.<sup>1</sup> This moralistic, cautionary-didactic, Catholic framework explains what Pezzotta (1997: 26) highlights as one of the central features of the Gothic *filone*: the focus on the female vampire's face as both an "object of desire" and a "target for violence". The final disfigurement of the villainesses in *I vampiri*, *L'amante del vampiro*, *Il mulino delle donne di pietra*, *La maschera del demonio*, *L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock* and *Amanti d'oltretomba* is meant to ultimately make the female vampires' face as repugnant as their soul, thus fixing the ontological breach that momentarily made Evil desirable.<sup>2</sup>

Focusing on Italian Gothic horror's cathartic qualities like Di Chiara (2009), but seeking to link the films to post-war Italy's socio-historical context, Günsberg (2005) and Bini (2011a) follow the steps of the 1970s gender approaches to horror fiction outlined in Chapter 2. Blending psychoanalysis and Marxism, the two scholars set out to examine "the patriarchal subtext of [Italian horror's] portrayal of femininity in relation to the position of real women [...] from the late 1950s to the mid-1960s" (Günsberg, 2005: 135). As a result, the films are seen as "implicitly and explicitly address[ing] the issue of women's gradual emancipation within Italian society", and exposing the "male fears surrounding female sexuality" brought about by "the changes in Italian culture that were a consequence of the new consumerist society of the late 1950s" (Bini, 2011a: 53). Within this framework, female vampires would be a metaphor for the New Women of the post-war Italian Republic who, after having entered the job market and obtained active and passive suffrage, started rejecting confinement in the house and the sexually-repressive submission to the male as either virgin daughters or wives-mothers. Vampire-themed horrors *I vampiri*, *L'amante del vampiro*, *Il mulino delle donne di pietra*, *La maschera del demonio* and *La strage dei vampiri* are therefore said to "perhaps more subconsciously than intentionally" (Ibid.: 59) play out "the threat femininity poses to masculinity in terms of problems of differentiation and the dissolution of subjectivity through

the invasion of boundaries, incorporation and castration” (Günsberg, 2005: 133), and to exorcise male anxieties over powerlessness and emasculation via happy endings “re-establishing masculine supremacy, with ‘bad’ femininity dispatched” by homosocial brotherhoods, “and ‘good’ femininity ushered off into the domestic realm of a new heterosexual family formation” (Ibid.: 172).<sup>3</sup> Hence, the parallel – also suggested in Jenks’s (1992) psychoanalytic account of Barbara Steele’s horrific allure – between the Italian diva films of the 1910s and Italian Gothic horrors: made during or in the aftermath of two war-time periods in which women “had entered the public sphere *en masse* [...] to substitute for men who were fighting at the front”, both subgenres are based on the scapegoating of the “D’Annunzian-symbolist archetype” of the “unnatural” femme fatale, a “beautiful and dangerously voluptuous” woman who uses “the perverse weaponry of seduction to destroy men” (Re, 2008: 147).

As Krzywinska (1995) and Günsberg (2005) astutely note by analysing “Carmilla”-inspired *La cripta e l’incubo*, though, Italian patriarchy’s worst nightmare might just not be the man-eating femme fatale. In fact, as the most blatant expression of “an autonomous female eroticism, free from the postulates of the stronger sex” (Troiano, 1989: 97), the lesbian vampire of *La cripta e l’incubo* poses much more dangerous a threat in that she embodies a form of gynsociality excluding men altogether. While both Krzywinska and Günsberg praise the film for allowing the spectator to enjoy the potentially-subversive pleasure of seeing the hero stood up in the middle of a love declaration because the heroine prefers female company, their analyses focus on the repressive strategies enacted by the text. Like all the coeval Italian Gothic horrors, *La cripta e l’incubo* adopts the “patriarchal divide-and-conquer approach” of splitting the female gender into opposing, irreconcilable poles in order to produce a “fractured [...] femininity” that “is unlikely to cohere socio-politically as a group that is sufficiently empowered to challenge patriarchy”. With gynsociality effectively prevented, female characters end up “isolated and alienated from each other”, so that male characters – who

always “work in homosocial fashion in teams or pairs” – can easily assert their dominance (Günsberg, 2005: 160). More specifically, *La cripta e l'incubo* reworks the melodramatic triangle described by Di Chiara (2009) and has its female protagonist Laura Karnstein torn between the ‘normal’, ‘natural’, heterosexual relationship with young scholar Friedrich Klauss (a dashing-hero character absent from Le Fanu’s short story) and the ‘abnormal’, ‘unnatural’, homosexual liaison with good-looking, monstrous female Sheena. And just as spellbound Laura is about to elope with Sheena, suitor Friedrich, Laura’s father and an old relative of the Karnsteins’s stake the female vampire, taking Laura back under the control of heteronormative patriarchy.<sup>4</sup>

Bringing to the screen “feminine threats to masculine identity”, vampire-themed Italian horrors from the late 1950s and early 1960s seem to mirror “the emergence of socio-political female autonomy and self-determination in the face of patriarchal hegemony” (Günsberg, 2005: 158-159). The vampire subgenre can then be seen as a mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century Italian updating of the **misogynistic** ‘taming’ of the late-19<sup>th</sup>-century English New Woman analysed by Stoker scholars in relation to the novel *Dracula* (see Chapter 2). In fact, as Troiano (1989: 96) notes, a “poetics of gynophobia” clearly lurks behind Italian Gothic horror narratives, with its Victorian-era corollary of Madonna/Magdalen dichotomy and all-male Crews of Light bent on the destruction of phallic women.

Laura Mulvey’s 1975 essay on classical Hollywood cinema’s libidinal economy, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, provides a good starting point to investigate the gynophobia underlying the filmic representation of Italian female vampires. In the essay, the feminist scholar rejects the idea that commercial filmmaking is just innocuous entertainment and, invoking “a political use of psychoanalysis” (Mulvey, 1985: 305), describes how framing, camera movement and editing cut up women’s bodies in order to appease men’s castration anxieties and reinforce patriarchy. This ideological aim is achieved by crafting either sadistic-voyeuristic narratives in which women are investigated, demystified,

saved/punished by males, or scopophilic ones turning female body parts into a fetish, whose ‘excessive’ beauty compensates for the threat of castration posed by women’s lack of penis. If Mulvey’s sadistic-voyeuristic model perfectly applies to early Italian vampire cinema, as shown by the dynamics of the Gothic *filone* highlighted by Pezzotta (1997; 2014) and Di Chiara (2009), it’s not so for fetishistic scopophilia, which requires a culturally-specific distinction.

For the aforementioned commercial reasons, a large number of Italian vampire movies from the late 1950s and early 1960s devote most of their screentime to the evil ‘bombshell’ rather than to the asexual, angelic damsel in distress. In addition to breasts,<sup>5</sup> two parts of the villainess’ body are repeatedly brought to the spectators’ attention: the eyes and the mouth. The interaction between the two erogenous zones located in the face is best exemplified by *La maschera del demonio* and the segment *I Wurdalak* from *I tre volti della paura*, where vampirisation takes place via kiss instead of bite, playing more like a love scene than an act of violence (no blood is shed on camera). In *La maschera del demonio*, Asa lies in a crypt, breathing deeply – posture, costume and framing emphasising the size of her breasts. She tells doctor Kruvajan: “Come closer! Kiss me! My burnt, dry lips will transform you. You will be dead for mankind, but alive in death!”. Terrified yet irresistibly attracted, Kruvajan steps beside Asa’s corpse. An extreme close-up of Asa’s face follows: it’s taken from Kruvajan’s point of view and the camera pans from the vampire witch’s eyes to her parted lips while slowly zooming into the mouth. Kruvajan and Asa kiss in the subsequent two-shot and, from that moment on, he’s her slave. In *I Wurdalak*, vampirised peasant Sdenka is sitting on her bed wearing only a nightgown and tells her human lover Count Vladimiro d’Urfé that “My lips are dead without your kisses”. Three close-ups of Sdenka’s face follow, intercut with two reaction shots of wide-eyed Vladimiro. The female vampire’s eyes are highlighted either via zoom in/out or lighting tricks, and their hypnotic effect is shown by making the close-ups blurred, as if onlooking Vladimiro was drunk or feverish. Then, the lovers kiss on the mouth

in a two-shot emphasised by zoom and the female vampire's lips slowly approach the man's neck. Evidently, given the Catholic prejudice against female corporality described by Yavneh (2001), in early Italian vampire cinema fetishistic scopophilia doesn't perform the reassuring function of expressing a mastering of male gaze over females. On the contrary, an excessively-beautiful body is the very weapon female vampires use to submit their prey, and its display therefore heightens men's anxieties rather than appeasing/disallowing them, leaving sadistic punishments (and especially those that make women literally and metaphorically lose their face) as the only viable option for patriarchal ideology to assert itself.

While the vampire women's hypnotic gaze can be considered a simple gendered variation of the Universal Dracula's mesmerising look, the focus on the mouth is to be connected to a specifically-female archetype, namely the devouring *vagina dentata* first analysed by Marie Bonaparte in the early 1930s and subsequently reworked in the feminist approaches to vampire fiction (see Chapter 2). Although none of the people involved in making vampire movies in 1960s Italy was a high-profile intellectual expounding psychoanalytic theories (see Chapter 1), the connection is less far-fetched that it may seem at first glance. *Danza macabra*, for instance, opens with Poe reciting "Berenice", the very same tale Bonaparte (1971) labels as a male attempt to overcome castration anxiety in that the protagonist cures himself of his fetishistic obsession for a young woman by depriving her mouth of the teeth that threatened to bite him – a retributive disfigurement similar to the sadistic punishments inflicted both to the sexy villainesses of the Gothic *filone* and the evil matriarchs of vampire-themed pepla *Roma contro Roma* (where centurion Gaio saves the day by plunging his sword into the eye of blood-drinking, cyclops-goddess Oro, whose gaze turns men into brainwashed zombies) and *Maciste e la regina di Samar* (in which the titular muscleman makes the face of a power-hungry alien queen thirsting for terrestrial blood melt down). Whether the reference to scholarly authority Bonaparte was unintended (e.g., a

byproduct of the commercial need to piggy-back on AIP's 1960-1964 Poe cycle), or a calculated attempt to tap into the small debate triggered on the then-contemporary Italian press by renowned psychoanalyst Emilio Servadio's (1959) calling vampire films regressive fantasies of oral incorporation, it's impossible to establish. Whatever the case, it's not difficult to read the Italian female vampire as a threatening "womb-gullet" (Creed, 1993: 111) ready to bite off the patriarchal phallus: most notably in *L'ultima preda del vampiro* and *La strage dei vampiri*, we are shown women who, after acquiring fangs and a new aggressiveness/appetite, repeatedly try to escape from controlling males such as their husbands, employers and doctors. Tellingly, as we shall see more in detail in the next subsection, the fanged women from *L'amante del vampiro* and *L'ultima preda del vampiro* show little respect even for the authority of their male vampire partner, who doesn't hesitate to kill them when he has had enough.

All in all, drawing from a variety of methodologies from semiotics to Marxism-informed psychoanalysis, current scholarship has been portraying the Italian female vampire of the late 1950s and early 1960s as a hyper-attractive dominatrix – a voracious, insatiable sexual predator that uses her physical qualities to overrule men (heterosexual female vampire) or exclude them altogether (lesbian vampire). Attempts to connect this portrait to the Italian zeitgeist, though, have so far produced only very vague discourses centred on male anxieties concerning the female emancipation brought about by the last years of World War Two, post-war reconstruction and the new affluence of the late-1950s 'Italian economic miracle'. The former two, granting Italian women access to the job market and the right to elect and be elected, are seen as an initial step towards female self-awareness, while the latter – and neocapitalist modernisation more in general – is seen as the decisive cause for women's rejection of traditional patriarchal culture and its limitation of feminine horizons to the choice between angel of the hearth and whore (Günsberg, 2005; Bini, 2011a). In order to provide a detailed account of early Italian vampire cinema from a gender perspective, it's then

necessary to investigate more in depth the socio-historical context in which vampire films were produced and consumed.

That, in the aftermath of World War Two, Italian men were anxious because Italian women started entering the public sphere of work and politics *en masse* after almost two decades of ‘home confinement’ under Fascism is easily demonstrable. For instance, Christian-Democrat Angela Maria Guidi Cingolani – the first woman ever allowed to speak in an Italian legislative session – opened her October-1<sup>st</sup>-1945 speech as a newly-elected Consultative Assembly member by reassuring her male colleagues: “Don’t be afraid that women’s contribution will be a return to a matriarchy, if such a thing ever existed. We know better than to aspire to that; but even if we did, we certainly couldn’t do any worse than you men have done!” (quoted in Tambor, 2014: 3). This is typical of post-war Italy’s “Lost Wave” proto-feminism – an informal, cross-party, female “movement for women’s equality” that, while presenting itself as unthreatening as possible to men’s established positions, “justified itself by the entire society’s need to be redeemed and protected from the threats men had unleashed” in the form of totalitarianism and war (Ibid.).

Crucially, these were the same years in which Italian women’s contribution to Resistance was being downplayed and depoliticised by men and women alike by invoking “maternal feelings” of care and protection as a core reason for the struggle against Nazi-Fascism, the Catholicism-inspired maternal register being “the strongest female image on which women could draw and [...] the only socially acceptable one in which they could be stronger than men” (Willson, 2010: 105). Indeed, the belittling of women was omnipresent in Italian political debates of the immediate post-war. While active and passive female suffrage was granted in 1945-1946, most male politicians were sceptical of adult women’s intellectual capabilities. Many members of the Italian Communist Party, in particular, deemed women electors too irrational/sentimental and therefore prone to be controlled by reactionary Catholics, to the point that party leader Palmiro Togliatti was forced to dispel these claims in

public speeches (1965a; b). As for gender diversity in the Parliament of the Italian Republic, composed of 630 elected deputies and 315 elected senators, female presence was minimal until very recently, a sign of distrust towards female politicians from both electors and fellow-party-members. In each of the six legislations following one another from spring 1948 to summer 1976, less than fifty women obtained a seat in the Chamber of Deputies (forty-five in 1948, thirty-four in 1953, twenty-five in 1958, twenty-nine in 1963, nineteen in 1968 and twenty-six in 1972) and less than eleven in the Senate (four in 1948, one in 1953, three in 1958, six in 1963, ten in 1968 and six in 1972). The height of post-war misogyny, however, was reached when occupational issues were at stake.

For Italian women World War Two and the immediate post-war were periods of reversal of traditional gender roles: since most male adults were fighting or hiding, prisoners or dead, women had to fill in the head-of-the-family role and deal with the world outside the house for the first time in their life. As a consequence, after 1945 “a bitter conflict of interest arose between th[e] mass of unemployed men”, returning from the front and demanding nothing but a reinstatement of the pre-war status quo, “and the many thousands of women who had worked during World War Two and wanted to hold on to their jobs” and newly-acquired economic independence (Ginsborg, 1990: 80). The zeitgeist is perfectly summarised by Garofalo (1956: 80-81):

articles about the need for women workers to leave their jobs to unemployed males are appearing once again [...]. Women are praised for what they have done so far [...] but basically they are told: “Now step aside and go back in the house [...]”. [...] In speeches and the press, ironical remarks are often made about women who work only to gain some extra money for luxuries like dresses, trips and entertainment, occupying a place that could go to a man who needs to feed his family.

Similarly, whenever the female politicians of the Lost Wave tried to pass laws that – in agreement with the democratic principles of the 1948 Italian Constitution – sought to make the work sphere less of a “fortress of virility” (Ibid.: 52), they were met by male colleagues,



and by male and female public opinion more at large, with **pseudo-scientific** discourses about women belonging to the domestic sphere as mothers and housewives. For instance, from 1945 until the approval of law 66 of February 9<sup>th</sup> 1963, female deputies and senators had been struggling to grant their fellow-women the right to become judges and diplomats, and to access state examinations awarding civil service jobs, only to be told throughout all the 1950s that females are naturally unfit for such careers. Two reasons were advanced: firstly, “in certain days of the month”, women transform into irrational ‘menstrual monsters’ endowed with an uncontrollable “aggressive libido” (Ibid.: 121); secondly, the female body is so delicate that it must be spared “any overwork or strain in order to protect the health of [women’s] reproductive system and progeny” (Tambor, 2014: 159).

Evidently, as shown by West’s (2006: 23) inquiry into the portraits of the ideal woman in 1950s Italian-language domestic manuals, the “binary logic that governed strictly separate gender roles, as well as the hierarchy implicit in the structure of the traditional patriarchal family unit [that] were intensely instrumentalised during the Fascist regime, [...] carried over into the post-war”. In the late 1940s and over the course of the 1950s, mainstream ideology still prescribed the Italian woman to be a “diligent little wife” whose most fulfilling achievement lies in childbearing and managing the household while the husband is “absent from home almost all day long due to his [breadwinning] work” (Ibid.: 24-26). Gender stereotypes were furtherly reinforced through Catholic propaganda, emanating both from the churches’ pulpits and via mass media like the press, radio and, after 1954, TV (the latter two firmly under control of the Christian Democrats after their landslide victory at the general elections of 1948 and 1953):

The purpose of marriage (and of the family) in the words of *Famiglia Cristiana* (13 October 1946), the leading Catholic popular weekly, was: ‘committing oneself to carrying out a great mission in life, that of collaborating with God in perpetuating and multiplying human life’. Women’s specific role was the subordinate one of mother and husband’s help-mate, with its attendant virtues of modesty, submission and sacrifice (Allum, 1990: 83).

The model was the Virgin Mary, who not coincidentally became the object of a Vatican-sponsored, nation-wide cult in the immediate post-war, culminating in Pius XII's 1950 dogma of Mary's Assumption. Things weren't different on the far-left side of the ideological spectrum: in spite of the fact that the Italian Communist Party repeatedly denounced female oppression and insisted on female occupation as a key to emancipation (Berlinguer, 1954; Longo, 1965; Togliatti, 1965a; b; c; d), in real life party members and sympathisers followed a strictly-heteronormative, patriarchal model of family and gender relations – one that was identical to that of their antagonists (Caldwell, 1991; Bellasai, 2000; Tasca, 2004).

In the post-war years, the female politicians' struggle to correct the most blatant instances of male privilege touched not only the ideal figure of the wife-mother, the nurturing and selfless Madonna, but also focused on its opposite – Magdalen, the whore, yet another creation of patriarchy. In fact, parallel to the attempt to give Italian women the opportunity to free themselves from confinement in the domestic sphere was that of abolishing *case chiuse*, the state-run brothels where adult women could be legally detained under a house-arrest regime for most of the day and allowed to exercise 'the oldest profession'. The debate following Socialist senator Angelina Merlin's 1948 proposal to close down *case chiuse* on grounds that no democratic state could discriminate women, and monetise on their sexual exploitation, offers invaluable insights on gender issues in the Italian Republic.

All major political forces indicted the inhumanity of the legalised prostitution system, but thwarted the approval of Merlin's bill for ten years. Besides economic interests to be protected, the belated approval was due to the fact that, from the neofascists to the Communists, there was a consensus among male citizens that "public brothels were important sites of the production and passing down of masculinity in Italy, places of patriarchal identity and certainty. Their management by the state lent legitimacy to th[e] structure of gender definition and hierarchy" that subordinates women to men (Tambor, 2014: 126). According to

the nation-wide Doxa polls of 1949 and 1959, the vast majority of female public opinion was against the abolition of *case chiuse* too: determined to defend howsoever small an influence they might have gained by conforming to patriarchy's idealised model of femininity, Italian Madonnas agreed with men that sex is postribular fun and love is familial duty, and therefore saw Magdalens as a 'necessary evil', performing the social function of providing males with the opportunity to 'let off some steam' without the risk of emotional complications that may jeopardise existing or prospective, respectable, procreation-bent marriage bonds (Garofalo, 1956; Parca, 1977). When, after a decade of virulent press campaigns against it, the law was finally approved on February 20<sup>th</sup> 1958, it had become a symbol of "women's takeover and destruction of every last space of masculine refuge" (Tambor, 2014: 126), and many a man went on record lamenting "the lost paradise" of *case chiuse* (Parca, 1977: 215). Most importantly, though, by the time the law was approved, it had been appropriated by the Christian Democrats and changed so much that, from a vindication of the absolute equality between sexes, it had become yet another instrument to keep women "in their place", under strict police surveillance, subordinate to male authority but idealised as "the creature of which the poets make angels, to whom Christianity brings the honors of divine maternity" (Tambor, 2014: 137).

In spite of the appeals to the sanctity of womanhood and, especially, motherhood, post-war Italy remained for decades a country where, as ruled by the Cagliari Courthouse on November 7<sup>th</sup> 1961, "it's not a crime to beat one's wife for correctional purposes" (quoted in Carrano, 1977: 77). As a matter of fact, a "double morality" (Parca, 1977: 6) was in place in Italy and, until very recent times, females could be subjected throughout their whole life to the arbitrary violence of their male tutors, whether fathers, brothers or husbands. For example, article 559 of Codice Penale (introduced in 1930 and upheld by the Constitutional Court in 1961) criminalised and harshly punished female adultery only, while, by the combined effects of article 587 CP and article 581 CP (also introduced in 1930), women could be wounded or

even killed by their husbands and/or male relatives with little to no consequences if the female was found out to have an illegitimate carnal relationship bringing shame to the honour of her family: impunity in case of beating not resulting in death, three to seven years in prison in case of murder ostensibly committed in a state of rage and without premeditation.<sup>6</sup> Article 559 CP was abolished in 1968, divorce was introduced in 1970 (and confirmed via referendum in 1974), and the parity between the two spouses in family law was established in 1975, but the dispositions about the *delitto d'onore* contained in article 587 CP, famously attacked in the eponymous *commedia all'italiana Divorzio all'italiana / Divorce Italian Style* (Pietro Germi, 1961), were maintained as far as 1981.

As shown by the above discussion of the Italian legislation, the 'economic miracle' of the late 1950s was far from bringing about an instantaneous, radical change in gender issues. At closer scrutiny, it's perhaps more correct to think of the 'boom' and its immediate aftermath as a period in which the dynamics of change clashed against subtle strategies to reaffirm patriarchal traditionalism under different means. This is evident, once again, in the work sphere. State data reveal that, throughout the 1950s, around 6.5 million Italian women (26% of the total female population) were working under a regular contract: on the one hand, there was an incentive for employers to hire women because they could be paid less than men for the same job, while on the other hand law 860 of August 26<sup>th</sup> 1950, which guaranteed working women paid maternity leave and other benefits, somewhat curbed female employment (Tambor, 2014). In the peak years of the 'economic miracle', from 1958 to 1963, the number of working women increased, showing a trend of female workers leaving jobs in agriculture to take on jobs in industry and services. Afterwards, however, "women's employment declined" and, during the 1960s, "about a million women left the labour force". Besides the higher numbers of young women undertaking full-time education in high school and university, the decline was because

male wages rose, and, as a result, some women were expelled from the labour market, particularly as the principle of equal pay, agreed in 1960, made employing them less attractive. [...] At the same time, improved male earnings enabled more women to become full-time housewives as their husbands now commanded a ‘family wage’. The pattern increasingly became that women worked when they were young, then left the labour market after the birth of their children, after which they found it hard to return (Willson, 2010: 119).

As the extended, patriarchal, peasant family of the countryside gave way to the city-dwelling, working-class, nuclear family, the main female role model of the 1960s continued to be the housewife (Tasca, 2004). This was for three reasons. Firstly, for many women, “particularly those from peasant backgrounds, the option of dedicating themselves to caring properly for their family and home could seem a conquest [...] that had largely only been possible for wealthy women in previous generations” (Willson, 2010: 120). Secondly, 1960s Catholic propaganda kept insisting on Pius XII’s 1945 statement that “every woman’s destiny is motherhood” (Ibid.: 131). Thirdly, from the second half of the 1950s consumer culture successfully intercepted the desire for security of many an Italian woman who experienced the hardships of war and reconstruction, and proposed via women’s magazine and radio and TV advertisements an attractive figure of the modern Italian woman that didn’t hurt the Vatican’s and the Christian Democrats’ principles – the “[*donna*] *tutta casa e famiglia*’, smartly dressed, with well-turned-out children and a sparkling house full of consumer durables” paid by instalments with the husband’s salary (Ginsborg, 1990: 244). As two surveys of 100,000 Italian housewives conducted by the Catholic organisation Centro Italiano Femminile in 1949 and 1964 revealed, though, the dream of being a housewife slowly turned into a nightmare of isolation, loneliness and dissatisfaction on the personal level (Willson, 2010), while “the idealized confinement of women to the home in the 1960s served to enclose them in a purely private dimension, and to remove them even more than previously from the political and public life of the nation” (Ginsborg, 1990: 244).

Besides pinpointing the exact source of Günsberg’s (2005) and Bini’s (2011a)

vaguely-defined male anxieties over female invasiveness and aggressiveness, the sketch of the Italian socio-historical context from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s shows that patriarchal attempts to prevent gynsociality, marginalise and tame the rebellious, post-war New Women were as successful in real life as in the vampire movies analysed in the opening of the subsection. No matter how scary, cruel and bloodthirsty matriarchy was depicted in vampire-themed horrors and, especially, in vampire-themed pepla *Roma contro Roma* and *Maciste e la regina di Samar*, real Italian men had little to fear from their female fellow-countrymen. Firstly, the sexist mentality of Italian society was so solid that it was shared by most women as well, as proven by the debate on *case chiuse*. Secondly, the Lost Wave proto-feminism always was a top-down movement with little follow-up in Italian society, and its egalitarian crusades ended up hijacked by Christian Democrats more often than not. Feminist groups started forming in 1966 (curiously, the year the Gothic *filone* waned and vampire cinema production came to a halt in Italy) and gathered political momentum only in the early 1970s (Balestrini & Moroni, 1988; Ginsborg, 1990). The zeitgeist, then, matches the misogynistic agenda of early Italian vampire cinema, which not coincidentally developed in an industrial environment economically and ideologically controlled by Christian Democracy.

However, the triumph of the institutionalised, “dominant cultural order” (Hall, 2009: 169) sanctioned by the punishment of the villainesses must not overshadow the complexity of the female monster. With the exception of the matriarchs from *Roma contro Roma* and *Maciste e la regina di Samar*, and of lesbian Julia from *Danza macabra*, female vampires are never portrayed as pure, perverted wickedness. On the contrary, a careful analysis of the filmic texts allows identifying some cues that the (overwhelmingly) male screenwriters<sup>7</sup> and (exclusively) male directors may have inserted for spectators to develop a certain sympathy towards the villainess so that, while appeasing the anxieties of Italian men, Italian women’s woes and sorrows under patriarchy could also be highlighted. Acknowledging this “mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements” (Ibid.: 172) makes it possible to nuance the monolithic

portrait of the Italian female vampire painted by academics so far and problematise taken-for-granted assumptions on Italian vampire cinema as an all-out misogynistic cultural manifestation.

A timidly 'feminist' *côté* of Italian vampire cinema from the late 1950s and early 1960s emerges if the cautionary-didactic, Manichaeian dynamics of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century French stage melodrama dissected by Brooks (1995) are traded for the specificities of Italian melodrama, and especially the cinematic melodrama codified in the immediate post-war by director Raffaello Matarazzo in a series of box-office hits like *Catene / Chains* (1949), *Tormento* (1950) and *I figli di nessuno / Nobody's Children* (1951). Contrary to French stage melodrama's "moral polarization and schematization" (Ibid.: 11-12), in Italian melodrama "the figures of the Virgin and the Whore are often found in the same woman", because for Italian authors and audiences pathos doesn't lie in the peripeties leading to the final triumph of Good over Evil, but occurs when the narratives "complicate any easy moral condemnation and dwell instead on suffering as a redemptive state and a route to compassion" (Bayman, 2014: 45). If we apply this suggestion to Italian horror, the female vampire remains an 'abnormal' villainess to be executed for the greater good of society, but her evil deeds are, if not excused, at least justified by very human feelings of either hate or love that are presented to the spectator within a revenge or tragic-love plot.

*Il sangue e la rosa*, *La maschera del demonio* and *La cripta e l'incubo* are illustrations of the former type of storyline. Whilst *Il sangue e la rosa*'s villainess is the ghost of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century woman tormenting the 1960s descendants of the man who shamelessly betrayed her love, Asa Vajda and Sheena Karnstein wreak havoc in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Central-Eastern Europe to exact revenge on their family for the wrongs they suffered centuries earlier in their mortal life within a misogynistic society ruled by their male relatives. It's never clear if, prior to their death at the hand of the inquisitors, Asa and Sheena really were vampire witches as they were accused to be: by setting their trial and execution during the period of early-modern witch

hunts made infamous by *Vredens dag / Day of Wrath* (Carl Theodor Dreyer, 1943), Arthur Miller's 1953 play *The Crucible* and its Italo-French film adaptation *Les sorcières de Salem / The Crucible* (Raymond Rouleau, 1957), the filmmakers automatically cast doubts on the validity of the accusations.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, there are no witnesses, no evidence of crime, no confessions – during the trial, the spectator can only listen to an all-male jury's verdict of culpability and see two young women as they face a horrible death with the dignity, defiance and faith in resurrection of a Christian martyr. Asa is dressed in white and about to be burnt alive, Sheena almost completely naked and crucified: both refuse to recognise the legitimacy of the court, invoke higher powers and curse the judges.<sup>9</sup> As has been written apropos of the later horror *Dracula: Prince of Darkness*, in *La maschera del demonio* and *La cripta e l'incubo*, too, “the image that should speak to us of the conquest of institutionalized good has a latent subversive content: it shows [...] males overpowering and symbolically violating a struggling, screaming female” (Prawer, 1980: 258). Sheena makes it explicit right after hearing from her fellow-Karnsteins the death sentence punishing her for unspecified “sacrilegious crimes”. Echoing the opening scene of Middle-Age-set peplum *Maciste all'Inferno / The Witch's Curse* (Riccardo Freda, 1962), written by *La maschera del demonio*'s screenwriter Ennio de Concini and revolving around a lustful judge using his position to have a woman who rejected him executed for witchcraft, Sheena says: “You kill me unjustly! But you will pay for your sins!”. The apex of melodrama Italian-style, however, is reached in the tragic-love plots of *I vampiri*, *Il mulino delle donne di pietra* and *La maschera del demonio*, where female vampires seek to realise the impossible dream of living a ‘normal’ life, loving and being loved just like anybody else.

Let's start from the opening scene of *La maschera del demonio*, with Princess Asa Vajda tied to a stake next to the lifeless body of her lover Javutich. The all-male jury of prelates – dubbed “the Sacred College of the Primates of Moldavia” – is led by Asa's brother Griabi, who sentences the woman to death with the following words: “I, Great Inquisitor



Griabi, second-born in the lineage of the Princes of Vajda, condemn you and, as your brother, I disown you. Many a crime you have committed in order to satisfy your satanic love for Devil's servant Igor Javutich. May God have mercy on your soul!". Besides the very vague accusations, what's interesting to note is the genealogical reference: if Griabi is the second born, then his sister is presumably the eldest in the family and, given the aristocratic custom of keeping family assets undivided, the sole heir to the Vajda's fortune, which suggests that the Great Inquisitor might have exploited the religious hysteria of the times to get rid of Asa and her partner for inheritance reasons. Whatever the case, once Asa and Javutich return from the dead, their objective doesn't seem to be vengeance *tout court*. Rather, they seek the blood of the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Vajdas as a means to rejuvenate and make up for lost time, which makes them **piteous, slightly-sympathetic characters along the lines of lovelorn Imhotep from Universal's 1932 *The Mummy***, not least for tear-jerking monologues like the one pronounced by newly-resurrected Javutich as he caresses Asa's corpse: "You have pulled me out of the earth that was as heavy as lead on my body, Asa. Now you aren't alone anymore. I will bring Katia to you and she'll be your prey. [...] Through her, you'll live again. You'll talk and smile like her, and we'll live again, as in the old days".<sup>10</sup>

Marguerite Du Grand from *I vampiri* and Elfi from *Il mulino delle donne di pietra* would stop at nothing to fulfil their dreams of love, too. Their villainy therefore acquires a shade of tragic grandeur mixing moral reprobation with awe-like respect and, perhaps, compassion, as in the Italian melodramatic imagination the 'reasons of the heart' are commonly perceived as uncontrollable, "all-too-human and eternal passions" (1955 interview with Matarazzo, quoted in Casadio, 1990: 8), and much more dignified a motive than lust or greed (Bayman, 2014). In her prime, Marguerite was madly in love with a married man, Pierre Lantin senior, and, once rejected, she used her wealth and social position to ruin the Lantins. Now, in mid-1950s Paris, decades after her beauty faded, she has her henchmen feed her the blood of innocent schoolgirls to regain her lost youth and seduce Pierre Lantin junior

(a portrait of Pierre Lantin senior is hanged in Marguerite's bedroom, next to the bed, symbolising her everlasting romantic obsession). Although viciously evil for the whole film, in the end we are informed by a policeman that "the Duchess died confessing her crimes", which hints at a repentance *in extremis* and a minimum of hope for the safety of her soul.

Elfi, on the other hand, suffers from a rare disease that kills her every time she's under emotional strain, so she's forced to spend the best years of her life as a recluse in her family house, in company of her hyper-protective father and a shady, lustful doctor, who revive her with transfusions of 'fresh' female blood. It's the feeling of having being unjustly wronged "by a blind and cruel fate" (Matarazzo, quoted in Casadio, 1990: 8) over which she has no control that, in a typically-melodramatic fashion, makes her a pity-inducing, somewhat-sympathetic victim as well as a cruel perpetrator. For instance, as she sadistically teases bound-and-gagged angelic virgin Liselotte, Elfi reveals her deep emotional wounds and fragility: "I am so afraid of thunders! When I was a child I always hid under the bed... and you? Weren't you afraid? No? It's because you have never been all alone like me, in this dark, gloomy house. Maybe you already knew Hans. You used to take refuge in his arms during storms, didn't you? Shivering in his arms must have been tremendously exciting!".

For all its privileging of the Madonna over the Magdalen, *Il mulino delle donne di pietra* is far from providing a portrait of the female vampire as absolute evil. Rather, the screenwriters and the director seem to air the idea that the blame for 'fallen' women's misfortunes should be put, at least partially, on the very same overemphasis on female virginity and moral double standard that Garofalo (1956) and Parca (1966; 1977) consider a bulwark of post-war Italy's oppressive patriarchal mentality. At the beginning of the movie, Hans enjoys a sexual encounter with 'sex bomb' Elfi (she's first seen emerging from vagina-shaped curtains, wears a scarlet nightgown and utters femme-fatale lines like "It is I who want you!") only to realise how pure and beautiful is the love of his virginal sweetheart Liselotte, who forgives all his faults without asking questions and agrees to marry him. This "implicitly

underlines a moral male-oriented judgement: better a modest life companion than a passionate lover who could not even offer her virginity” (Curti, 2015: 52), which is confirmed by the film’s treatment submitted to the Italian State Cinema Bureau: “Embittered for having yielded to the call of the flesh and having fallen into Elfi’s trap, Hans finds peace in his childhood friend Liselotte’s pure love” (Unknown, 1959). As Di Chiara (2009: 103) writes, then, “Hans’s behaviour is that of the young, petty-bourgeois stock-character who, after an adventure with an already ‘compromised’ woman, goes back to his girlfriend to get married”.

However, *Il mulino delle donne di pietra* doesn’t promote the heteronormative narrative as unproblematically and enthusiastically as the treatment and the moralistic framework sketched by Italian horror scholars would lead us to believe. Indeed, at one-third of the film, in the highly-melodramatic scene in which Hans breaks up with one-night stand Elfi, she makes some good points before bursting into hysterics and dropping dead on the floor: “I love you, Hans. I love only you, do you understand? Even if other men before you took advantage of my loneliness... of my lack of experience... But maybe you are blaming me for this? You are unfair. If you only knew how horrible is my life, all alone in my room!”. In short, under patriarchy, once a woman gives in to passion and ‘falls’ (loses her virginity out of the wedlock), she’s branded as a whore and becomes a pariah of sorts. Contrary to men – who are free to satisfy their sexual appetites at any one time and, if virgin, are allowed to ‘fall’ without suffering any consequence – unmarried, non-virgin women are excluded from the number of the respectably marriageable and become an easy target for unscrupulous men who promise redemption via marriage in exchange for sex with no intention of keeping their part of the bargain after coitus. As a matter of fact, desperate with her outcast status, the compromised woman would even be the first to offer men sex, like Elfi does with Hans, in the attempt to convince the sexual partner to marry her and make a ‘honest woman’ out of her.

The tragic-love narratives of *I vampiri* (symptomatically retitled *Quella che voleva amare*, ‘She who wanted to love’, for its August-1958 *fotoromanzo* release in issue 31 of *I*

*vostri film*), *Il mulino delle donne di pietra* and *La maschera del demonio* allow putting forward three interconnected points. Firstly, in spite of their academic reputation of transgressive, promiscuous man-eaters, the most well-known Italian female vampires from the late 1950s and early 1960s are quite romantic and decidedly monogamous-minded, their dream being the same as that of the damsels in distress on which they feed: living with a man *more uxorio*, happily ever after. The only difference between the two female opposites lies in the means by which they try to win over their beloved, that is to say in the conflict between carnality and purity, with the latter always triumphant – except in *Il sangue e la rosa* (whose ending suggests that Leopoldo Karnstein’s angelic bride is possessed by villainess Millarca), *I Wurdalak* and *Danza macabra* (where vampirised damsel in distress Sdenka and undead adulteress Elizabeth eventually get to live forever with the young man they are in love with).<sup>11</sup>

Secondly, if damsels in distress are little more than screaming ornaments waiting to be saved and married by the dashing hero, vampire women don’t fare much better from a ‘female empowerment’ point of view: they, too, live in a condition of total dependence to men, as shown by the fact that the monstrous female is easily disposed of by the good guys once her male servants and/or lovers are defeated (*I vampiri*; *La maschera del demonio*; *L’orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock*; *Maciste e la regina di Samar*), switch allegiance (*L’amante del vampiro*) or lose interest in her (*La strage dei vampiri*). In other words, with the exception of Sheena from lesbian-themed *La cripta e l’incubo*, female vampires embrace rather than reject the heteronormative mentality of post-war Italy according to which the members of the ‘weaker sex’ must put themselves under the protection of the ‘stronger sex’ in order to survive – the power of the vampire dominatrix being the sum of male manpower and intellect she can co-opt through sex appeal and/or the black arts. And indeed, trapped under patriarchy, both ‘good’ and ‘bad’ femininity ultimately end up voicing the same feelings of frustration, entrapment, powerlessness, worthlessness and isolation that, according to Ginsborg (1990) and Willson (2011), plague the Italian post-war housewife. Elfi, as we have seen, laments her

imprisonment and loneliness in the familial home several times over the course of *Il mulino delle donne di pietra*, and so do Laura in *La cripta e l'incubo* (“Almost nobody ever comes here. This castle is like a tomb...”) and Katia in *La maschera del demonio* (“I feel so desperate and lonely here! [...] What is my life? Bitterness and grief, something that is destroyed little by little and nobody ever rebuilds. It wastes away day after day, like this garden, which is dying away like my aimless existence!”).<sup>12</sup>

The case of *L'amante del vampiro*'s vampire Countess Alda, who, like Duchess Du Grand, is more afraid that the lack of blood would make her look her real age than kill her, brings us to the third point, namely that female vampires give a great importance to their physical aspect, literally obsessing about youthful looks and beauty. Other notable examples come from *Amanti d'oltretomba* (in which decrepit servant Solange agrees to be an accomplice in a brutal double murder to reacquire youth via blood transfusion and marry her master) and *L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock* (in which the title-character tries to make up to his first wife Margaretha for mistakenly burying her alive by feeding her the blood of his second wife Cynthia, so that Margaretha – grotesquely aged due to the shock of premature burial – will get back her good looks). Not coincidentally, in an early-1960s nation-wide poll, “physical qualities” ranked absolute first choice as an answer Italian adult males gave to the question ‘What is the most valuable characteristic in a woman?’, with “21% of the votes” (Parca, 1977: 118), thus showing at work “the dictatorship of beauty”, i.e. the patriarchal dogma according to which beauty is the only weapon for a woman to ‘catch’ a male protector and make it in life (Garofalo, 1956: 29).

By bringing to the fore the vindictive and tragic sides of early Italian vampire cinema, common assumptions about the Gothic horror *filone* have been problematised, and the female vampire presented as an all-too-human being melodramatically caught between sexual rebellion/transgression (pre- or extra-marital sex, recreational rather than procreative intercourse, ‘abnormal’ sexual behaviours, ‘excessive’ beauty, patriarchy) and hyper-

identification with traditional patriarchal values (marriage, monogamy, dependency/submission to the male, overemphasis on female youth and beauty). Such nuanced and contradictory portrayal, though, is hardly due to a feminist sensibility on the part of screenwriters and directors. Rather, it's most likely a byproduct of the *filone*-filmmaking mode of production described in Chapter 3.

Firstly, as all *filoni* exploits, the Italian vampire movies of the late 1950s and early 1960s generally were written and shot at breakneck speed, and revised/reworked by people with different tastes and agendas at different stages of pre-production, production and post-production, which is bound to result in changes in register within the film, if not plain inconsistencies. Secondly, as written in Chapter 1, for the almost totality of the people involved in the golden age of Italian genre cinema, the main motive for working on a project was financial gain, and therefore the aim was to craft a movie obliging popular narrative formulas, established cultural stereotypes and censorship diktats, so that many people would go to see it (especially in a huge film market such as 1950s-1960s Italy, where the state also granted tax refunds proportional to box-office receipts) (see Chapter 3). Under this light, the sexy, uninhibited, slightly-sympathetic 'bad woman' of Italian Gothic horror – a much rounder character than the passive damsel in distress – could have been conceived both as an eye candy for male spectators and a hook for strong female identification, in order to broaden the audience as much as possible. The countercheck to the above considerations is provided, by way of counterpoint, if we move on to investigate the portrayals of the villainesses in post-1968 Italian vampire cinema.

As “bastardised excrescences” (Curti, 2011: 300) of the Gothic revival triggered in 1957-1958 by Hammer, most vampire-themed Italian horrors made after 1968 adopt the narrative *topoi* codified in the late 1950s and early 1960s. First of all, they reprise the sexually-connoted moral dichotomy between villainesses and damsels in distress emphasised via hair colour (e.g., wayward brunette Lucy versus blonde wife-to-be Mina in *Il Conte*

*Dracula*, and red-headed, promiscuous Countess Dracula versus raven-haired, virgin chambermaid Tanya in *Il plenilunio delle vergini*). A minimal variation to this scheme is provided by *La notte dei dannati*, where blonde Danielle is already happily married when she crosses path with a dark-haired vampire witch, which makes her a madame in distress rather than a damsel in distress. Secondly, whilst under the influence of the 1968-1971 Jean Rollin vampire tetralogy, of Hammer's 1970-1971 Karnstein trilogy and of the 1971 'lesbian vampire' exploits by Kümel and Franco the late-1960s and 1970s Italian female vampires become even more proactive and forward in soliciting sex from male and females alike, their 'woman in peril' counterparts maintain the passivity of the late 1950s and early 1960s, so that decisive actions are once again entrusted to either a male hero (*La notte dei dannati*; *La notte dei diavoli*; *Il plenilunio delle vergini*; *Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!*) or homosocial brotherhoods (*Il Conte Dracula*; *Le vergini cavalcano la morte*; *Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel Trecento...*). Thirdly, in the denouement, many post-1968 Italian vampire films tend to focus on the punishment of evil women through disfigurement, purifying fire, staking or other bodily mutilations (*Il Conte Dracula*; *La notte dei dannati*; *La notte dei diavoli*; *L'amante del demonio*; *Le vergini cavalcano la morte*; *Il plenilunio delle vergini*), although there occasionally are sardonic, unhappy endings that, just like in early-1960s entries *Il sangue e la rosa*, *I Wurdalak* and *Danza macabra* and in Polanski's influential *Dance of the Vampires*, let vampires have it their way (...*Hanno cambiato faccia*; *Nella stretta morsa del ragno*) or doom the male protagonist right after evil is defeated (*Il plenilunio delle vergini*; *La notte dei diavoli*).

The main difference between the Italian vampire-themed horror output of 1956-1965 and that of 1969-1975 lies in the latter's abundance in female nudity and lack of nuance in the representation of the villainesses. From an industrial perspective, this is explained by the fact that – inspired by the success of Anglo-American, Francophone, West-German and Spanish "sexy-eror" (Anonymous, 1971) in the late-1960s and early-1970s international 'grindhouse'

circuit, and aided by a relative relaxation of the Italian Censorship Office over the course of the second half of the 1960s – Italian horror began to target adult males by relying more and more on sensationalist sexual content at the expense of plot and character development, and even narrative coherence, as denounced in the censorship reports for *Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel Trecento...* cited in Chapter 3. Tellingly, the only post-1968 female vampires who are given a minimum of characterisation are those played by Lucia Bosé and Milena Vukotic – two aging actresses that, by the early 1970s, had little sex appeal to show off, especially if compared to their much younger co-stars Ewa Aulin, Silvia Dionisio, Dominique Darel and Stefania Casini.

In *Le vergini cavalcano la morte*, a rip-off of Hammer's *Countess Dracula*, forty-two-year-old, former Miss Italia 1947 Bosé exploits the fact that her beauty was on the wane to play Erzsébet Báthory II, a 19<sup>th</sup>-century Marquise who resorts to bathing in blood like her infamous ancestor to regain youth and the sexual attentions of her estranged husband Karl. When her plan fails, guilt-ridden after commissioning several murders and killing Karl in a fit of jealousy, Báthory II confesses her crimes and takes full responsibility in front of the authorities, just like Duchess Du Grand from *I vampiri did in articulo mortis*. In the last shot of *Le vergini cavalcano la morte*, we see the Marquise walled up in her room by court order, mummified in front of a mirror, forever bound to contemplate her decaying face. In *Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!*, on the other hand, thirty-eight-year-old Vukotic plays the small role of unattractive spinster Esmeralda Di Fiore: due to her being a virgin, she's vampirised by Dracula and, after he's executed, she commits suicide by impaling herself on the same stake that killed her demonic 'husband'. These are the only two female vampires who can compare to the villainesses of the late 1950s and early 1960s as far as psychological depth, inner turmoil and tragic grandeur are concerned. As for the rest, the characterisation of post-1968 female vampires is flattened, if not dumbed down, as shown in *La notte dei dannati*, *L'amante del demonio* and *Il plenilunio delle vergini*.



Borrowing from *La maschera del demonio* and *La cripta e l'incubo*, *La notte dei dannati* is centred around Tarin Drôle ('Strange Nose'), a woman executed for witchcraft in 1650 who periodically returns from the dead to exact revenge on the descendants of her executioners, the family of the Princes of Saint-Lambert, leading the male Saint-Lamberts to madness and drinking the blood of the female Saint-Lamberts to continue her existence as young and beautiful Rita Lernod. Contrary to the early 1960s films, though, no flashback of Tarin Drôle's execution is provided to cast doubts on the validity of the 17<sup>th</sup>-century inquisitors' accusations. Moreover, the villainess is given little dialogue and spends most of her screentime coveting beautiful young females, mangling or caressing their exposed breasts. As a matter of fact, *La notte dei dannati* starts as a revenge-from-beyond-the-grave horror but soon becomes a 'sexual triangle' narrative of the *Les lèvres rouges* or *Vampyros Lesbos* kind in which, for unexplained reasons, the vampire witch insinuates herself between detective Jean Duprey and his wife Danielle (neither of whom belongs to the Saint-Lambert family). Lesbian interludes are privileged over narrative coherence in *L'amante del demonio* as well, where a fang-sporting blonde woman – completely naked under her red cape – suddenly appears during an orgy scene involving two virgin girls kidnapped by a group of brigands and prostitutes. After heterosexual and lesbian couplings, the two former virgins are bitten by the female vampire and become Satan's helpers in corrupting the damsel-in-distress protagonist. It's not made clear who the naked female vampire is and where she comes from, as she briefly appears during the orgy scene never to be seen again.<sup>13</sup> Finally, *Il plenilunio delle vergini*'s threadbare plot (revolving around twin brothers Franz and Karl Schiller looking for the ring of the Nibelungs around the village of Ladracu) is fleshed out to the minimum requirement of eighty minutes not only by protracted wanderings in castle corridors and dungeons, but also, and most importantly, via Countess Dracula's sexual exploits with 'bad twin' Franz and zombie-chambermaid Lara, and the final orgiastic ritual of sex and blood. Not coincidentally,

the screenplay of the film calls for the subtitle *Eros Vampiros* (a clear nod to *Vampyros Lesbos*) to appear in the opening credits (Batzella, 1972).

That after 1968 the female vampire had become a synonym for pure, bloodthirsty and sex-starved evil is confirmed by the 1970s ‘adults only’ Italian magazines advertising some coeval vampire films from Italy and abroad. In an article about *Le frisson des vampires / The Shiver of the Vampires* (Jean Rollin, 1971) titled “I want the female vampire that I like so much”, for instance, it’s noted that “a brand new vampire” is “trending today” – a version of the vampire that, compared to previous big-screen incarnations, is “revised and corrected, or, to better put it, revised and corrupted, transformed into a charming female creature hungry for blood and sex” (Rey 1971: 1). A launch article for *Il plenilunio delle vergini* focused on its star Rosalba Neri, the actress “that more than any other has become ‘the undressing leading lady’ of Italian cinema” (Santevri, 1972: 8), similarly quips that “Rosalba – naturally, given the times we live in – rather than blood seeks (you bet it!) sex...” (Ibid.: 6). The piece then lauds the director for having the end credits roll right after the death of Neri’s character, as the movie makes no sense without the “panoramic and expressive curves” of “the vampire Countess thirsty for blood (and sex!)” (Ibid.: 11). Finally, publicity blurb puts special emphasis on *Il plenilunio delle vergini*’s sapphic scenes, e.g. on the covers of *Cinesex Attualità* issue 13 (November 1972) and *Cinestop Attualità* issue 12 (May 1973), where the taglines “Rosalba Neri... more lesbian than ever!” and “Rosalba Neri, horny lesbo-vampire!” appear.<sup>14</sup> The joke about the updating and spicing up of classic horror figures is repeated in a launch article for *La notte dei dannati* unambiguously titled “Sex in the darkness”:

Black magic is now spreading everywhere. Until a few years ago, it was practised only by small congregations in England – the adepts grouped around efficient and extremely knowledgeable, yet decrepit and ugly, witches. It’s only natural, then, that their followers were few. But, in a short turn of years, sexual commodification penetrated even in this dark zone of Western subculture. The average age of witches drastically dropped [...] and their attractiveness, on the contrary, grew enormously: today a black magic priestess must be a beautiful-bodied twenty-year-old (during the

rituals, nakedness is *de rigueur* just like formal dress at the Nobel Prize ceremony) (Giustiniani, 1971: 74).

Perhaps inspired by the fact that the subject of “the first full-frontal-nudity picture ever to appear in an Italian popular magazine” was Gothic-*filone* star “Barbara Steele [...] in a photoshoot female photographer Elisabetta Catalano made in 1967, for *Playmen* issue 1” (Pezzotta, 2014: 44), **an article advertising *Requiem pour un vampire / Requiem for a Vampire* (Jean Rollin, 1971)** proposes a connection between the so-called sexual revolution of the late 1960s and vampire cinema, in that they both are bent on liberating people by breaking centuries-old taboos about carnal pleasures and the representation of sexuality (Cirici, 1972). Full-frontal female nudity and lovemaking without inhibition or remorse are the main attractions also in the horror-themed ‘adults only’ Italian comic-book series of the late 1960s and early 1970s, as best exemplified by the adventures of female vampires Jacula and Zora, whose namesake series spanned from 1969 to 1982 and from 1972 to 1985 respectively, and sold an average 60,000 copies per issue in the first years, when production expenses were 50 lire per copy and the retail price 200 or 300 lire (Pettarin, 1980; Origa & Ferrero, 2007; Curti, 2011). “Finally I can love without restraint!”, says a naked girl lying on a tomb during a vampire sabbath in *Jacula* issue 1 (March 1969), symbolically announcing the death of the Catholic-patriarchal obscurantism and welcoming a new era of sexual freedom and female self-fulfilment. A sketch of the then-contemporary historical and socio-cultural context is therefore needed to assess the claims about the inherently-subversive quality of post-1968 Italian vampire cinema and, especially, to shed light on its gender politics.

As already mentioned, in Italy feminist groups started forming in 1966, bringing together the predominantly upper-middle-class, university-educated women who constituted the target audience of the first Italian editions of second-wave-feminism manifestos like Simone de Beauvoir’s 1949 *Le Deuxième Sexe* and Betty Friedan’s 1963 *The Feminine Mystique*, published between 1961 and 1965. The pathfinder was the collective Demau

(‘Demystification of authority’) in Milan, followed in the early 1970s by Rome-based Rivolta femminile (‘Female revolt’), Milan-based Liberazione femminile (‘Female liberation’), Trento-based Cerchio spezzato (‘Broken circle’), Padua-based Lotta femminista (‘Feminist struggle’) and a few others. As a matter of fact, a characteristic of Italian feminism was “its diffusion through a number of diverse groups” operating in different cities – “varied realities” (Bono & Kemp, 1991: 4) that were seldom in contact with each other and strongly suspicious “of all formally constituted parties, which were seen as entrenchments of male authority” (Ibid.: 10). Proud of their non-institutional basis, Italian feminist groups adopted as an operating principle the idea that the personal is political and, through the theoretical tools of 1960s-1970s French psychoanalysis, elaborated a philosophical practice known as *autocoscienza*, i.e. “independent, small groups of women, meeting to discuss issues of all kinds on the basis of personal experience” (Ibid.: 9). Seeking freedom in sexual difference rather than equality at men’s conditions, the most radical Italian collectives even declared that “we [women] communicate only with women” (Rivolta femminile, 1991: 40). In their writings, Italian feminists – and especially the members of Rivolta femminile and Lotta femminista – criticised Marx’s dialectic materialism for ignoring women’s unpaid labour within the house and accused Marxist revolutionary theory of being patriarchal: women liberation “does not lie in achieving economic independence” and is not to be postponed until after the proletarian revolution, like the Italian Communist Party had been saying ever since its foundation in 1921, but must be achieved in the here and now by “destroying the institution [of the family,] which made [women] into slaves even after slavery had been eliminated” (Lonzi, 1991: 52).

According to historians, the origins of 1970s Italian feminism are less connected to the creation of the 1966 Demau collective than to the Italian student movement of 1968: “many of the women involved in the ‘new’ feminism of the 1970s came out of the experience of 1968, with its strong anti-institutional bias, and were or had been members of

extraparliamentary [leftwing] groups” (Bono & Kemp, 1991: 10). The birth, demands and impact of the Italian student movement are explored in Chapter 5, where the political and socio-economic implications of Italian vampire cinema are analysed. For now, suffice it to say that the youth revolt that exploded in Italian universities in 1968 catalysed the 1960s male and female teenagers’ ever-growing restlessness about traditional gender roles: the authority of the father over sons and daughters was fiercely questioned, the family was charged with the sexual enslavement of females, and slogans exalting personal freedom and free love were shouted. As in “other Western countries, many Italian women first became politicised through the sit-ins and mass debates of the student movement”, criticising “authoritarian ideas (including the ‘authoritarian family’)” and calling for “greater sexual freedoms”, then “rebelled against it” (Willson, 2010: 151) upon realising that, for their male fellow-protesters, the much-called-for sexual freedom simply meant that women should make themselves available at any time to meet men’s sexual needs, on pain of being called frigid, lesbian, old-fashioned, reactionary or a combination thereof (Segre, 1982). This explains why 1970s feminists, exasperated by and disgusted with their former male comrades’ die-hard sexism, insisted on *autocoscienza* and the importance of gynosociality rather than male-female dialogue.

Although never widespread at mass level, very loosely structured and fragmented in a myriad local sections, the Italian feminist movement nonetheless gained some momentum from the early 1970s to the early 1980s, when a series of parliamentary debates and referenda touched upon issues like legalising contraceptive pills, divorce and abortion, which were seen as potentially instrumental to liberate women from the century-old stereotype of (house)wife and mother. In spite of the fact that Lotta femminista’s proposal of instituting a salary for housewives (Dalla Costa, 1972) was never taken into consideration by political parties, and that the laws on divorce and abortion were passed in far less radical a form than the one many feminists hoped for (Caldwell, 1991), the movement quickly entered collective imagination as

synthesised by its slogan ‘Tremate, tremate, le streghe son tornate!’ (‘Tremble with fear, the witches are back!’), meant to underline the aggressiveness of 1970s feminist militants, who – contrary to the moderate, non-threatening proto-feminists of the Lost Wave – purported to literally scare men off their privileges.<sup>15</sup> The witch analogy, however, proved a double-edged sword for Italian feminists, because it was immediately used by their ideological rivals to derogatorily depict them as nagging, often ugly and past-their-prime women who conspired against constituted order out of sexual frustration, mostly to take revenge on the men they couldn’t win over.

Moving from the socio-cultural context back to the filmic texts, only two post-1968 Italian vampire movies can be said to bend the austere sexual morality of the vampire subgenre codified in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and embrace the countercultural mindset of the student-protest years. In ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* and *Il prato macchiato di rosso*, the theme of the conflict between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ femininity is reworked to make hyper-sexed hippy characters a *bona fide* positive model: the former film contrasts a red-headed hippy girl’s joyous embracing of sex as healthy, uncomplicated fun with a brunette vampire secretary’s view of sex as a duty and a means to an end; the latter contrasts a cute, brunette hippy’s sexual attraction to her partner with a blonde, lame, vampire-like, upper-class woman’s incestuous relationship with her neo-Nazi brother. As for the rest, given both the dependence of the 1969-1975 vampire output to the early-1960s Gothic *filone*’s narrative models and the one-dimensionality of 1970s vampire women, post-1968 vampire cinema leans heavily towards an **all-out misogyny** whose aim is twofold – to exorcise the ‘old’ fears of the immediate post-war (many 1970s male characters still end up willy-nilly serving a vampire dominatrix, as shown by *La notte dei dannati*, *La notte dei diavoli* and *Le vergini cavalcano la morte*) and the ‘new’ anxieties about 1970s feminists, who were struggling to build a society where females could survive without a male protector if they so desired.

Perfectly capable of getting by without any help from men, the powerful vampire witches of horrors *La notte dei diavoli*, *La notte dei dannati* and *Il plenilunio delle vergini* lend themselves particularly well to incarnate the 1970s patriarchal stereotype of the feminist *strega* in all its shades, from the old maid jealous of other people's familial happiness to the impenitent or reformed lesbian. In *La notte dei diavoli*, an extended peasant family (consisting of an old patriarch, his submissive young wife and two kids, plus the patriarch's slightly-younger brother and his three grown-up children) is threatened by a wurdalak in the Slovenian backwoods. Conforming to then-contemporary sexist slander against feminists, the wurdalak isn't a highwayman like in Tolstoy's *La famille du Vourdalak* and *I tre volti della paura*'s segment *I Wurdalak*, but a middle-aged, unmarried woman of unremarkable physical qualities who lives alone in the wilderness, plotting to destroy the family unit barricaded in the ancestral house. As for motivations, the filmmakers strongly imply that she acts out of sexual frustration and envy: her aim is to separate the old patriarch from his attractive young wife, and it's only after the vampirised patriarch is dispatched by his relatives that the wurdalak unleashes her fury on the rest of the family, as a revenge of sorts. In *La notte dei dannati*, on the other hand, the all-female orgiastic rituals officiated by vampire witch Tarin Drôle/Rita Lernod might be seen as a parody of *autocoscienza* meetings, while the lesbian villainess' rejection of males as inadequate sexual partners (she kills her husband the Prince of Saint-Lambert and subsequently starts chasing young women around, including married Danielle) could be a 'sexexploitative' dramatisation of the Italian feminists' radical stance that "wom[e]n must not be defined in relation to man" (Rivolta femminile, 1991: 37) and should communicate only among themselves.

The most **misogynistic** vampire-themed horror, however, is *Il plenilunio delle vergini*. This is not so much because Countess Dracula is executed by hero Karl in the finale, as a punishment for her lesbian escapades and for her taking on a penetrative, masculine role during heterosexual intercourse.<sup>16</sup> As we have seen when discussing state and religious

censorship bodies, identifying evil with non-normative sexuality and violently sanctioning it were inescapable conditions for industry people who sought to make money by challenging the boundaries of the visible, which was particularly true for the representation of homosexuality until well into the 1970s (Giori, 2015). The apex of misogyny in *Il plenilunio delle vergini* is actually reached one hour into the movie, when the Countess, after many decades of widowhood livened up only by lesbian ménages, finally has sex with a man in the person of consummate playboy Franz: so wonderful is the experience that the Countess calls him “the living reincarnation of my husband Count Dracula”, decides to marry Franz and share with him the immortality and omnipotence granted by the ring of the Nibelungs. Besides exemplifying what Zimmerman (2004: 78) calls the “heterosexual context” of the lesbian vampire film – i.e. the flattering of male viewers’ egos by showing a man “stepping in to separate two women and thus prove his superior prowess, [...] his sexual potency and his masculine superiority” – Countess Dracula’s character arc is a stark illustration of the sexist idea that what women really want isn’t equality/emancipation/freedom/power but a virile husband able to satisfy them in bed. So much for the subversive content and sexually-liberating power of post-1968 vampire cinema from a female perspective.

### **The male vampire**

The previous subsection showed that, in early Gothic horrors, misogynistic repression coexists with more ambivalent dynamics highlighting the hardships women have to face in a man’s world. At closer inspection, *Il mulino delle donne di pietra*’s titular museum-mill is a perfect metaphor for Wood’s (1979a; b; 1985) and Berenstein’s (1996) suggestion that horror is a highly-contradictory genre in which the enforcement of the political, socio-economic, racial and gender status quo goes hand in hand with a subterranean critique of dominant ideology (see Chapter 2). Firstly, the museum-mill doesn’t only showcase sculptures of stereotypically-evil women like Salomé, as it’s often misreported in plot synopses, but



features a problematic hybrid between femme fatale and tragic lover (Cleopatra) and a martyred national heroine (Joan of Arc) too. Secondly, all these statues – whether representing ‘good’ or ‘bad’ female archetypes – contain the corpses of innocent girls bled dry by two older men obsessing over young and beautiful Elfi due to borderline-incestuous attachment (professor Wahl) and sheer lust (doctor Bohlem), which certainly begs the question of who the actual vampire of the narrative is. Such a question, however, has rarely, if ever, been asked in academia. After Clarens’s (1968) and Mora’s (1978) seminal studies, there has been a tendency to see “the Italian [Gothic] horror film” as “concentrat[ing] almost entirely on the devastating effects of a sexually provocative witch/vampire woman on hapless masculinity” (Newman, 1986a: 22), to the point that the male vampires appearing in Italian genre cinema have never been analysed in depth.

Contrary to their female homologues who remained confined to horror/thriller hybrids, supernatural horror and pepla, **in the aftermath of the Hammer *Dracula*’s worldwide box-office success** male vampires started appearing everywhere in Italian genre cinema, extending their domain from chillers and sword-and-sandal adventures to comedy, and even popping up in one *spogliarello* movie (see Chapter 3). Although displaying more variety in terms of film-genre appearances, Italian male vampires are far less nuanced characters than female ones, and therefore rather univocal and uniform figures if subjected to gender readings. In fact, whatever the genre context and the production year, they basically act as hyper-sexed demon lovers that women young and old, nubile and married, either secretly desire (the woman-as-willing-victim stereotype) or are unable to turn down (the woman-as-powerless-victim stereotype). **The will to piggy-back on Hammer’s smash-hit *Dracula* and the ensuing *Dracula* cycle** – which revolved around “this very charming, handsome man” (Fisher, quoted in Eyles, Adkinson & Fry, 1973: 14) by whom “women were eager to be nipped” (Michael Carreras, quoted in Frayling, 2011: 126) – is a plausible yet only partial explanation for Italian male vampires’ one-dimensionality over the next sixteen years. Useful insights for an investigation

into ‘makeshift Draculas’ from 1959 *Tempi duri per i vampiri* to 1975 *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* can be found by revisiting the post-war Italian zeitgeist.

As made explicit by Guidi Cingolani’s speech at the 1945 Consultative Assembly (“we [women politicians] certainly couldn’t do any worse than you men have done!”) (quoted in Tambor, 2014: 3) and by 1950s Italian-language domestic manuals claiming that the “so-called feminine progress” is “due to the recent ‘crisis of the masculine world’” (West, 2006: 26), World War Two tore down a long-standing patriarchal bulwark that was particularly cultivated by the Fascist regime, i.e. “the myth of male infallibility” (Garofalo, 1956: 4). Moreover, with the advent of TV around the mid-1950s, and the inception of the ‘economic miracle’ and consumer culture in the late 1950s, “the traditional balance of power between genders” slowly began to shift in Italy:

In a rigidly-patriarchal culture, gender hierarchy greatly hinders the expansion of consumer-goods consumption because, by imposing themselves as mediators between the women and the marketplace, men grant housewives a very limited autonomy of choice, one that is basically restricted to the purchase of food and a few household goods. [However,] the booming consumer-goods market [of late-1950s and 1960s Italy] demanded more and more interlocutors [...] in possession of a certain degree of autonomy: when this superior need of the market found an obstacle in masculine demands for a total submission of females to males, the market removed the obstacle by bypassing men and addressing women directly (Bellassai, 2011: 106).

Thus, due to the influence of mass-media advertising, during the 1958-1963 ‘boom’ women progressively took centre stage and became the ideal citizens of modern, neocapitalist Italy as both housewives responsibly managing consumption in the private sphere of the home and married or unmarried spendthrift purchasers of non-essential goods. Coinciding with the abolition of *case chiuse*, the “harem” of the wannabe “sultan” that is the Italian male (Parca, 1977), the emergence of a consumerist ‘female power’ was perceived by many Italian commentators from the early 1960s in terms of a weakening – if not a downright feminisation or devirilisation – of the *bel paese* as a whole (Alberoni, 1967). At the same time, consumer

culture's reparative attempts at reassuring Italian males of their virility and gender leadership somewhat added insult to injury, because advertising agencies started linking traditional masculine values like authority, strength, determination, pragmatism and self-reliance to the stereotypically-feminine spheres of the care of the self and housekeeping, as shown by 1963 press advertisements for cosmetic products for "modern", "successful", "sober and virile", "essentially manly", "*definitely* masculine" males (Bellassai, 2011: 116), and by the hugely-popular 1961-1965 Moplen *caroselli* in which "Milanese comedian Gino Bramieri" plays a "househusband" moving with the times and efficiently running the house in place of his careerist "architect wife" (Manzoli, 2012: 109).

In spite of the fact that in Italy what Bourdieu (2001) terms "masculine domination" managed to keep gender equality at bay well into the 1970s, Italian cinema started bringing to the screen flawed, vulnerable, passive, ineffectual male protagonists from the earliest days of the newly-founded Republic, especially focusing on the depiction of "male prowess and sexual vigour, previously celebrated by [Fascism] and so central to the representation of masculinity in Hollywood cinema, [...] as untenable for Italian men" (Rigoletto, 2014: 4-5). The examples discussed by film scholars usually come from auteur cinema, e.g. the humiliated father of *Ladri di biciclette / Bicycle Thieves* (Vittorio De Sica, 1948) (Bondanella, 1983; Marcus, 1986), the lovelorn wanderer of *Il grido* (Michelangelo Antonioni, 1957) (Chatman, 1985; Rohdie, 1990), the moralist 'little man' seduced, abandoned and reduced to madness by a King Kong version of Anita Ekberg in *Le tentazioni del dottor Antonio* (Federico Fellini, 1962) (Manzoli, 2014), the countless *inetti* played by Marcello Mastroianni from *La dolce vita* (Federico Fellini, 1960) and *Il bell'Antonio* (Mauro Bolognini, 1960) up until *La città delle donne / City of Women* (Federico Fellini, 1980) (Reich, 2004; Rigoletto, 2014), and Marco Ferreri's men on the verge of extinction (Grande, 2003; Rigoletto, 2014).

Italian genre cinema abounds with weak, disoriented, inadequate male characters ever since the end of World War Two too. For instance, in the comedy *Come persi la guerra* (Carlo

Borghesio, 1947), vaudeville star Erminio Macario plays a ‘little man’ who, with his timidity, naivety, ineptitude and fundamental kindness, demolishes the Fascist mystique of virility as military and sexual voracity (Ben-Ghiat, 2005), while in early-1950s comedies like *Il seduttore* (Franco Rossi, 1954), *L’arte di arrangiarsi / The Art of Getting Along* (Luigi Zampa, 1954) and *Un eroe dei nostri tempi* (Mario Monicelli, 1955) actor Alberto Sordi incarnates a far more dislikable version of the man-child, one who combines Macario’s simple-mindedness and lack of physical prowess with laziness, vainglory, cowardice, selfishness and deceitfulness. And it’s exactly by virtue of comedies like *Il seduttore*, *L’arte di arrangiarsi* and *Un eroe dei nostri tempi*, together with more high-profile pictures like *Lo sceicco bianco / The White Sheik* (Federico Fellini, 1952) and *I vitelloni* (Federico Fellini, 1953), that Sordi will become one of the *mostri* (‘monsters’, in the sense of both morally-objectionable character and talented performer) of the scathingly-satirical, prevalently-urban-and-contemporary-set comedy of manners known as *commedia all’italiana*, which, in the aftermath of the success of *I soliti ignoti* in 1958 and throughout most of the 1960s and 1970s, will represent not only how low the average Italian man can sink to ‘get ahead’ during and after the ‘economic miracle’, but also the many sexual *défaillances* of self-proclaimed Latin lovers (Brunetta, 1980; Gili, 1980; Laura, 1981; D’Amico, 1985; Aprà & Pistagnesi, 1986; Giacobelli, 1995; 1999; Grande, 2003; Canova, 2004; Fournier-Lanzoni, 2008; Comand, 2010; Bini, 2011b; Manzoli, 2012; Fullwood, 2015).

For reasons of space and thematic pertinence, however, only horror-tinged pepla and early Gothic horrors will now be analysed to outline the masculinity-in-crisis background against which the representation of male vampires as powerful, irresistible demon lovers developed from the late 1950s onwards. As implied when dominatrices were discussed, there seems to be “no peace for males in Italian Gothic”. In *La maschera del demonio* “Javutich and doctor Kruvajan end up being *succubi*, literally zombies for [the] love [of a woman]” (Curti, 2011: 148). In *Il boia scarlatta* Mickey Hargitay plays a bodybuilder “who is

presumably impotent”, a “dishonour” (Ibid.) he shares with paraplegic doctor John Hichcock from *Lo spettro / The Ghost* (Riccardo Freda as Robert Hampton, 1963). Doctor Bernard Hichcock from *L’orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock*, on the other hand, is a necrophile who dreams “to be capable of absolute subjugation [of women], without possibility of resistance” (von Krafft-Ebing, 1991: 393) while actually being totally dominated by his corpse bride Margaretha. Another sexually-deranged leading man is doctor Stephen Arrowsmith from *Amanti d’oltretomba*, who prefers scientific research to female company (his wife Muriel consequently lusts after the all-brawn-and-no-brains gardener David) and can only reach orgasm by torturing living beings. Villains are belittled *qua* males in horror-tinged pepla as well, most notably in *Roma contro Roma*, where the much-feared Roman consul oppressing the people of Armenia is a mere puppet in the hands of his ruthlessly-ambitious wife (played by Susy Andersen, already employed in the role of Sdenka in *I tre volti della paura*). By the same token, *Roma contro Roma*’s seemingly-invincible villain Aderbale – a high priest who is invulnerable to human weapons and able to perform wonders such as resurrecting the dead and controlling the mind of the living – is ridiculed by a finale showing that all his powers actually derive from his mistress goddess Oro: once she’s blinded by hero Gaio, Aderbale loses his sight too, and quickly meets an undignified end.

The heroes of the Gothic *filone* don’t fare much better, as best exemplified by Austrian nobleman Wolfgang from *La strage dei vampiri* and English journalist Alan Foster from *Danza macabra*. The former is bitten by both his vampirised wife Luise and his vampirised servant Corinne, and spends most of the denouement confined to bed in an unmanly “satin nightie with a ruffled collar” (Rigby, 2016: 108), acting as a bait to ensnare the vampires; the latter is a “subject of inaction” (Di Chiara, 2009: 190) who, from the fearless macho he boasts to be in the tavern-set prologue, quickly turns into a frightened, powerless witness to supernatural events. Not only is Foster taunted by lady of the house Elizabeth at the beginning of his adventure in the haunted Blackwood mansion (“Is it possible that it’s up to me, a

woman, to give you courage?”), but “in the end – in a curious reversal of narrative roles – [he] assumes the position normally reserved to the damsel-in-distress: it is up to Elizabeth to save him from the other bloodthirsty undead, in a plot twist later recycled verbatim in [...] *La vendetta di Lady Morgan*” (Curti, 2015: 112). The same contempt for men with a big mouth and little courage is displayed in *L’ultima preda del vampiro*, where vampirised ballerina Katia shows up naked in her bossy, loudmouth employer’s bedroom as he’s leafing through a pin-up magazine: “Why do you look at me like that, Lukas? Didn’t you always say that you like me? I’m in your room now. [...] Tell me that you want me!”, she says baring her fangs, to which he replies by babbling like a baby and fainting – a blatant demonstration that flesh-and-blood women are too much for him. As for the rest, heroic figures are rather unflatteringly depicted as either **businesslike, asexual professionals along the lines of Hammer’s Van Helsing** (reporter Pierre Lantin junior from *I vampiri*, the Orthodox priest from *La maschera del demonio*, doctor Nitch from *La strage dei vampiri*, doctor Low in *L’orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock* and doctor Joyce in *Amanti d’oltretomba*), or sexually-opportunistic and cowardly petty-bourgeois stock-characters (Alan from *Danza macabra* and Hans from *Il mulino delle donne di pietra*).

In such a desolate scenario for masculinity, vampiric villains might have paradoxically stood out as a positive model of identification for the very many Italian males mourning the death of traditional virility and the feminisation of the *bel paese* after World War Two. Indeed, behind Italian ‘makeshift Draculas’ lurks the figure of the *gallo* (literally ‘cock, rooster’), i.e. the hyper-sexed, hyper-virile, aggressively-predatory Latin lover of the Casanova or Don Juan kind, who gets all the women he desires by one means or the other and

accumulates female conquests in a way that could be defined paratactic, [...] without any emotional involvement or distinction [among the conquered individuals]. He finds every woman irresistibly attractive, therefore for him all women are attractive in the same way (Manzoli, 2012: 174).

These words, originally referring to Giacomo Casanova as brought to the screen in *Il Casanova di Federico Fellini / Fellini's Casanova* (Federico Fellini, 1976), perfectly fit the 1959-1975 Italian male vampire in that he basically is a lady killer for whom all women are but necks to be penetrated for nourishment. However, contrary to Fellini, who – like the less highbrow directors of 1950s Italian comedies and the post-1958 *commedia all'italiana* – genuinely despised the myth of the Italian womaniser and mercilessly ridiculed it (Reich, 2004; Comand, 2010; Manzoli, 2012; Rigoletto, 2014; Fullwood, 2015), the filmmakers involved in Italian vampire cinema didn't show a strong dislike towards the undead galloping after nubile, engaged and married women of all ages.

Obviously, given the Catholicism-influenced moral restrictions to filmmaking outlined in the previous subsection, the bloodsucker seeking the unlimited satisfaction of carnal desires ends up negatively sanctioned (*L'amante del vampiro; L'ultima preda del vampiro; Ercole al centro della Terra; Maciste contro il vampiro; La strage dei vampiri; Ercole contro Moloch; Il mostro dell'Opera; Il Conte Dracula; Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel Trecento...; Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!*) or somewhat reformed (*Tempi duri per i vampiri; Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza*) more often than not (*I tre volti della paura*). Yet, much like the last-minute punishment of the Gothic *filone's* monstrous females, the happy ending exacting justice on Italian Draculas might be considered a mere token to be paid for slipping sex past state censors, as the movies' main attraction lies in the sexual escapades of the fanged Casanova rather than in the struggle of the good guys to protect womankind. Under this light, although consistently and unmistakably bearing the stigma of evil-to-be-eradicated, the Italian male vampire can be seen as a champion of traditional machismo within ideologically-charged narratives bent, among other things, on the virile compensation of disgruntled masculinity – an uncanny, sleazy fellow-traveller to the 1958-1964 spotless Ercoles and Macistes whose muscles “reflected [the] need for reassurance over the value of the strong male body in uncertain times” (O'Brien, 2013: 193).

A survey of 1959-1975 vampire cinema ‘made in Italy’ confirms that cautionary appeals to sexual restraint and compensatory male empowerment live side by side in the vampire subgenre’s agenda. This is evident in vampire-themed pepla and horrors, where male bloodsuckers are allowed their fair share of female ‘necks’ before bringing about their own destruction by asking too much – too many women (*L’amante del vampiro*; *Ercole contro Moloch*; *Il mostro dell’Opera*; *Il Conte Dracula*; *Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel Trecento...*; *Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!*), women who belong to somebody stronger (*L’ultima preda del vampiro*; *Ercole al centro della Terra*; *Maciste contro il vampiro*), a child bride (*La strage dei vampiri*). The most interesting attempts at finding a balance between indulgence and punishment, though, are horror parodies *Tempi duri per i vampiri* and *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza*.

*Tempi duri per i vampiri* presents the hyper-sexed, predatory masculinity of the Hammer Dracula as easily attainable for Italian males, who seemingly have it ‘in their genes’, but ultimately labels the *gallo* way-of-life as not-preferable. The film opens by contrasting dignified, Eastern-European vampire Baron Roderico of Bramfürten (English actor of Italian descent Christopher Lee), a ‘tall, dark stranger’ whom women simply can’t resist,<sup>17</sup> with clownish, short and chubby, impoverished Italian Baron Osvaldo Lambertenghi (thoroughbred Roman Renato Rascel, a specialist in the role of *il piccoletto*, ‘the small guy’, ever since the 1930s), hopelessly in love with Lilla, a twenty-something servant who is as pure as the lilac blossoms that bear her name. Based on these premises, one would expect the comedic substance of the film to arise from the contrast between self-confident vampire Roderico and his clumsy human nephew Osvaldo. Yet, it’s not so: accommodating the economic needs to keep Lee’s shooting schedule as brief as possible and to exploit the enormous domestic popularity of Rascel’s slapstick antics, the split entirely takes place within Osvaldo’s personality, Jekyll-and-Hyde-style. In fact, a bite from Roderico and a second-hand black cape with red lining awake the dormant *gallo* inside timid, ineffectual suitor Osvaldo,



who subsequently spends his days as an awkward bellboy and his nights as a tireless stud able to ‘bite’ forty-two women in a few hours, making no distinction between Italian and foreign, virgin and non-virgin, married and unmarried, young and old ‘necks’. The only woman Osvaldo doesn’t ‘bite’ is of course Lilla, whose pure kiss of love cures him of the inextinguishable vampiric thirst. Eventually, in the Christian-Democrat-approved happy ending, Osvaldo leaves sexual excesses to his aristocratic uncle (who is last seen walking away arm in arm with two Scandinavian models) and embraces a life of middle-class monogamy by taking on a managerial job and marrying his virgin dream girl.

Some sixteen years after the release of *Tempi duri per i vampiri, Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* brings to the screen the very same master narrative, i.e. a hapless Italian male meets a foreign vampire whose libertine lifestyle he tries out for a while but ultimately rejects in favour of marital sexuality. Very few details have changed from the 1959 blueprint: protagonist Costante Nicosia (Sicilian Lando Buzzanca, who had his breakthrough in 1961 as a young lover in *Divorzio all’italiana* and later became the star of many 1970s sexy comedy/*commedia all’italiana* hybrids as the Mediterranean macho with a voracious sexual appetite) is a prosperous industrialist, Romanian Count Dragulesku (Englishman John Steiner mimicking the aplomb of Lee’s 1958-1973 *Dracula*) is a bisexual vampire who presides over a harem of three young, constantly-horny women and an older, effeminate gay man, and after all it’s considered socially acceptable for Nicosia to have a young female lover in addition to his aging wife if the appearances of a happy marriage are kept up.<sup>18</sup>

“He’s not a man – he’s something more, much more!”, raves a married woman in *Tempi duri per i vampiri*, sporting the same dreamy expression and naughty smile Mina gives her husband Arthur in the Hammer *Dracula* upon her return home after spending the night with the Count. The married woman of *Tempi duri per i vampiri*, though, is not referring to Lee’s tall and handsome demon lover Roderico, but to stumpy, big-nosed Osvaldo, who ‘bit’

her overnight while her lawful husband was “sleeping like a baby”. This is a crucial point all the following Italian movies featuring male vampires insist on, regardless of the *filone* to which they belong: although beauty helps, Italian Draculas don’t have to be good-looking to get what they want. The key to their success is being ‘real men’, with manliness consisting in a mix of sexual magnetism and brute strength. The prevalence of one component over the other allows for a broad classification of Italian male vampires, who can be divided into seducers (sexual magnetism > brute strength) and rapists (sexual magnetism < brute strength).

In the two aforementioned horror parodies and in Italian vampire-themed horrors, the male vampire generally seduces women into letting themselves be bitten. His attractive power, however, lies less in elegant clothes, aristocratic demeanour and **Lugosi-like mesmerising gaze** than in the fact that he’s more masculine – i.e. more willing to get involved in sexual activities and more skilled in carrying them out – than his human competitors. Indeed, **just like in the Hammer *Dracula***, Italian Draculas conquest female ‘necks’ by preying upon women’s latent/unconfessed desires, loneliness and dissatisfaction with human partners. *La strage dei vampiri* is a case in point. Female lead Luise has just married well-off aristocrat Wolfgang and moved in with him in a luxurious, newly-refurbished castle for the honeymoon. There, during a party, Luise’s romantic temperament (symbolised by her musical talent and love for ancient buildings and Italian Renaissance gardens) is contrasted with Wolfgang’s matter-of-fact nature (symbolised by his concern for money, food and wine). As soon as the spectre of character incompatibility between spouses is evoked, the vampire shows up: while Wolfgang neglects his wife to entertain guests and play the master of the house, the undead seducer makes Luise feel like she’s the centre of the world and a real woman by staring at her and holding her tight during a dance. That same night, left alone once again by Wolfgang, Luise locks herself in the nuptial bedroom and loosens her hair (a symbol of unleashed female passion in Italian cinema ever since the diva films of the 1910s), thus implicitly inviting the vampire in. At this point, “the director doesn’t dwell on poeticisms” **like Fisher did in the**

highly-elliptic scene of Lucy's seduction, but shows a villain more eager to kiss Luise's breasts than biting her neck (Curti, 2011: 73). Finally, after Wolfgang's wife is sucked dry, the vampire dedicates his attentions to the slightly-younger, nubile servant Corinne, whose vampirisation follows the same procedure.

In *L'amante del vampiro*, *L'ultima preda del vampiro*, *Il mostro dell'Opera*, *Il Conte Dracula* and *Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel Trecento...* the male vampire similarly exploits the sexually-connoted curiosity of young, unmarried women wandering around spooky, forbidden places at night, away from the sight of their fathers, fiancés and employers. First he gives the wayward girls a taste of the pleasures of the flesh, then sits back waiting for the initiated to start craving for more.<sup>19</sup> The implications are clear: not only sexual pleasure is addictive but, most importantly, the female victims of the vampire Casanova 'are asking for it', proving somewhat accomplices to their own doom. Which leads us to *Sexy proibitissimo*, a *spogliarello* movie that – following the misogynistic mentality of a striptease *filone* that infallibly portrays women as “sex-crazed beasts, perpetually lying in ambush, much more clever and perverse than man, the poor fall guy” (Risè, 1964: 100) – presents us with a Dracula and a Frankenstein monster that are literally forced to attack young women after being teased with sexy dances (“The woman could quickly undress and be done with it, but no, there's a man in the room, even if he's a monster. Then why not provoking him a little bit? A brief, innocent striptease...”, remarks *Sexy proibitissimo*'s voice-over narration). In sum, to quote a “homage to the Lord of Darkness” Dracula that appeared in Italian illustrated film magazine *King Cinema* as vampire movies became trendy again in the late 1960s, “the relationship monster-victim” is subsumed into “a more intimate one: man-woman, that is to say male sadist-female nymphomaniac” (Farina, 1969: 86), with the latter adhering to “the sexist stereotype of the woman who inevitably feels pleasure after an initial reluctance and resistance” (Pezzotta, 2014: 43).

In the wake of the Hammer *Dracula's* release, Italian newspapers were rife with articles comparing real-life sex crimes to vampire attacks. Take, for instance, the case of the red-headed “vampiro di Mestre”, attacking girls in the streets at night with a hammer (De’ Rossignoli, 1961: 349), or that of the “Dracula di Porta Genova” Giuliano Ballerini, a 20-year-old who knocked several Milanese women unconscious, molested them and allegedly drank the blood spurting from their wounds (Ibid.: 358-359). Not to mention “il vampiro di Venezia”, a manic-depressive Venetian painter obsessed with “religious principles” who, after “a romantic setback”, bit two female passersby at the neck (Rossi-Osmida, 1978: 120-126). In Italian vampire cinema, though, the rapist’s domain isn’t the horror genre, but the rigidly-Manichaeic narratives of pepla *Ercole al centro della Terra*, *Maciste contro il vampiro* and *Ercole contro Moloch*, where young, beautiful and virtuous females refuse to give in to the vampire’s demand for blood/sex, and the villain resorts to physical violence to have his way with them. In *Ercole al centro della Terra*, Lyco (‘tall, dark and gruesome’ Lee minus the usual fangs) is a power-hungry aristocrat who strikes a deal with “the cruel gods of darkness” to become the immortal vampire king of Ecalia by drinking the blood of his niece Deianira, Ercole’s wife, “on the night the moon is devoured by the great dragon”. Additional ominous notes come from the villain’s association with predatory animals – he controls an army of bat-like humanoids and the name ‘Lyco’ is etymologically related to Greek word *lukos*, ‘wolf’.<sup>20</sup> In *Maciste contro il vampiro* the titular vampire is Kobrak, a giant, fanged-and-clawed, shapeshifting sorcerer whose name recalls the snake, an all-time symbol of evil in Catholicism: he commands a gang of pirates, who provide him with virgin blood by ravaging the coastal villages of the Middle East. In *Ercole contro Moloch* the bloodthirsty villain is Moloch, the horribly-disfigured son of a woman called Demetra, like the vessel that carries Count Dracula to England in Stoker’s novel, and of infernal deity Moloch, probably an echo of the evil god who demands children sacrifice in *Cabiria* (Giovanni Pastrone, 1914). As in the previous two cases, vampire Moloch is physically imposing and associated with the

animal world, as he's fanged, clawed, and hides his hideous features behind a mask halfway between wolf and bat.

From *Tempi duri per i vampiri* to *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza*, Italian vampire cinema is basically a procession of “sexual tyrants” (Rigby, 2016: 95) attempting to build a comprehensive harem so that all their whims can be satisfied as far as women's age, hair colour and physique are concerned. Within this machoist framework, the male vampire figure – whether seducer or rapist, attractive or repellent – inevitably overlaps with that of the patriarch. Indeed, the vampiric *gallo* rules over the aforesaid harem with an iron fist, as shown most blatantly in early Gothic horrors *L'ultima preda del vampiro*, *La strage dei vampiri* and *Il mostro dell'Opera*. In *L'ultima preda del vampiro*, vampire Count Gabor Kernassy satiates his blood lust with airhead ballerina Katia only to unceremoniously dispatch her with an improvised stake when she demands to be his one and only love. The vampire from *La strage dei vampiri* is similarly unscrupulous and strict with his female partners. Not only the prologue shows him abandon his vampire bride to an angry mob of peasants in order to save himself but, throughout the movie, he confirms the patriarchal “double morality” (Parca, 1977: 6) of post-war Italy, forbidding his conquests to have contacts with other men while he lusts after all the females that cross his way. Finally, in *Il mostro dell'Opera*, which is probably the height of Italian vampire cinema in terms of masculine compensation, “misogynist bloodsucker” (Curti, 2017b: 103) Stefano takes delight in torturing seven young women chained to the walls of a foggy dungeon and dressed in skimpy, strategically-ragged outfits. “Look at them!”, he tells the 20<sup>th</sup>-century reincarnation of Countess Laura, his lover from the Middle Ages, who had him walled-up alive to get rid of him and go on living with her lawful husband, “These are your victims! I destroyed them as you destroyed me! Now, at every new moon, they wait for the blood of a young woman to resurrect them, so I can kill them once again!”.

Dealing with power structures and power struggles within the institution of the family, *L'amante del vampiro* and *I tre volti della paura*'s segment *I Wurdalak* are particularly interesting from a patriarchal point of view. *L'amante del vampiro* revolves around the vampire marriage between Countess Alda and servant Herman, and the "crisis in their relationship, perhaps brought on by their long period of cohabitation" (Bini, 2011a: 59). In the 16<sup>th</sup> century Herman was bitten by Alda and became her vampire butler, attending to all her needs from serving tea properly to providing her with female blood – a plot point that has won the film the reputation of "'feminist' work in that Herman seemingly is dominated by the Countess", playing the 'slave' who sleeps in the cellar to the vampire 'mistress' occupying the upper floors of the castle (Gomasasca, Pulici, Stellino et al., 2002: 42). A careful analysis of *L'amante del vampiro*, however, reveals a radically-different scenario, more akin to the idea – developed by later Italian Gothic horrors *L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock* and *La frusta e il corpo / The Whip and the Body* (Mario Bava as John M. Old, 1963) as well – that in a sadomasochistic relationship it's always the person in the slave position who's actually in control (Olney, 2012).

Far from being a sign of submission, Herman's going out hunting every night, gorging on female blood so that castle-dwelling, idle and unproductive aristocrat Alda can feed by sucking him dry, is the very staple of his masculine domination. Herman himself confirms it, when he puts Alda in her place one night after she snobbishly dismisses him for being unbearably ugly: "It's I who preserve you alive, young and beautiful, don't forget it! Or I'll throw you out in the sun just for the pleasure of seeing you fall to dust!". In sum, we are in front of the classic patriarchal dynamic in which a woman's survival totally depends on her male partner-protector acting as a mediator between the female and the outside world. More than a dominatrix, Alda should then be considered a character modelled upon the idealised housewife of the late 1940s and early 1950s, who never needs to venture outside the home, while 'her man' Herman is the typical patriarchal husband who not only dominates his bride

but is also paranoid about losing his position as “the one and only master of my world”. This is why he stakes every new, hungry and potentially-wayward female vampire he creates to feed Alda, and why, seeing himself doomed by the approaching sunrise, switches allegiance and helps good guys Luca and Giorgio to kill the Countess: there must not be other vampires before (and after) him. At the same time – and equally importantly – throughout the film Alda plots to kill Herman not to seek emancipation, but to substitute him with gentler, more humane master Luca.

Although shifting from aristocratic to peasant vampires, and from late-1950s Central Italy to early-19<sup>th</sup>-century Eastern Europe, *I Wurdalak* presents us with a similarly patriarchal world where the life of the farmer protagonists “revolves around the elderly *pater familias* [Gorka], who is served and revered like a king; his male progeny follows his every word no matter how unreasonable [...]; the women are passive and obedient” (Curti, 2015: 82). So consolidated is the hierarchy, that the unexpected vampirisation of Gorka by a wurdalak highwayman proves a false turning point, incapable of subverting the status quo. The film in fact gives an ironic lesson about blood being thicker than water by having Gorka’s living relatives doom themselves to the vampire contagion for fear of contradicting the undead *pater familias*, who eventually ends up reigning over a submissive vampire family that is virtually indistinguishable from the former human one (Di Chiara, 2009).

As a matter of fact, the theme of the vampire family submitted to the patriarch survives the ‘earthquake’ of the 1968 anti-authoritarian protests unscathed. This is true not only for Hammer, whose *Dracula* easily controls his brides and young disciples from the 1958 *Dracula* to *Dracula A.D. 1972* (see Chapter 2), but also for Italian vampire cinema. *Il Conte Dracula*, for instance, brings to the screen the Stokerian scene in which Dracula orders his three daughters-brides away from Jonathan Harker but glaringly omits their rebellious retort “You yourself never loved; you never love!” (Stoker, 1980: 42), while, as we have seen in the previous subsection, what all-powerful widow Countess Dracula really wants in *Il plenilunio*

*delle vergini* is to marry another vampire macho. Even in post-1968, self-proclaimed modern and transgressively-revolutionary vampire-themed comic-book series heteronormative patriarchy rules uncontested. In *Jacula* issue 1 (March 1969) and *Zora la vampira* issues 1-2 (September-October 1972) the titular heroines are presented as blossoming young women who consider virginity and parental control as a burden to get rid of but, once deflowered by Dracula, simply turn from dominated daughters touching themselves in secret to dominated sex-slave brides of whoever male vampire happens to be the strongest (or the most well-endowed) at that particular moment.<sup>21</sup>

True, vampire masculinity becomes less granitic as years go by and starts showing cracks in the early 1970s, after Polanski's *Dance of the Vampires* popularised an irreverent take on vampire mythology in both the European and Anglo-American film market. For instance, the aging, sickly Dracula from *Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!* needs to apply make-up to be presentable, moves around in a wheelchair and, as the facetious Italian title suggests, ends up killed by his female victims' lack of sexual restraint. In the same desecrating vein, *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* pokes fun at the vampirised protagonist's unsuccessful attempts at possessing "a nymphomaniac upper class man-eater who [...] recites verses of D'Annunzio's poems" and a whip-cracking S&M dominatrix (Curti, 2017b: 141), which is an attempt to capitalise on both the Polanski-style 'vampire comedy' and 1970s sexy comedy/*commedia all'italiana* hybrids such as *Un caso di coscienza* (Gianni Grimaldi, 1970), *La prima notte del Dottor Danieli, industriale, col complesso del... giocattolo / The Lovemarkers* (Gianni Grimaldi, 1970), *Il vichingo venuto dal sud / No One Will Notice You're Naked* (Stefano Vanzina as Steno, 1971), *Homo eroticus* (Marco Vicario, 1971), *Il merlo maschio / The Naked Cello* (Pasquale Festa Campanile, 1971), *Io e lui* (Luciano Salce, 1973), *L'arbitro / Football Crazy* (Luigi Filippo D'Amico, 1974) and *Il gatto mammone* (Nando Cicero, 1975), where Buzzanca plays a 'real man' facing impotence, sterility and all kinds of sexual complexes (D'Amico, 1985; Bertolino &



Ridola, 1999; Manzoli, 2012). Yet, to really see Italian male vampires in crisis one has to wait for the last year of intensive genre-film production in Italy. In a seventy-second dream sequence from the “La cavallona” episode in portmanteau sexy comedy *40 gradi all’ombra del lenzuolo / Sex with a Smile* (Sergio Martino, 1976), the titular ‘big-ass babe’ Emilia Chiapponi – played by Edwige Fenech, the insatiable sex goddess of Italian cinema ever since the late-1960s film-scandal *Top sensation* (Ottavio Alessi, 1969) and the early-1970s *decamerotici* – tears Dracula’s clothes off, mounts on top of him, steals his punchline “Let me sink my ravenous teeth in your soft neck” and sets out to ‘bite’ him. At which point Dracula, defrauded of his role, undignifiedly runs away half-naked and in fear, whining: “You haven’t understood anything! I am the vampire!”.

### **Concluding remarks**

This chapter has begun to explore the cultural specificity of the vampire metaphor in Italy by dealing with representations of gender in 1956-1975 Italian vampire cinema. Reflecting the patriarchal zeitgeist of post-war Italy, the thirty-five films contained in the corpus mostly bring to the screen misogynistic narratives. As for female vampires, they generally are presented as ‘abnormal’ villainesses – power-hungry predators that must be executed by either a male hero or a homosocial brotherly band as a punishment for using sex appeal to overthrow masculine domination (at the opposing pole of femininity we have the ‘good’, ‘normal’, ‘asexual’ damsel in distress, basically a screaming ornament waiting to be saved and married by a dashing bachelor who comes to learn that the marital, procreative sexuality of the angelic virgin is to be preferred to the hedonistic, non-procreative sexuality of the ‘lost’ woman). As for male vampires, they adhere to machoist stereotypes like the irresistible Latin lover and the tyrannical *pater familias*, thus functioning as champions of traditional virility seeking to reassure real-life Italian men of their gender leadership in times when traditional gender roles began to be contested more and more. However, as Chapter 4 has shown through

a careful work of textual and contextual analysis, oppositional readings are possible. In fact, if the vampire-themed Italian Gothic horrors of the late 1950s and early 1960s are read under the light of the Italian melodrama tradition, a timidly 'feminist' *côté* emerges, presenting the villainesses as empathy-inducing characters caught between rebellion and hyper-identification with traditional values: victims returning from the grave to seek revenge against their male oppressors, and tragic lovers dreaming of a monogamous heterosexual relationship that looks strangely similar to marriage. This way, while appeasing the anxieties of real-life Italian men, the woes and sorrows of real-life Italian women under patriarchy can also be highlighted.

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<sup>1</sup> As Curti (2015: 16-17) notes, “the dichotomy between two female models” privileging “the wife” over “the lover” – “the companion of a lifetime” over “the one-night stand” – wasn’t exclusive to the Gothic *filone*, but characterised *pepla* too, to the point that the prototype for Barbara Steele’s double role as Katia and Asa in *La maschera del demonio* can be traced back to the 1954 *Ulisse*, “where Silvana Mangano played both Penelope and Circe”. Bava was indeed hired by the *Ulisse* production, and so was the future screenwriter of *La maschera del demonio* Ennio de Concini (Lucas, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> The treatments of *Il mulino delle donne di pietra* and *La maschera del demonio* were much more graphic than the finished films as far as female disfigurement is concerned. In the former Elfi’s corpse ends up covered in repugnant bluish spots and is set on fire by her father (Unknown, 1959). In the latter Gorobec beats Asa with “a wooden bar” until “her body goes to pieces”, leaving “only a screaming head”. Then, “Gorobec grabs the witch’s head by the hair while the Gorgon-like creature tries to bite him”, and an Orthodox priest “sprinkles the monstrous head with holy water”, opening “wounds and cracks as if the skin is attacked by a corrosive acid”: the head melts down to reveal the skull and finally “falls to dust” (Unknown, 1959-1960).

<sup>3</sup> Günsberg (2005)’s and Bini (2011a)’s argument essentially is a restatement of the psychoanalysis of the sexy heroines of *fumetti neri* conducted on Italian journals *Quaderni di Ikon* and *Ikon* in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Imbasciati, 1969; 1970a; b).

<sup>4</sup> Together with *La cripta e l’incubo*, *Il sangue e la rosa*, *Danza macabra* and *Il mostro dell’Opera* are generally considered the earliest examples of lesbian-themed Italian vampire cinema. In the latter three films, however, lesbianism is a very marginal element, basically a “hook for voyeurs” (Pezzotta, 1997: 30). In *Il sangue e la rosa* – a loose adaptation of “Carmilla” set in 1960s Italy – there’s a scene in which young lady Carmilla Karnstein briefly kisses Miss Giorgia Monteverdi on the mouth, but the plot actually revolves around Carmilla’s attempts to seduce her male object of desire, cousin Leopoldo Karnstein, engaged to Giorgia. In *Danza macabra*, lesbianism is summarily dismissed as the most unnatural perversion: lesbian Julia tries to force herself on adulteress Elizabeth lying in shock on the conjugal bed next to the dead bodies of her husband and her lover; Elizabeth screams “I like men, do you understand? [...] I’d rather die than do this!”, stabs Julia and commits suicide (after death, Elizabeth would go on rejecting Julia with lines like “I am a woman, do you understand? A real woman! [...] I despise you! I hate you!”). In *Il mostro dell’Opera* there’s an openly-lesbian character, “Yvette, born in the city of Lesbo, in the Sappho province”, and some girl-on-girl caressing and biting takes place due to the sexual vibes emanated by the male vampire, but the story always remains focused on heterosexual couples.

<sup>5</sup> *Il mulino delle donne di pietra*’s starlet Scilla Gabel, whose stage name evokes Homer’s man-eating monster Scylla, started her career as a body double for Sophia Loren, the busty *maggiorata* par excellence (Castoldi, 2005a). In *La strage dei vampiri*, Graziella Granata runs down a staircase wearing a flimsy, very low-necked *négligée* in order to show her large breasts bouncing. In his autobiography, screenwriter Gastaldi (1991: 179) remembers that Maria Luisa Rolando was cast as the villainess in *L’amante del vampiro* because she had “two tits on which you could study geography”, and it’s precisely this part of her body that a male vampire grabs in the risqué promotional material for the movie reproduced in Gifford (1969: 77). The lure of the breasts, though, isn’t restricted to evil women: in both *L’amante del vampiro* and *La maschera del demonio*, the diegetic need to show a crucifix hanging from the damsel in distress’ neck offers the occasion for a “close-up of a florid, pulsating female cleavage” (Curti, 2015: 64), whose titillating allure supposedly is sanitised by the religious symbol.

<sup>6</sup> For the record, article 587 CP was formulated in such a way as to grant lenient sentences also to women who murdered their adulterous husbands in a fit of rage and without premeditation. The person with whom the man or woman had been caught to have an illegitimate carnal relationship could be mistreated and killed with minor consequences too.

<sup>7</sup> In the corpus of 1956-1975 vampire films studied in the present thesis, only *La maschera del demonio* and *Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!* had a female contribution at the writing stage. The former was rewritten, among others, by Fede Arnaud, Lucia Torelli and Maria Nota (ACS 3302-265, 1960), while much of the latter’s dialogue was made up day by day by production secretary Pat Hackett (Morrissey, 1974). Such contributions went uncredited in the film prints.

<sup>8</sup> First submitted to the Italian Censorship Office in 1950 as *Dies Irae* (NO 7425, 1950), Dreyer’s film was re-released in Italian theatres in 1958 (in Danish with Italian subtitles) and again in 1959 (dubbed), possibly in an attempt to cash in on Hammer’s Gothic revival. Miller’s *The Crucible* premiered in Italy in November 1955 as *Il crogiuolo*, for Luchino Visconti’s direction, to a good public and critical success.

<sup>9</sup> In *La cripta e l’incubo*’s screenplay Sheena is crucified upside-down like Saint Peter and her hands are mangled by the spikes in close-up (Gastaldi & Valerii, 1963). The state censors enacting preventive censorship marked the passage in blue and both the upside-down crucifixion and the gory details didn’t make it in the finished film.

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<sup>10</sup> In *La maschera del demonio*'s English-language shooting script Javutich actually says: "We shall live again, my beloved... You and I together! I shall kiss you again, as in that long, distant time – and terrible shall be our revenge!" (Unknown, 1960). In a May-1980 interview for Parisian newspaper *Libération* (quoted in Leutrat, 1994), Bava states that Asa is sentenced to death for committing incest with Javutich, although the incest subplot is nowhere to be found in *La maschera del demonio*'s existing treatments and screenplays (Unknown, 1959-1960; 1960; ACS 3302-265, 1960; Gomasasca, Pulici et al., 2004).

<sup>11</sup> As testified by the preventive-censorship report, *I tre volti della paura*'s screenplay envisaged a radically-different ending for *I Wurdalak*, with vampirised Sdenka choosing to die by impalement rather than infect her beloved Count Vladimiro d'Urfé (ACS 4206-390, 1962). In the original Tolstoy tale, Marquis d'Urfé is mocked by vampirised Sdenka for his earlier attempts at gallant courtship, but ultimately escapes unharmed from the clutches of the peasant wurdalaks.

<sup>12</sup> In the shooting script, Katia voices her dislike for her condition more energetically than resignedly: she complains to her father that her younger brother Costantino can go out hunting in the forest, while she's shut into the castle with nothing to do (Unknown, 1960). It's worth recalling that, in both the script and the movie, Katia has just turned twenty-one, which was the age of majority in Italy until March 1975.

<sup>13</sup> *L'amante del demonio*'s screenplay doesn't feature a vampire in the orgy scene, but a "completely naked negress" who "performs an infernal dance" as part of an "inbadist [sic] ritual" (Lombardo, 1970). Although generally lavish with details as far as shot composition and editing are concerned, the screenwriter annotates that it's up to the director to decide on the content of the final five shots of the orgy, thus underlying its purely-attractational qualities of softcore insert.

<sup>14</sup> Lesbian vampires were already a selling point in 1960s ballyhoo, although much more timidly in both texts and accompanying pictures. This is shown by *Il sangue e la rosa*'s launch article "Vampires and sex in Vadim's film", which fraudulently states that, following "Vadim's favourite formula of non-stop sex", the movie revolves around "a girl attracted to the fiancé of her cousin" (Anonymous, 1960b: 43). A decade later, equally mendacious is a promotional article for *Nella stretta morsa del ragno* titled "Sexy-orrer [sic] takes inspiration from the American Poe", stating that "Elizabeth is married to William but she's the lover of both Herbert and Julia" (Anonymous, 1971: 76): just like in *Danza macabra*, *Nella stretta morsa del ragno*'s female protagonist Elizabeth feels only disgust towards lesbian Julia.

<sup>15</sup> The full slogan reads "Tremate, tremate, le streghe son tornate! Non più puttane, non più Madonne, finalmente siamo donne" ('Tremble with fear, the witches are back! Neither whores nor Madonnas anymore, finally we are women') (Crainz, 2005b: 517).

<sup>16</sup> "It's almost like it is she who is possessing him, now", aptly comments a caption in the *fotoromanzo* adaptation of the movie, in *Cinestop Attualità* issue 12 (May 1973), as the naked Countess refuses the 'receptive' missionary position and mounts on top of her male partner to penetrate him with her teeth.

<sup>17</sup> The screenwriters probably refrained from naming him Dracula, and chose the Poeian 'Roderico' instead, to avoid copyright issues, but the casting of Lee and the 'D' emblazoned on Roderico's coffin leave no doubts about the character's actual identity. In the official documents contained in ACS 3149-243 (1959), the vampire is called either Drakula or Baron Macula.

<sup>18</sup> Contrary to the film, in the screenplay Nicosia's wife also has an affair (Fulci & Avati, 1975). Count Dragulesku (absent in said screenplay, where the protagonist is bitten by a Rumanian hotel clerk) is the only case in Italian vampire cinema of a male bloodsucker explicitly involved in homosexual activities: until 1975, the homosexual implications of showing a male vampire biting, or attempting to bite, a human male were neutralised by narrative ellipsis (*La maschera del demonio*; *I tre volti della paura*; *Il Conte Dracula*), or justified as either a means for survival (*Danza macabra*; *La vendetta di Lady Morgan*; *Nella stretta morsa del ragno*; *La notte dei diavoli*) or a key to reach the hyper-virile, aggressively-predatory, heterosexual ideal of *gallo* masculinity (*Tempi duri per i vampiri*). In *Jacula* issue 16 (October 1969), the editor of the 'readers' letters' page even tries to put an end once and for all to questions about vampirism and homosexuality by authoritatively stating that vampires prefer victims of the opposite sex, and vice versa.

<sup>19</sup> Echoing a line uttered in the Hammer *Dracula* ("Victims consciously detest being dominated by vampirism, but are unable to relinquish the practice, similar to addiction to drugs"), *L'amante del vampiro* explicitly connects vampire sex to drug use ("The vampire especially targets young women. Once they are bitten, it's like they fall victim to a drug that lures them to the monster again and again. They look for him because, from that moment on, they can love him only... [...] It's like being drunk!"; "Vampires! That's a wonderful theme for a new ballet. Sensuality, warmth, terror... and yearning eyes, more exasperated than the eyes of a person poisoned by cocaine..."). The former line is repeated verbatim in *Malia* issue 1 (February 1961), an original *fotoromanzo* titled *L'urlo del vampiro*, and paraphrased in both the *KKK* and the *I racconti di Dracula* series: see *KKK* issues 1 (June 1959), 44 (December 1961), 116 (April 1969) and *I racconti di Dracula* issues 4 (1960), 6 (1960), 57 (1964), 68 (1974). The association between vampire sex and intoxication is reprised in *Zora la vampira* issue 1 (September 1972): "The bite of the vampire is a drug that makes you drunk...", states a caption to a sequence in which the newly-vampirised heroine masturbates, fellates and rides her "master" Dracula.

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<sup>20</sup> The film's treatment follows the Hammer models *Dracula* and *The Brides of Dracula* more closely: "Lyco, the vampire, wreaks havoc everywhere. The flesh of dead young girls bears the mark of his bestial teeth. Farmers build funeral pyres all over the countryside" but the flames can't burn the corpses, and the vampirised girls "break free from the chains and roam the countryside howling like hungry wolves. It's the death that lives, death that spreads death" (Continenza & Tessari, 1961).

<sup>21</sup> The heteronormative and ultimately moralistic mentality of "porno-horror comics" is efficaciously sketched in Barbiani (1980: 50-52), with Jacula and her husband Verdier serving as the most prominent example of "ministerial vampires" who "champion conjugal love and would probably vote for abrogating divorce in Italy".

## CHAPTER 5 - POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC READINGS

In this chapter the “unmasking of cultural artifacts as socially symbolic acts” (Jameson, 2002: 5) that constitutes the aim of the thesis proceeds with an analysis of the political and socio-economic implications of 1956-1975 Italian vampire cinema. Here, the theoretical points of reference are the scholars of literature and film who – reworking insights from Karl Marx’s 1867 *Das Kapital* as detailed in Chapter 2 – have investigated the dynamics of class and imperialistic struggle in vampire narratives, exposing the vampire as “a social or political tyrant who sucks the life from his people” (Jones, 1931: 125). Many Italian vampire movies in fact identify bloodsucking figures either with an enemy ‘within’ (a specific group of people within the nation-state’s social body) or an enemy ‘without’ (scheming foreigners), essentially adapting Marxian and Marxist invectives to the post-war Italian zeitgeist, from the dawn of the ‘economic miracle’ in the late 1950s to mid-1970s austerity. However, direct references to the oeuvres of Marx and Marxist thinkers are absent from the Italian vampire movies of the late 1950s and early 1960s, and extremely rare in Italian cinema as a whole until the second half of the 1960s, when the Christian Democrats’ anti-Communism began to loosen up, at least in the Italian State Cinema Bureau (the Italian Socialist Party officially entered the government coalition in late 1963) and in the Italian Censorship Office (whose jurisdiction was limited exclusively to matters of public decency by law 161 of April 21<sup>st</sup> 1962). Chapter 5 is thus divided into two chronologically-defined subsections – one devoted to the somewhat-oblique vampire metaphors of the 1950s and 1960s, and one to the explicitly-politicised vampires of the 1970s. Taken singularly, these two subsections follow the same template: they open with an account of political and socio-economic relations in the first three decades of the Italian Republic, and subsequently analyse why, and how, the leftist equation between vampires and socio-economic leeches or political oppressors was employed by then-contemporary Italian genre cinema practitioners.

The first subsection, “After the ‘boom’”, focuses on vampire movies made between 1959 and 1965, and deals mainly with contemporary-set horror parody *Tempi duri per i vampiri* and pepla *Ercole al centro della Terra*, *Maciste contro il vampiro*, *Ercole contro Moloch*, *Roma contro Roma* and *Maciste e la regina di Samar*. Although none of the people involved in making these films ever claimed to have done anything but mindless, apolitical entertainment, the combination of textual and contextual analysis reveals the cultural instrumentalities of the works. Shot at the inception of the 1958-1963 ‘economic miracle’, the *grande trasformazione* (‘big transformation’) that turned Italy from a vastly-backward, prevalently-agricultural country into a modern, industrial one, *Tempi duri per i vampiri* can be read as a class-struggle parable concerned with the social mobility caused by the shattering of the traditional class order based on the dichotomy, and symbiotic relationship, between aristocracy and serfdom. Of particular interest is how the film reworks the figure of the transnational vampire codified in Stoker’s novel: rather than a polluting invader to be destroyed for the greater good of society, *Tempi duri per i vampiri* makes the Transylvanian *émigré* into a magical helper from whom human characters must learn how to adapt to the changing Italian environment – i.e. to renegotiate their ancestral class identity – in order to avoid extinction. On the other hand, the pepla narratives, with their rigidly-Manichean division of characters into good and bad, restore the traditional equivalence between Otherness and Evilness. Made in the aftermath of the 1960 governmental alliance between the Christian Democrats and the neofascist Movimento Sociale Italiano, the five vampire-themed pepla revolve around small communities of Classical Antiquity oppressed by foreign tyrants cum local collaborators, in what seems to be a re-enactment of the Nazi occupation of Italy in the last years of World War Two and a nod to the failed defascistisation of the Italian Republic.

Finally, the second subsection, “After the *Sessantotto*”, focuses on five contemporary-set films (...*Hanno cambiato faccia*; *La corta notte delle bambole di vetro*; *Il prato macchiato*

*di rosso; L'uomo che uccideva a sangue freddo; Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza*) and one period-piece (*Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!*) made between 1970 and 1975. Directly referencing Marx and Marxist thinkers, the works liken the ruling political caste and the capitalist class to greedy, self-serving vampires that are undefeatable due to their power of adaptation, thereby presenting the political and socio-economic status quo as ultimately immutable. In spite of the different movie genres, and of the authors' different professional and ideological backgrounds, the six films therefore share a resignedly-pessimistic view on the post-'boom' period, from the wave of anti-authoritarian protests in Italian universities and factories that exploded in the late 1960s as a response to the inconclusive 1963-1968 alliance between Christian Democrats and Socialists to the mid-1970s plans for an alliance between Christian Democrats and Communists.

### **After the 'boom'**

The national, international and transnational industrial factors leading to the making of horror parody *Tempi duri per i vampiri* in spring 1959 have been described in Chapter 3. What needs to be done here, before putting forward a reflectionist reading of the film as a class-struggle parable, is a work of **contextual analysis** detailing the causes and consequences of the 1958-1963 'economic miracle'. As in the previous chapter's exploration of gender issues, the starting point is the reconstruction period. From the immediate post-war until well into the second half of the 1950s, Italy was an underdeveloped country. According to the 1951 census, 42% of the Italian working population made a living in the primary sector, with the percentage rising dramatically in the South. Such agricultural activities were mostly labour-intensive and technologically backward if compared to 20<sup>th</sup>-century Western standards, and productivity was generally low, based as it was on the landowners' pure and simple exploitation of destitute seasonal workers struggling for bare survival. Facing dropping profit margins due to war damages, impoverished soil, managerial ineptitude, natural disasters,



occasional peasant unrest and the advent of international competitors following the end of Fascist protectionism, the big landowners (many of them aristocrats whose titles ceased to be legally recognised with the Italian Constitution of 1948) started selling part of their land to their sharecroppers – a move also encouraged by the 1948-1950 agrarian laws approved by the newly-elected Italian Parliament. This fragmentation of property, combined with limited state and private investments in infrastructural modernisation, made only subsistence farming possible in large parts of the countryside (Ginsborg, 1990). As a result, in 1951 and for a few more years, Italian standards of living remained abysmal, with no more than “five kilograms of beef per capita consumed yearly” (Crainz, 2005a: 88) and “the elementary combination of electricity, drinking water and an inside lavatory” to be found in less than 10% of households (Ginsborg, 1990: 210). Yet, the overall economic situation wasn’t completely bleak: contrary to the primary sector, the “industrial sector could boast of some advanced elements in the production of steel, cars, electrical energy and artificial fibres”. True, from the mid-1940s to the late 1950s cutting-edge factories “were limited both geographically, being confined mainly to the north-west, and in their weight in the national economy as a whole” (Ibid.), but it’s on this backbone that the ‘economic miracle’ would be built.

The names with which Italian economy’s great leap forward in the secondary and tertiary sectors was dubbed by politicians and the press from the spring of 1959 onwards suggest the idea of a sudden, unexpected event (‘boom’), a gift from God (‘miracle’). This is because the Christian-Democrat, Socialist and Communist leaders of the time publicly hailed 1958 as a year of economic crisis due to some negative backlashes connected to the inception of the European Economic Community (Crainz, 2005a). However, historians have convincingly argued that Italy’s ‘economic miracle’ wasn’t random at all. Its bases were laid in 1953, mainly due to the work of top managers Oscar Sinigaglia and Enrico Mattei, who used the funds from the Marshall Aid to reorganise and modernise the state-owned metallurgical industry and the domestic extraction of methane gas and hydrocarbons, thereby

providing Italian entrepreneurs with cheap materials and energy sources for their factories. In the same year, private industries like vehicle-manufacturer FIAT began massive investments in new plants in Northern Italy, while the Parliament approved laws granting easy access to credit and tax benefits for Northern-Italy industries delocalising production in the South (Ginsborg, 1990; Crainz, 2005a). Clearly, “monetary stability, the non-taxation of business interests, the maintenance of favourable lending rates by the Bank of Italy [...] create[d] the correct conditions for the accumulation of capital and its subsequent investment in industry” (Ginsborg, 1990: 214). The most decisive factor for the late-1950s ‘boom’, though, was the extremely-low cost of Italian labour. In fact, the post-war mass unemployment and the aforesaid crisis in agriculture “ensured that demand for work far exceeded supply, with predictable consequences in terms of wage rates” (Ibid.). Moreover, not only most Italians were desperate to work for no matter how little the salary; during the authoritarian, fiercely-anti-Communist, Christian-Democrat governments of the late 1940s and 1950s, the police and the army also reduced union activities almost to zero, effectively increasing productivity via exploitation (Crainz, 2005a; b).

The ‘economic miracle’ is summed up by the following figures provided by Ginsborg (1990) and Crainz (2005a; b). Net national income went from the 17,000 billion lire of 1954 to the 30,000 billion of 1964, while over the same period per-capita income rose from 350,000 to 571,000 lire. The eight million Italians working in agriculture in 1954 fell to less than five million ten years later. Most of them moved from the impoverished rural South and North-East to city areas to take up jobs in factories, and since the 1939 law designed to prevent the inurbation of farmers was repealed only in 1961, throughout the 1950s internal migrants basically were at the mercy of their new employers, who could easily enact all sorts of labour abuse by threatening a denunciation for the crime of illegal migration.<sup>1</sup> It’s thus that, in the early 1960s, Italy ceased to be a prevalently-agricultural country (by 1964, 40% of the working population was employed in the secondary sector, 35% in the tertiary). Specific data

on what, and how much, Italian industries produced between the mid-1950s and 1963 reveal a crucial aspect of the ‘boom’, namely its export-driven nature: as vehicle-manufacturing skyrocketed from 148,000 to 760,000 units, fridge-manufacturing from 370,000 to 1.5 million units, TV-set-manufacturing from 88,000 to 634,000 units, the production of “textiles and food products gave way to those consumer goods which were much in demand in the advanced industrial countries, and which reflected per capita incomes far higher than Italy’s own” (Ginsborg, 1990: 214-215). Indeed, although Italian standards of living were improving by the early 1960s, with the combination of electricity, drinking water and an inside lavatory to be found in almost 30% of households according to the 1961 census (contrary to the 7.4% of 1951), Italy was still too poor a country for the majority of its citizens to enter the age of *benessere* (‘affluence’) and be able to afford the cars and home appliances they were beginning to see advertised everywhere around them.

Official data show that in Italy the ownership of consumer durables expanded greatly in a very short turn of years:

Whereas in 1958 only 12% of Italian families owned a television, by 1965 the number had risen to 49%. In the same period the number owning fridges increased from 13% to 55%, and washing machines from 3% to 23%. Between 1950 and 1964 the number of private cars in Italy rose from 342,000 to 4.67 million (Ibid.: 239).

While in the Italian left-wing press of the early 1960s there was much talk of the television-in-the-shack paradox, the booming access to the *nuovi consumi* (‘new consumer goods’) concerned Italian society almost exclusively from the lower middle class upwards, above all in the North and Centre (Crainz, 2005a). Apart from the traditional *haute-bourgeoisie* élite, i.e. the owners and top managers of the heavy industry, two professional groups within the middle class were particularly benefited by the ‘miracle’: white-collar workers from a lower-middle-class background holding a secondary-school or university diploma, and small-firm-level industrialists. The former were the better-paid echelon of the fastest-growing section of

the Italian workforce in the late 1950s, absorbed *en masse* by the industrial sector, the tertiary sector and the ever-growing bureaucratic apparatus of the state. The latter were a “new generation of Italian businessmen”, men “of limited culture and education, but determined and audacious, [...] prepared to travel all over the world in order to build up markets for their products”, mainly clothes, footwear, office supplies, electric appliances or parts thereof, all manufactured in small (oftentimes clandestine) but constantly-expanding workshops. They were

the *nouveaux riches* not only of the major cities, but perhaps above all of the provinces [of Lombardy, Emilia Romagna and Tuscany]. In Vigevano, to take just one example of a smallish town near Milan, [...] there were 900 workshops and factories making shoes; one quarter of all Italy’s shoe exports came from Vigevano (Ginsborg, 1990: 236-237).

These two professional groups were also responsible for the skyrocketing number of Italian people enjoying holidays in the country over the summer and during the weekends, with hotel and camping reservations more than doubled from 1956 to 1965. Together with what were luxury goods like cars, fridges, TV-sets and washing machines, for white-collar petty bourgeois and small-firm-level industrialists, holiday breaks became a “status symbol” charged with a “demonstration effect”: by shedding their traditional accumulation-bent stinginess in favour of a new lifestyle characterised by expenditure, the rising lower strata of the bourgeoisie “explicitly or implicitly show[ed] off, manifest[ed], symbolise[d] and strengthen[ed] their social position”, confirming “to both social peers and social inferiors the distance from everything that is work, necessity, industriousness” in the attempt to resemble as much as possible the highest class of them all, aristocracy, unproductive par excellence (Alberoni, 1967: 262). Writing in the early 1960s, and appropriating the concept of conspicuous consumption from Thorstein Veblen’s 1899 study *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*, sociologist Giorgio Alberoni thus efficaciously portrays the whole of the rampant Italian bourgeoisie as involved in a symbolic struggle for

social distinction/promotion in which the clerical lower middle class imitates the small-firm-level industrialists, the small-firm-level industrialists the top managers and captains of industry of the *haute bourgeoisie*, the *hauts bourgeois* the 20<sup>th</sup>-century remnants of the feudal, landowning aristocracy (deprived of legally-recognised titles by the Italian Constitution of 1948, but still endowed with abundant economic and symbolic capital).

As the middle class was busy with conspicuous consumption, working-class people, and especially the inurbated peasants who had become blue-collar factory workers in the second half of the 1950s and the early 1960s, managed to access the *beni di cittadinanza* ('citizenship goods') for the first time in their lives, i.e. to fulfil very basic needs of nourishment, clothing and hygiene, meet the standard of what is "perceived as right, proper and dutiful for any civilised man", and be considered citizens of the Italian nation-state (Ibid.: 119). For instance, while mostly living in self-built shacks in the outskirts of the cities or in overcrowded city attics/basements, and working like slaves in factories and building sites, the migrant workers from the South and the North-East were finally able to afford daily meals, proper shoes and warm clothing for the bad season. Not coincidentally, a wellbeing indicator such as the yearly per-capita consumption of beef in Italy rose from the four/five kilograms of the mid-1940s to the nine kilograms of the mid-1950s ("matching the level of the poor and autarchic, pre-war Fascist period"), and reached thirteen kilograms in 1960 and twenty kilograms in 1966, all this combined with other types of meat, dairy products, fruit and vegetables (Crainz, 2005a: 88) – an increased consumption that enriched town-dwelling, petty-bourgeois shop owners, who immediately joined their white-collar homologues in the symbolic struggle for social distinction/promotion. Evidently, for the late-1950s and early-1960s blue-collar working class, the *nuovi consumi* largely remained a deluxe mirage, even if the opportunity of payment by instalments was widely available. Italian blue-collar workers' expenses not strictly related to basic needs were absorbed by motor vehicles cheaper than cars (between 1950 and 1964 "the number of owned motorcycles went from 700,000 to 4.3

million”) (Ginsborg, 1990: 239) and entertainment, perhaps playing a part in the boom of the discographic market, whose sales went from “the five million records sold in 1953” to “the eighteen, twenty-two and thirty million records sold in 1958, 1962 and 1965 respectively” (Crainz, 2005a: 82).

If the inception of the ‘boom’ caught Christian Democracy and the Left by surprise in 1958, the *rivoluzione dei consumi* (‘consumer-goods revolution’) that followed revealed the Italian politicians’ absolute unpreparedness to seriously engage with consumer capitalism, and to correct its downsides and distortions. Such unpreparedness was due to the fact that Italian politicians, whether militant Catholics or Socialists/Communists, shared a simplistic view of “capitalism as incapable of producing development and progress”, and a strong dislike for modernisation, seen as the harbinger of the catastrophic erasure of the ancient “world of the poor” that traditionally constituted the stronghold of the secular power of both the Catholic and the Marxist ‘churches’ (Ibid.: 43). As a result, all major parties first and foremost concerned themselves with exploiting the booming economy for propaganda purposes in view of electoral competitions at local and national level. On the one hand, the Christian Democrats willy-nilly embraced the ‘miracle’ euphoria: they judged that putting forward the idea of an upcoming era of prosperity within capitalism – whose possible excesses had of course to be mitigated by the Christian values of frugality, renunciation and solidarity – was after all the best antidote to the ‘red threat’, and used media events like the 1956-1964 construction of the Milan-Naples motorway, the Financial Times’s awarding of a monetary Oscar to the Italian lira as the most stable currency of 1959, the 1960 Rome Olympics and the inauguration of the Fiumicino airport in Rome in 1961 as occasions to increase the party’s national and international prestige. On the other hand, the Left, and especially the Communist Party, denounced the very same events as a way to mask the huge imbalances the ‘boom’ was introducing in the already-unequal Italian society. Ultimately, though, party politics did very little to govern the *grande trasformazione*.

It's not possible, here, to provide a detailed account of the actions taken by post-1958 Italian governments in socio-economic matters. The main point is that from 1958 onwards Christian Democracy and its left-wing allies (the Socialist Party first granted a centrist government the vote of confidence in early 1962, then joined the governing coalition from December 1963 to June 1968) overwhelmingly privileged private interests over public ones, even more so after the growth of Italian economy came to a halt in the summer of 1963, when the increase in workers' salaries – brought about by a reprisal in union activities against a by-then unbearable exploitation – significantly exceeded the increase in productivity. Four examples would suffice. Firstly, while dutifully involved in a crackdown on unreported employment (*caporalato*, 'the gangmaster system', was outlawed in 1961), Italian governments always sided with captains of industry in seeing unions and worker protests as the main cause for recession, and left workers at the mercy of their employers, the police and the army. Secondly, any draft law about urban planning, much needed in times of massive internal migrations, was systematically sabotaged during parliamentary discussions to protect the interests of private speculators. Thirdly, electric energy was nationalised in 1962, but this was done by having the state pay huge indemnities to the private-firm owners rather than to shareholders, with the former also left free to use state money as they wished. Fourthly, in recession year 1964, in order to give confidence to investors after the negative *congiuntura* ('conjuncture') of 1963, the existing fiscal laws were modified to grant high-income people complete anonymity, thereby legalising tax evasion (Crainz, 2005b). Within this framework of deregulated "export-led growth" emphasising "private consumer goods, often of a luxury nature, without any corresponding development in public consumption", the 'boom' assumed the character of a wild, spasmodic, unchecked search for "individual" and/or "familial" gain at the expense of the collectivity (Ginsborg, 1990: 216). The mottos 'Mors tua vita mea' ('Your death [is] my life') and 'Ognun per sé e Dio per tutti' ('Each one [provides] for himself and God [provides] for all') indeed became the guiding principles for the conduct of many

Italians, from the *haute bourgeoisie* and small-firm-level industrialists profiting on the exploitation of destitute migrant workforce down to the destitute migrant workers themselves, largely abandoned by the state and therefore forced to fend for themselves through more or less amoral forms of familism (Crainz, 2005a; b).

A topical film of the ‘boom’, horror parody *Tempi duri per i vampiri* opens with an explosion wiping out the ‘old world’ of the *ancien régime*. It’s the late spring or the summer of 1959, somewhere in the Carpathian countryside: Baron Roderico of Bramfürten – whose Poeian first name sounds to Italian ears as a crasis of *rodere* (‘gnaw’) and *ricco* (‘rich’) – is a vampire who has been living in his ancestral castle for 400 years, ruling as an absolute master over the region. The days of the bloodsucking feudal lord, though, seem to be numbered, as Roderico’s castle is about to be blown up by a group of civil engineers in order to make room for a nuclear power plant. Therefore, a hearse drawn by two black horses and carrying a white coffin (a blatant nod to the Hammer *Dracula*) hastily leaves the manor headed for Frankfurt train station, where Roderico’s old butler mails his master to Italian Baron Osvaldo Lambertenghi, Roderico’s nephew and last living descendant. We’ll be back to this servant who, in spite of being a very minor character in terms of screentime, is a crucial figure in the sociological design of the film.

As the setting moves from Central-Eastern Europe to the *bel paese*, it’s immediately made clear that the Italian Baron is facing a major crisis of his own: just as Roderico is evicted from his Carpathian domain by the march of progress, in the Italy of the ‘economic miracle’ Osvaldo has to sell the family manor to a business company and use all the proceedings to pay off his debt with tax collectors. Aiming to take advantage of the booming economy and consequent increase in consumption, the company’s board of directors promptly turns the historical place into a commodity – a luxury hotel for foreign tourists, for the traditional Italian *haute bourgeoisie* and, above all, for the Italian *nouveaux riches* created by the ‘miracle’, who are particularly anxious to convert the newly-acquired economic capital



into social capital, showing off their distance from necessity in hopes of cleansing the stigma of their miser, petty-bourgeois past and join the dominant group of the *hauts bourgeois*. As demonstrated by Alberoni's (1967) and Bourdieu's (2010) social inquiries into the judgement of taste, money is the next best thing to blood for those who seek social distinction but weren't born into an upper-class family.

The word Osvaldo uses in one of his first lines to describe his personal situation is "tragedy", and he's not exaggerating. Contrary to the aristocrat protagonist of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa's 1958 best-selling historical novel *Il Gattopardo*, who is granted a slow, golden twilight after the end of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, Osvaldo suddenly loses his ancestral home and wealth, i.e. his past, class and status, and finds himself in a sink-or-swim situation, a battle for survival in a hostile environment. True, forced to start a new life from scratch, he's immediately hired as a hotel bellboy in his former manor, but the offer of shelter and salary in exchange for work is nothing but a bourgeois vengeance against the nobleman. In fact, as a bellboy, Osvaldo is constantly bossed around and humiliated not only by the big businessmen who bought him out of his castle, but also by their clerical, petty-bourgeois subordinates such as hotel manager Vassalli (literally 'vassals') and the concierge. An exchange between the latter and Osvaldo is particularly revealing. Having addressed the concierge with the informal expression "Young man", bellboy Osvaldo is harshly reminded that "When talking to a superior, you must call him *cavaliere* and use the courtesy form!". Not to mention the film's stereotypical Milanese *commendatore* – an old, bald, fat, uneducated, arrogant *nouveau riche* who drives the latest Fiat 2100: adding insult to injury, the *parvenu* calls the castle "an authentic antiquity" and invades it to acquire nobility by osmosis, while titled Osvaldo slaves moving the *commendatore's* heavy luggage around.

However, no matter how humiliated by the verbal (and sometimes also physical) abuse of the bourgeoisie, Osvaldo sticks to his noble principles and tries to maintain aristocratic behaviour and dignity. For instance, when a young lady-guest of the hotel sends him on an

errand, he refuses to accept her generous tip as a display of both chivalry and nobility's disinterest in money. Such *beau geste* doesn't impress anybody except Osvaldo's love-interest Lilla, a twenty-something poor gardener who has worked for Osvaldo all her life, like all her relatives before her. Lilla loves Osvaldo as much as he loves her, but the two don't give in to passion: Osvaldo doesn't because, as a disgraced Baron, he can't afford to "cover [her] with gold and jewels"; Lilla doesn't because she thinks of herself as a mere servant, unworthy of an aristocrat's love (until the very end of the film, she keeps calling Osvaldo "Signor Barone" even if, after the Italian Constitution of 1948 and the 1959 sale of his estate, he holds the title only formally). Evidently, the main obstacle to the interclass romance is that both lovers refuse to let go of the past. It's in this stalemate situation that transnational vampire Baron Roderico arrives to Italy as a *deus ex machina*, to teach Osvaldo to forget about aristocracy, move on with the times and become a 'carnivorous' bourgeois. As a matter of fact, in *Tempi duri per i vampiri*, there's no trace of the xenophobia-tinged, reverse-colonialism paranoia that literature and film scholars traditionally consider the cornerstone of vampire narratives from the novel *Dracula* onwards (see Chapter 2). Rather than as an alien vermin, a polluting "foreign body" (Hughes, 1997: 132) migrating West to subjugate the host nation's body politic, Roderico acts as a benign, if creepy, magical helper from whom human characters must learn how to adapt to the rapidly-changing socio-economic reality of the 'boom' years in order to avoid extinction.

According to Stoker (1980: 33), Dracula is a descendant of some of the noblest, strongest, bravest and proudest warrior "races" in history. If life is a Darwinian struggle in which only the fittest can make it, the undead Count certainly possesses the willpower and the skills to crush his competitors: he's a fighter, a survivor, and so is Roderico in *Tempi duri per i vampiri*. Abruptly evicted from his Carpathian castle, Roderico wastes no time in melancholic brooding and relocates himself in a new habitat, Italy, which he assumes to be backwards enough to allow him to keep on living as a feudal landlord. Unfortunately for him, the country

has just had a late industrial revolution and aristocrat landowners are bound to extinction. However, the transnational vampire has no intention of lying down and dying: as the family crypt in Osvaldo's castle has been desecrated and turned into an American bar, Roderico simply sleeps under the barman's counter; with no female peasants in sight, he feasts on Scandinavian models. His capacity to adapt seems almost limitless, just like that of Stoker's Dracula, who is a Boyard warlord, a *haut bourgeois* dealing in London estates, a qualified petty-bourgeois solicitor, a working-class handyman helping out carriers, and even a servant, making the bed and cooking for his unsuspecting guest Jonathan Harker.

Osvaldo, on the other hand, doesn't seem to be able to adjust to his new life as a bellboy. He tells Roderico "You must adapt, uncle!", but for Osvaldo adapting means passively accepting circumstances – that's why he ends up at the mercy of rampant bourgeois who wish him dead. Drastic measures need to be taken to save Osvaldo, and Roderico chooses the most drastic of them all, passing on the curse of vampirism to his nephew. The shock treatment works: once vampirised, Osvaldo overcomes his mild, romantic nature, and becomes aggressive, willing to fight for living space and privilege in the Italian social arena ("During the day you are a stupid dummy, this is why you lost the castle!", he contemptuously snarls to his human self in front of the mirror). First of all, Osvaldo 'bites' forty-two female guests of the hotel in one night, claiming a *droit du seigneur* over the daughters and wives of the wealthy bourgeoisie and making them experience a pleasure they have never reached before with their human partners (see Chapter 4). Secondly, Osvaldo proceeds to scare the wits out of the businessmen, the hotel manager Vassalli and the *commendatore*, thus taking vengeance on those who dared belittling him earlier in the film. It's only after having proved his manhood to his social superiors that the now-confident Osvaldo regains his ancestral castle. He can't buy it back because he has no money, but with some cunning and Roderico's help, he has Vassalli fired and is appointed as the new hotel manager. Finally, Osvaldo gets his dream girl Lilla, rescuing her at the last minute from a half-hearted assault by Roderico.

In the end, Osvaldo feels too grateful to stake his vampire uncle, so Roderico is left free to go his way with two Scandinavian models. As for Osvaldo, he falls from the heights of nobility and lands on his feet because he successfully adapts into a bourgeois clerk. He might not own the castle like in the old days, but he's the man in charge, he runs the place. Borrowing from Hutchings's (2003: 58-59) analysis of class relations in the Hammer *Dracula* and 1950s England, the parable of the Italian vampire can be conceived of as the transformation of a self-pitying, disgraced aristocrat into a "Carnivore" bourgeois whose ruthlessness is an affirmation of his "inalienable right to lead". The aristocracy, however, isn't the only class in need to renegotiate its ancestral identity in late-1950s Italy. Osvaldo marries Lilla, whom marriage elevates from feudal slavery to bourgeois status, allowing her to survive the disappearance of the class that traditionally offered servants protection in exchange for total submission. In sum, it seems that in the grimly-titled *Tempi duri per i vampiri* ('Hard times for vampires') there's a happy ending for everybody, to the point that, just before the end credits, Osvaldo asks the spectators if these can really be considered hard times for vampires. Indeed, even in the case of the bossy hotel manager whose place is taken by Osvaldo, it's difficult to speak of dark future prospects: Vassalli may have lost his job, but the ruthlessness in command he has displayed throughout the movie leaves no doubt that he can survive any adversity. The only character who meets a tragic destiny is Baron Roderico's old servant, who commits suicide at Frankfurt train station after mailing his master to Italy, but this is the proverbial exception that confirms the rule. "May I kill myself?", asks the butler to his master, submissive until the very end. After having been granted permission to take leave, he melancholically adds "What kind of life is left for me anyway?", and throws himself under an off-screen passing train. Contrary to Baron Roderico, Baron Osvaldo and serf Lilla, the old servant can't face the downfall of aristocracy and goes extinct like every being that doesn't possess the will and the skills to adapt to a changing environment.

The opening credits feature the disclaimer "The characters of this film are absolutely

imaginary”. Of course they aren’t, because *Tempi duri per i vampiri* is a work of satire meant to comment on actual social dynamics in the early years of the ‘economic miracle’. The effects of the ‘boom’ on the working class aren’t explored at all: 1959 was perhaps too early to assess how the booming economy, new affluence and consumerism impacted factory workers and peasants, plus the business-minded film producers most certainly wanted to steer clear from any social commentary on backwardness and exploitation that might upset Christian Democracy. The movie focuses on the middle class instead, by thematising the downfall of aristocracy and the upward mobility of both servants and the new rich from the *petite bourgeoisie*. As we have seen, when the traditional socio-economic order is broken, characters must renegotiate their ancestral identity or die. The example for them to follow is that of the transnational vampire, who for once is shown to be a positive model instead of being portrayed as a scapegoat, an alien evil to be hated, disowned and purged for the greater good of society. Consequently, in *Tempi duri per i vampiri* there’s no Van-Helsing-character to re-establish law and order: in the Italy of the ‘boom’, however frightening, uncertainty of identity, social fluidity and downright chaos are harbingers of new possibilities for self-fulfilment and social promotion – everything is up for grabs and one needs a set of strong, sharp canines to survive, since it’s dog eat dog and ‘herbivores’ get eaten first.

Perfectly attuned to “the aggressive and pragmatic spirit of ‘booming’ Italy” (Curti, 2011: 88-89), the film at the same time pays heed to Christian Democracy’s will to make Italy’s great leap forward into modernity less traumatic as possible. As a matter of fact, *Tempi duri per i vampiri* advocates for the necessity of restraint and moderation, the triumphant bourgeois of the happy ending being a *via media*, a midway compromise, literally a marriage, between the fading highest class (feudal aristocracy) and the lowest (serfdom). Therefore, Osvaldo embraces certain predatory aspects of his vampire uncle like determination, cunning, self-confidence, but rejects others, for instance preferring middle-class monogamy and work ethics to the sexual excesses and unproductivity of Baron Roderico. As stated in the first

treatment of the film, whose screenplay and final cut were approved without reservations by state censors, “[Osvaldo] remains [Osvaldo], but a new [Osvaldo], who didn’t undergo so many transformations in vain. He will maintain the purity of his soul, but a new strength will allow him to contrast other people’s prevarications” (Anton, 1959).<sup>2</sup>

Adopting a dichotomy popularised by Umberto Eco’s 1964 collection of essays *Apocalittici e integrati: comunicazioni di massa e teorie della cultura di massa*, Manzoli (2012) remarks that the Italian screenwriters and filmmakers of the 1950s and 1960s displayed two different attitudes towards the ‘economic miracle’: genre cinema generally was *integrato* (‘integrated’) and mediated between good and bad aspects of the ‘boom’, trying to negotiate an imaginary path for Italian people’s survival in times of radical changes, whereas auteur cinema was downright *apocalittico* (‘apocalyptic’) in its aprioristic refusal and indictment of modernisation. Horror parody *Tempi duri per i vampiri*, with its midway-compromise happy ending, seems to belong to integrated cinema. Yet, in spite of its bright Ultrascope-Ferraniacolor-Technicolor photography and upbeat tone, the film strikes some pretty sombre notes that resonate with the critique of the *grande trasformazione* as alienating, dehumanising, liberticidal and culturally genocidal to be found in coeval Italian auteur cinema efforts like *La dolce vita*, *Rocco e i suoi fratelli / Rocco and his Brothers* (Luchino Visconti, 1960), *Accattone* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1961) and *Mamma Roma* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1962). Director Steno and his screenwriters were no Marxists as far as it is known (Ventavoli, 1999; Giraldi, 2007), but their representation of the carnivorous middle class’ power to incorporate all other classes, including its traditional antagonist the aristocracy, possibly alludes to the rise of what Marx and Lenin call “the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie” (quoted in Manzoli, 2012: 39). Moreover, and perhaps more topically as far as cinematic references are concerned, by casting comedy star Renato Rascel as a literal monster taking no prisoners in his struggle for survival in the social arena of 1959 Italy, *Tempi duri per i vampiri* resonates with the 1959-1968 branch of the *commedia all’italiana* informally known as *commedia dei mostri*, i.e. the

scathingly-satirical, and often tragedy-tinged, Italian comedies featuring *mattatori* like Alberto Sordi, Vittorio Gassman and Ugo Tognazzi incarnating the cynicism, recklessness and ultimate moral monstrosity of the Italian everyman in the rat race to *benessere* (Brunetta, 1980; Gili, 1980; Laura, 1981; D'Amico, 1985; Aprà & Pistagnesi, 1986; Giacobelli, 1995; 1999; Fournier-Lanzoni, 2008; Comand, 2010; Lawrence-Doyle, 2017). It's not by chance that the quintessential *commedia dei mostri* – the aptly-titled *I mostri* (Dino Risi, 1963) – was produced by Mario Cecchi Gori and co-written by Agenore Incrocci and Furio Scarpelli, respectively the producer and the uncredited screenwriters of *Tempi duri per i vampiri* (ACS 3149-243, 1959).

All in all, the self-proclaimedly escapist horror parody *Tempi duri per i vampiri* is less innocuous than it appears at first glance. It suggests that vampires live among us and, as written by Dino Buzzati in the 1959 summer-holiday-themed short story “*Dracula ai bagni*” (‘*Dracula at the beach club*’), they tend to bite “on the left side of the chest”, near the heart, where Italians keep the wallet (quoted in De’ Rossignoli, 1961: 349-350). Such bloodsuckers aren’t only the profit-bent businessmen of the hotel company and the tax collectors who suck Osvaldo’s finances dry at the beginning of the film: as we have seen, in the Italy of the ‘economic miracle’, where the law of the jungle is in place, everyone must become a vampire, preying on weaker/dumber creatures, or be eaten.<sup>3</sup> If Freda’s 1956-1957 *I vampiri* rehearses the traditional ‘death of feudalism’ narrative (see Chapter 2), the vampire-themed Italian Gothic horrors of the ‘boom’ years would rather follow the path opened by *Tempi duri per i vampiri* and locate vampire figures also outside the nobility of *ancien régime*. Of course, given Italian horror’s commercially-driven tendency to blur its national origins via spatial and temporal displacement (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 3), it’s mostly the middle and lower classes of 19<sup>th</sup>- and early-20<sup>th</sup>-century Great Britain and Mitteleuropa to be accused of vampirism, so that social parables about the *bel paese* become much more covert than in *Tempi duri per i vampiri*. Yet, the coincidence between the beginning of the Gothic *filone* in 1959-1960 and

Italy's 1958-1963 'economic miracle' didn't go unnoticed to then-contemporary Marxist critic Goffredo Fofi, who saw the then-budding Italian horror as confirming the 19<sup>th</sup>-century dictum that "ghosts, monsters and a taste for horror appear when a society enters the industrial age, and becomes prosperous and modern" (1963: 80). Not coincidentally, the opening shot of *L'amante del vampiro* – the first Italian attempt at a proper-horror rip-off of the Hammer *Dracula* – is a "panning over the placid Lazio countryside", amidst newly-built, towering "apartment buildings and television antennas", two symbols of Italy's late yet sweeping modernisation (Curti, 2015: 62). Within this framework, regardless of their setting in time and space, the vampire narratives of early Italian Gothic can be said to reflect the spasmodic, cynical search for personal financial gain and social promotion that characterised most of the Italian society during, and immediately after, the 'boom'.

The overarching themes allowing us to group together various vampire-themed Italian horrors of the early 1960s are two: the fading out of the aristocracy, and the mutation affecting both the bourgeoisie and the aristocrats' servants, who literally become vampires in their struggle for social promotion at the expense of enervated noblemen. As for the former idea, following the Le Fanu-Stoker-Browning-Fisher template, the aristocratic vampire is generally killed off in the end (*L'amante del vampiro*; *La maschera del demonio*; *L'ultima preda del vampiro*; *La strage dei vampiri*; *La cripta e l'incubo*; *Il mostro dell'Opera*) or, like Osvaldo in *Tempi duri per i vampiri*, is forced to turn into a bourgeois to survive in late-1950s/early-1960s Italy (*Il sangue e la rosa*). Similarly, non-vampiric aristocrats see little future in their own class, preferring to marry into the wealthy bourgeoisie as Prince Tancredi Falconeri does in the already-mentioned 1958 best-seller *Il Gattopardo*, be it a doctor (*La maschera del demonio*; *Amanti d'oltretomba*), a scholar (*La cripta e l'incubo*), an architect (*La vendetta di Lady Morgan*), the daughter of a high-rank magistrate (*Il sangue e la rosa*). Even a penniless danseuse (*L'ultima preda del vampiro*) or a peasant girl (*I tre volti della paura*) would do, as long as the bride-to-be is beautiful. These narrative dynamics can be connected to the



perceived disintegration of the Italian ‘old world’ of landed estate in a period of booming economy based on the secondary and tertiary sectors.

As for the attempts at upward social mobility enacted by the classes below aristocracy, a good starting point may be *Amanti d’oltretomba* and *La vendetta di Lady Morgan*, which, made in 1965, are “a summation of situations, characters and narrative patterns that are commonplace in Italian Gothic horror films of the decade” (Ibid.: 145). In *Amanti d’oltretomba*, bourgeois physician Stephen Arrowsmith and decrepit servant Solange conspire against their social superiors and act as vampires as part of a plot to appropriate the wealth belonging to Stephen’s aristocratic wives Muriel and Jenny: with the complicity of Solange, Stephen kills Muriel and draws her blood; then, Solange is injected the purloined blood to reacquire youth and become beautiful enough for her co-conspirator to marry (the plan is to be repeated with Jenny, Muriel’s sister/heir and Stephen’s second wife, but fails). Likewise, in *La vendetta di Lady Morgan*, the Blackwood aristocrat family is sucked dry of its wealth and lifeblood by a gang including rival aristocrat Lord Morgan, a petty-bourgeois governess and two servants, all greedy crooks who become vampires after death. The differences with pre-‘boom’ *I vampiri*, where the bourgeois are the good guys and the servants mere automata in the hands of the aristocratic villain, are macroscopic: in post-‘boom’ horrors, starting with *L’amante del vampiro* and continuing (only to cite vampire-themed ones) with *L’orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock*, *I tre volti della paura*, *Danza macabra*, *La cripta e l’incubo*, *Amanti d’oltretomba* and *La vendetta di Lady Morgan*, cunning, money-/sex-/power-hungry servants take on an active role and pursue an agenda of their own, often in league/competition with reckless, social-climbing bourgeois aiming to supersede aristocrats at the top of the food pyramid. Indeed, the haunted houses of *Danza macabra* and *La vendetta di Lady Morgan* – both movies co-written by Giovanni Grimaldi and released after the 1963 *congiuntura* – host vampire aristocrats, vampire bourgeois and vampire servants, in what could be read as an apocalyptic statement: in the attempt to take advantage of the five-year ‘boom’, all classes

have become self-interested to the point of literal bloodsucking.

While horror parody *Tempi duri per i vampiri* and the vampire-themed Gothic horrors more or less covertly allude to some socio-economic dynamics of the ‘boom’ years, 1961-1964 vampire-themed pepla *Ercole al centro della Terra*, *Maciste contro il vampiro*, *Ercole contro Moloch*, *Roma contro Roma* and *Maciste e la regina di Samar* tap into political issues relating to post-war Italy’s problematic coming to terms with the events following the September 8<sup>th</sup> 1943 armistice: German occupation, the creation of the Fascist Repubblica Sociale Italiana in the Centre-North under the aegis of the Nazis, and the partisan struggle that, in synergy with the Allies’ Italian Campaign, led to Liberation in April 1945. As was usual for the Italian genre cinema practitioners of the 1950s and early 1960s – always careful not to give state financiers and censors the impression of being too politicised – the writers and directors of horror-tinged pepla approached the 1943-1945 events symbolically, by adopting an allegorical register in which the troubles of Classical Antiquity stand for those of World-War-Two Italy. Yet, apart from a few Italian-language articles, mainly by Vittorio Spinazzola (1963; 1964; 1965a; b), and a French-language essay by Italian-adventure-cinema veteran Domenico Paolella (1965), pepla’s reflectionist potential has been neglected in Italy until very recently, when Anglophone and Francophone studies like Lagny (1992), Dessere (1995), Dyer (1997), Günsberg (2005), Burke (2011) and O’Brien (2013; 2014) prompted a new interest in the politics of late-1950s and early-1960s musclemen adventures (Marchena, 2009; Della Casa & Giusti, 2013; Di Chiara, 2016a).

As demonstrated by the ‘Cottafavi diatribe’ between Italian and French critics (Di Giammatteo, 1960), and by Marxist film magazine *Cinema nuovo*’s “kind disagreement” with Spinazzola’s (1965a: 270) taking the peplum *filone* as a serious object of study, the above-mentioned neglect was due to reasons of cultural legitimacy (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 2) – an intellectualist prejudice that ultimately proved to be counterproductive because, in dismissing and ignoring pepla, the neorealism-revering Italian *intelligentsia* of the time

missed out on a culturally- and commercially-significant instance of neorealist heritage. In fact, in spite of major stylistic differences, the neorealist war movies of the immediate post-war and many a peplum share the same sanitised, Manichaeian vision of 1943-1945 Italy, one in which poor, peace-loving, hardworking *brava gente* (the silent majority of Italian ‘good people’) are victimised by a cruel, foreign tyrant (Nazi Germany) aided by a few local *mele marce* (a minority of Fascist collaborators, the proverbial ‘rotten apples in the basket’) until the arrival of an all-powerful saviour (the US, embodied by the American army in neorealist features and by an American or American-seeming bodybuilder in pepla). Let’s now focus on *Ercole al centro della Terra*, *Maciste contro il vampiro*, *Ercole contro Moloch*, *Roma contro Roma* and *Maciste e la regina di Samar*, whose vampire characters make the references to the World-War-Two past unmistakable.

The four main characteristics of the vampires threatening the happiness of Ancient Greece (*Ercole al centro della Terra*; *Ercole contro Moloch*), Ancient Rome (*Roma contro Roma*; *Maciste e la regina di Samar*) and the Middle-East (*Maciste contro il vampiro*) mark the bloodsuckers as a metaphor for the Nazi invader. Like the German soldiers who occupied Centre-North Italy after the September 1943 armistice, the vampire is first of all a foreigner to the local population, either because he/she is from abroad (*Roma contro Roma*’s cyclops-goddess Oro is the daughter of Osiris and therefore comes from Egypt) or doesn’t belong to the human race (*Maciste e la regina di Samar*’s female vampire Selene is an alien from the Moon; *Maciste contro il vampiro*, *Ercole al centro della Terra* and *Ercole contro Moloch*’s bloodthirsty male villains are evil spawns from the depths of Hell). Secondly, vampires are defined by their inhuman, literally-beastly nature, as best exemplified by *Maciste contro il vampiro*’s snake-born, fanged and clawed Kobrak (‘the cobra’), *Ercole al centro della Terra*’s Lyco (‘the wolf’), and *Ercole contro Moloch*’s Moloch, who is fanged, clawed and wears a mask halfway between a wolf and a bat (see Chapter 4). The wolf imagery is crucial here: Hitler’s German Shepherd Blondi often appeared in Nazi propaganda and wolf-dog hybrids

henceforth became a stereotypical feature of the Nazi army in non-German war movies (Hitler's very own first name meant 'noble wolf', as widely publicised by the Third Reich). Thirdly, in a clear allusion to the Nazi-backed Repubblica Sociale Italiana, pepla's vampires generally rule over the population through a puppet-government composed of local, power-and-money-hungry collaborationists. In particular, the military raids carried out on civilians by the vampire's minions – filled as they are of burned-down villages, screaming mothers holding crying little children, and martyred corpses hanged as macabre warnings to the rebels – are modelled upon the house-to-house searches carried out by the Nazi-Fascists in Centre-North Italy to appropriate resources for the continuation of the war effort, eradicate partisan cells, and enforce reprisals, conscription and racial laws.<sup>4</sup> Fourthly, borrowing from a commonplace of the Allies' anti-Nazi propaganda, pepla's vampires are shown to use brainwashing either to co-opt single individuals (*Ercole al centro della Terra; Roma contro Roma*) or to create an army of “perfect warrior[s], alive but with no will of [their] own” (*Roma contro Roma*), “automatons made of flesh and bones, soulless and faceless slaves” (*Maciste contro il vampiro*), soldiers with a heart of stone that execute orders like robots (hence the stone-golems from *Maciste e la regina di Samar*, obeying a high-priest whose skull face recalls the *Totenkopf* insignia on SS uniforms and the *testa di morto* adorning the berets of the Brigate Nere paramilitary groups during the Repubblica Sociale Italiana).

Of paramount importance to understand the representational strategies of 1961-1964 vampire-themed pepla is the Italo-Swiss propaganda documentary *Giorni di gloria* (Mario Serandrei, Luchino Visconti, Giuseppe De Santis, Marcello Pagliero, 1945), whom the opening credits dedicate “to all those who, in Italy, have endured and fought the Nazi-Fascist oppression”. Formally produced by Titanus (actually involved in distribution only), *Giorni di gloria* was the result of the joined efforts of the Anglo-American Psychological Warfare Branch Film Division and of the cross-party National Association of Italian Partisans, and sought to facilitate a nation-wide, collective self-absolution from the Fascist past through the

portrayal of Italian people's spontaneous, dignified, cohesive opposition to Nazi invaders after the 1943 armistice and the power void caused by the escape from Rome of King Vittorio Emanuele III and the Italian Army's high ranks (Eisenschitz, 2014). Obviously for an Anglo-American-sponsored work, the words 'Communism' and 'Socialism' are never mentioned in the voice-over commentary, while Communist filmmakers Serandrei, Visconti and De Santis strategically ignore the years of Fascism's mass consensus to focus on the 1943-1945 decline under Nazi patronage, which allows the film to present Italy as a victim of "foreign infiltrators" and "Barbarians" (1943-1944 statements by Benedetto Croce, quoted in Ben-Ghiat, 1999: 84) – a "poor lamb, offered in holocaust, fighting to defend itself", in Corrado Alvaro's (1986: 40) famous words from 1944 – and to imply that the whole Fascist *ventennio* had been but a "parenthesis" in the life of an intrinsically-humane, democratic country, the pathological deviation of a minimal part of the Italian population, the most fanatical and violent in its search for power and wealth (Croce, quoted in Ben-Ghiat, 1999: 84).

*Giorni di gloria's* rhetoric, based on the externalisation of guilt and the dismissal of the Repubblica-Sociale-Italiana adherents as mere collaborationists rather than real combatants, would also imbue *Roma città aperta*, *Paisà* (Roberto Rossellini, 1946), *Avanti a lui tremava tutta Roma / Before Him All Rome Trembled* (Carmine Gallone, 1946), *Vivere in pace* (Luigi Zampa, 1947) and the other Italian war movies of the immediate post-war that, for reasons of ideological pacification, national unity and moral uplifting in view of the reconstruction, were similarly keen on denying both the mass-appeal of Fascism and the civil-war aspects of the Resistance (Pesce, 2008; Licthner, 2013). What really makes *Giorni di gloria* a seminal work in relation to the five pepla discussed here is the fact that it explicitly compares the Nazi-Fascists to vampires: "Who are the authors of these massacres? [Kurt] Mälzer, [Eugen] Dollmann, [Pietro] Caruso and many other vampires...", states the voice-over commenting on the Nazi-Fascists' 1943-1945 war crimes on Italian soil, always taking extreme care in distinguishing between the numerically-overwhelming Nazi "hordes" and the

few “reactionary gangs” of “Fascist slaves” acting like “puppets in a mad carnival of blood”. The political declination of the vampire metaphor is further strengthened by emphasising the occupants’ foreignness (the use of the word “hordes” to describe the German army encourages spectators to make an association with Barbarian invasions), and by highlighting the beast-like nature of the Nazi-Fascists (the Brigade Nere are said to go around in “packs” like wolves; the SS exacting a “bestly vengeance” on the Italian people are called “the German Moloch”, a reference to the 1914 *Cabiria*’s child-eating god of evil to be reprised in *Ercole contro Moloch*, where the titular villain is called “the symbol of a cruel regime”).<sup>5</sup>

Ostensibly, the screenwriters and directors of vampire-themed pepla referenced Nazi-Fascism for reasons of narrative economy, to create with a few, broad strokes a series of unredeemable, universally-despicable supervillains for Manichaeic narratives financed by Italian, French, West-German and North-American distributors (see Chapter 3). At the same time, writers and filmmakers might have also been encouraged to deal with 1943-1945 national history by their producers, who perhaps sought to piggy-back on the late-1950s and early-1960s “anti-Fascist and partisan *filone*” (Spinazzola, 1962: 73-74) consisting of *Il generale Della Rovere / General Della Rovere* (Roberto Rossellini, 1959), *Estate violenta / Violent Summer* (Valerio Zurlini, 1959), *La lunga notte del ‘43 / It Happened in ‘43* (Florestano Vancini, 1960), *La ciociara / Two Women* (Vittorio De Sica, 1960), *Il carro armato dell’8 settembre* (Gianni Puccini, 1960), *Il gobbo / The Hunchback* (Carlo Lizzani, 1960), *Tutti a casa / Everybody Go Home!* (Luigi Comencini, 1960), *Il federale / The Fascist* (Luciano Salce, 1961), and many others. These were Italian auteur cinema efforts and *commedie all’italiana* that found critical and/or commercial success by bringing to the screen Benito Mussolini’s deposition on July 25<sup>th</sup> 1943, the 1943 armistice, Nazi occupation, the Repubblica Sociale Italiana and the Resistance after a decade of almost complete silence following *Giorni di gloria* and the already-mentioned neorealist movies of 1945-1947 (Pesce, 2008). Industrial analysis, though, provides only part of the picture – the one relating to

vampire-themed pepla as concerned with the historical past. To fully expose the cultural instrumentalities of *Ercole al centro della Terra*, *Maciste contro il vampiro*, *Ercole contro Moloch*, *Roma contro Roma* and *Maciste e la regina di Samar*, the political situation in early-1960s Italy needs to be outlined.

In the Italy of the immediate post-war, many former Fascist-Party members kept their position of responsibility as public servants in the name of the continuity of state institutions, and similarly untouched were the formerly-Fascist big landowners and leading businessmen, as the Allies didn't want the country's political, judicial, military and economic powers to fall into the hands of the Left. Moreover, many Fascists convicted for the war crimes committed in the name of the Repubblica Sociale Italiana benefited from the June-22<sup>nd</sup>-1946 amnesty promulgated for reasons of national pacification by the last Ministry of Justice of the Kingdom of Italy, Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti (Ginsborg, 1990). The outlawed Fascist Party could thus be recreated in late 1946 under the name of Movimento Sociale Italiano, which immediately obtained a handful of seats at the general election of 1948. From then on, the Movimento Sociale Italiano started building up electoral consensus by playing the cards of anti-Communism and patriarchal traditionalism, until it became a key ally of Christian Democracy in early 1960, when appointed Prime Minister Fernando Tambroni, a Christian Democrat, gained a narrow parliamentary approval for his centrist government thanks to the votes of extreme-right representatives. In order to give a further demonstration of strength, in June 1960 the Movimento Sociale Italiano organised a congress in Genova, "a city which had been awarded a gold medal for its part in the Resistance", and invited as a guest of honour "the last prefect of Genova during the [Repubblica Sociale Italiana], who had been responsible for the deaths and deportations of many Genoese workers and anti-Fascists" (Ibid.: 256). Violent mass protests involving former partisans as well as common people followed in Genova and in other Italian cities (where anti-Fascist riots intertwined with worker protests), and the police and the army opened fire on the crowds upon governmental

order, killing several demonstrators (Balestrini & Moroni, 1988). According to Crainz (2005a), Tambroni was trying to create civil-war-like chaos and pass it off as a Communist coup in order to implement strong measures against the Left. Whatever the case, the tense situation was solved by the moderate currents of Christian Democracy, which forced Tambroni to resign and, seeing that a large part of public opinion identified with the values of Resistance and opposed the participation of the neofascists to the government, started building the centre-left alliance that would rule the country from December 1963 to June 1968.

The crumbling of Tambroni's government in late July 1960 and the subsequent 'opening to the Left' by Christian Democracy brought to an end the fiercest period of the Cold War in Italy, as signalled by the fact that the Resistance ceased to be a taboo subject: "a climate of Anti-Fascist revival" began in 1961, with "a ministerial circular extend[ing] the teaching of history in upper schools as far as the Resistance" (previous curricula stopped at the end of World War One), and with official World-War-Two commemorations like state ceremonies and state-radio/TV broadcasts finally including Socialist and Communist speakers (Crainz, 1999: 127). Yet, reactionary forces still held a considerable influence. For example, in March 1961, the neofascist protests against a TV sketch parodying black shirts and the Fascist colonial dreams of the 1930s and 1940s prompted Christian-Democrat Prime Minister Amintore Fanfani to publicly admonish the management of Italian State Television for mocking the homeland. As a result, as late as 1968-1969, state-sponsored broadcasts about the 1943-1945 period put "the full responsibility for the evils of the era [...] on the Nazis", and obscured "such important matters as the hopes of the Resistance for a radical social transformation, as well as the basic nature of the conflict between Fascism and Anti-Fascism" (Ibid.: 129).

If this is the political climate in which Italian producers, screenwriters and filmmakers set out to exploit the commercial success of both *Le fatiche di Ercole* and the Hammer



**Dracula** by making vampire-themed pepla, it's possible to read the "popular historical lesson" (Lagny, 1992: 174) of *Ercole al centro della Terra*, *Maciste contro il vampiro*, *Ercole contro Moloch*, *Roma contro Roma* and *Maciste e la regina di Samar* also as a warning about the resurgence of Fascism in early-1960s Italy, with the vampires lurking in the dark caves of the faraway lands of "fanta-antiquity" (Salotti, 1986: 151) acting as a stand-in for the Movimento Sociale Italiano and, more in general, for the former Fascists who maintained their position of power in the democratic institutions of the Italian Republic. Unfortunately, none of the people involved in making these films ever went on record commenting upon their politics. For instance, apropos of *Ercole al centro della Terra* – where the threatened kingdom is called Ecalia (Italia?) and the doors of scheming usurper Lyco's palace are adorned with swastika-like decorations – director Mario Bava (quoted in Cozzi, 1970-1971: 101) kept his usual low profile by stealing the 'bet' anecdote from his colleague Freda:

I made a bet that I could make a feature film only by using a modular wall with a door and a window, and four mobile columns, without any other scenery. Therefore, I shot *Ercole al centro della Terra* by continuously moving these few elements around, in an endless series of shot-countershot. No spectator ever noticed.

An attentive genre-cinema scholar like Spinazzola further problematizes anti-Fascist readings when he advises against "dilating beyond measure the libertarian and Spartacist potential" of historical-mythological movies (1963: 106), for after all their Manichaean narratives pitting an unlawful usurper/oppressor against a people's hero are an expression of a dangerously-reactionary "populist paternalism" (1964: 52-53). To limit ourselves to examples taken from vampire-themed pepla, the oppressed masses are always shown to be totally ineffectual, most blatantly in *Maciste e la regina di Samar*, where, after a lengthy subplot about the setting up of an underground resistance movement, Maciste has to save the day alone because a storm prevents the insurgents from showing up on the battlefield. Moreover, after the vampire rulers are killed by the muscleman heroes, the newly-liberated people,

whose motto until that moment had been “Freedom or death!” or variations thereof, simply call for more humane masters to obey, as monarchy (*Ercole al centro della Terra*; *Maciste contro il vampiro*; *Ercole contro Moloch*; *Maciste e la regina di Samar*) and colonialism (*Roma contro Roma*) are never contested as tyrannical per se. In sum, we are in front of a double paradox: not only the pepla’s musclemen overthrowing fascistoid regimes physically and ideologically embody the clerico-Fascist ideal of the strong, Messiah-like ‘Man of Providence’ able to enforce the law, order and tradition that the impotent masses crave (Dyer, 1997), but also the revolution ultimately serves the preservation of the authoritarian status quo (Marchena, 2009; Burke, 2011). Lacking precise information about the political convictions of the almost totality of the producers, screenwriters and directors of vampire-themed pepla, it’s not possible to establish if the films were intentionally conceived **as vehicles for a specific left-wing or right-wing ideology**. What’s certain is that they succeeded in their aim of appearing politically innocuous, or ambiguous, enough to be left alone by state censorship and start making money at the box office (see Chapter 3), which was probably the main concern for most of the people involved in their making.<sup>6</sup>

### **After the Sessantotto**

If horror parody *Tempi duri per i vampiri* and the early-1960s vampire-themed Gothic horrors and pepla were, at best, timidly politicised, bringing to the fore “a desperation related to the present but often expressed through the disguise of the past” (Curti, 2011: 8), Italian vampire cinema from the 1970s tackled then-current political and socio-economic issues more directly, adopting a prevalently-contemporary setting, and openly and abundantly referencing Marx and trendy Marxist thinkers of the day. As for the latter characteristic, the main sources of inspiration were the writings of world-renowned foreign intellectuals like critical theorist Herbert Marcuse, although post-war Italy had its very own Marxist tradition of ferocious critique of consumer capitalism (as we shall see below, the most famous representative of

such tradition, Pier Paolo Pasolini, made use of the vampire metaphor in a 1968 article indicting the infectiousness of bourgeois conformism). The 1970s politicisation of the vampire subgenre is the result of two factors: on the one hand, we have the end of the most acute phase of the Cold War in Italy, sanctioned by Tambroni's resignation in summer 1960 and the official alliance between Christian Democrats and Socialists in late 1963; on the other hand, we have a new political conscience developed by students and workers facing the inequalities and distortions brought about by the ungoverned 1958-1963 'boom' and the post-1963 failure of the reformist program of the centre-left coalition. The second factor deserves in-depth contextualisation, as the vampire movies analysed in this subsection – ...*Hanno cambiato faccia*, *La corta notte delle bambole di vetro*, *Il prato macchiato di rosso*, *L'uomo che uccideva a sangue freddo*, *Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!* and *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* – were all made in the aftermath of the anti-establishment student protests of 1968 and the 1969-1970 *autunno caldo* ('hot autumn'), when the student movement joined forces with exploited factory workers, leading to an unprecedented mass-revolt against the capitalist class and the parties of parliamentary politics that would last until the late 1970s.

1968 is unanimously considered a crucial year for anti-authoritarian protests all over the world. In Italy – just like in the US, in France, in West Germany and in many other countries outside the Western bloc – the rebellion was initiated and led by the urban youth, and especially involved a mass-movement of students in their mid-to-late teens and early twenties (even before the Italian government extended compulsory education to fourteen years of age in 1962, the Italian youth was accessing secondary education *en masse*, going from the 500,000 junior-high-school students of 1947 to the 900,000 of 1955 and the 1.6 million of late 1961, while university students went from the 268,000 of 1960 to the over 450,000 of 1968) (Ginsborg, 1990; Crainz, 2005a). As it has been remarked by many historians, youth protests in Italy didn't come out of the blue. Rather, they were the virulent

radicalisation of a generational clash and discontent with the status quo that first became apparent in 1958, when groups of university students occupied some faculties in Naples to demonstrate against state examinations, overcrowded classrooms and the professors' lack of commitment to their educational mission (Crainz, 2005a). The small-scale Naples uprising was easily repressed by the local authorities, but it provided the blueprint for students of other cities to follow: from 1962 onwards, high-school and university students would periodically occupy public buildings all over the country, mainly to ask for a reform of the Italian school system. Together with the post-war baby boom, the 1962 extension of compulsory education had in fact greatly increased the number of students undertaking, or wishing to undertake, secondary and tertiary education, but did nothing to modernise curricula, hire more teaching personnel and improve infrastructures (Crainz, 2005b). Moreover, it's not to be forgotten that many high-school and university students (most of them of middle-class extraction) had already played a major role in the violent anti-Tambroni/pro-workers protests of summer 1960: so much for Alfassio Grimaldi & Bertoni's (1964) idea that the consumerist ideology of the 'economic miracle' made young Italians into self-centred, atomised, docile individuals interested only in achieving the car-marriage-job status symbols.

From the anti-Fascist revival of the early 1960s to the mid-1960s anti-US-imperialism demonstrations, Italian students and, more in general, young Italians contesting the capitalist status quo from a variety of ideological stances – from traditional Marxism to libertarian anarchism – were given a series of nicknames by the national press: *giovani dalle magliette a strisce* ('striped-shirt youngsters'), beatniks, *capelloni* ('long-haired'), hippies, provos, and so on. As shown by Balestrini & Moroni (1988) and Crainz (2005a; b), the tone of most newspaper articles dealing with the rebellious youth of the early-to-mid-1960s oscillated between paternalism (the parliamentary left-wing) and the certainty that the protests were just a subcultural phenomenon involving small groups of anti-social misfits, a passing fad that – like worker protests – could easily be brought to an end by the police and the army (the centre

and the extreme right-wing). It's with the beginning of academic year 1967-1968 that fear started spreading among the older generations.

The now-famous Italian *Sessantotto* ('1968 rebellion') actually started in November 1967, with about a thousand students occupying the Università Cattolica in Milan. As happened in Naples in 1958, the Milanese students adopted the weapon of occupation to attract media attention, and put forward very basic, practical demands relating to the reduction in economic, class and bureaucratic barriers preventing access to higher education (*in primis*, the reduction of university fees), the opening of new facilities, more up-to-date curricula, more commitment on the part of the professors, right of student assembly and student participation to the 'academic Senate'. In autumn 1967, the Italian Parliament was indeed discussing a reform of the university system, but the debate basically focused on the single issue of allowing the "university barons" to keep on being lavishly-paid, absentee employees – a privilege that was of course granted, since many members of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate had a parallel career as university professors (Crainz, 2005b: 222-223). Given the indifference of state institutions, the student revolt grew bigger and bigger, expanding from the Università Cattolica in Milan to the universities and high schools of Turin, Trento, Rome, Naples, Florence, Pisa, Pavia, Bologna, Genova, Cagliari, Palermo, and many more. Most crucially, it took on more general connotations, becoming a protest against the whole of Italian post-war society, a sort of public trial against the political caste, the police, the army, the magistrature, state- or party-controlled media, the institution of the family and the Catholic church, all perceived as 'fascist', i.e. old, self-interested and repressively authoritarian.

Contextually, as the government decided to ignore the students' demands and treat protests as a problem of public order requiring firm military interventions and exemplary convictions by judges, the Italian youth abandoned the non-violent forms of dissent of the early 1960s, as demonstrated by 'the battle of Valle Giulia' on March 1<sup>st</sup> 1968, after which

crash-helmets, stones, bats and Molotov cocktails became fundamental instruments of ‘self-defense’ for protesters during public demonstrations (Balestrini & Moroni, 1988; Ginsborg, 1990). Following the idealistic thrust of both the Parisian student protests of May 1968 and the US countercultural movement of the mid-1960s (as codified and somewhat rationalised by Marcuse), the main slogans of the *Sessantotto* became ‘Vietato vietare’ (‘It’s forbidden to forbid’) and ‘L’immaginazione al potere’ (‘Power to the imagination’). The most immediate result of the ideological and physical battles that took place in 1968 Italy was the approval of law 910 of December 11<sup>th</sup> 1969, granting all students in possession of a high-school degree access to university education. Yet, the biggest achievement of the student movement was the creation of a united front with the urban working class (especially the unskilled and semi-skilled migrant workers living in Turin, Milan and respective suburbs), an ‘army’ of young and middle-aged factory workers exasperated by exploitation and the unfulfilled promises of the 1963-1968 centre-left governments.

As we have previously seen, the ‘economic miracle’ came to a halt with the *congiuntura* of summer 1963, when the increase in workers’ salaries significantly exceeded the increase in productivity. Ever since the immediate post-war, workers’ unrest was rife in Italian cities and countryside, but the Christian Democrats – committed to protecting the interests of big landlords and industrialists against the ‘red threat’ – always managed to repress it, in blood more often than not, to the point that even the most moderate Catholic unionists of the 1960s were forced to admit that, in matters of employment and class relations, the Christian-Democracy-run Republic had until then been “more a state of police than a state of law” (Crainz, 2005b: 181). It was only with the fall of Tambroni’s government and the first talks of a centre-left alliance that union activities could gain momentum and become effective, leading to the aforementioned wage rises. The monetisation of exploitation and hazardous working conditions, however, wasn’t enough for the workers: having grown exponentially from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, the urban working class was becoming

more and more conscious of its strength and bargaining power, and less and less prone to be ruled by the traditional Catholic or left-wing unions, which were increasingly deemed to be too lax and aligned with the conservative powers that be. In particular, the thousands of young, unskilled or semi-skilled workers who had recently emigrated from impoverished rural areas of the South to the big cities of the Centre-North showed signs of extreme radicalisation, violently clashing with the representatives of the status quo, be it the police, the army, union officials and even left-wing politicians, as best exemplified by the July-1962 events of Piazza Statuto in Turin (Balestrini & Moroni, 1988; Crainz, 2005b). After the end of the ‘boom’, the emergency deflationist policies and the investment strike enacted by the capitalist class produced the usual consequences (“Unemployment rose, with women being the first to lose their jobs”) (Ginsborg, 1990: 275), but the formation of the first centre-left government in late 1963 ‘froze’ the workers’ struggles, as the 1961-1962 negotiations between the Christian Democrats and the Left had led to the formulation of an “ambitious program” of “structural reforms” – an uncanny embrace of capitalism and Socialism for “the economic and political integration of the lower classes into the nation-state” (Ibid.: 266) that galvanised the hopes of both the blue-collar proletariat and the white-collar lower middle class.

The season of reformism under the aegis of Christian Democrats and Socialists soon proved to be utopia: as mentioned in the previous subsection, no significant action was ever taken to increase public spending, fight tax evasion and protect the workforce from labour abuses. Basically, by July 1964, when anti-Communist army general Giovanni De Lorenzo might or might not have threatened the republican institutions with a military coup, any project of serious reform in favour of the working class and the underprivileged was shelved indefinitely, as in the post-*congiuntura* period of economic crisis the government’s priority became bringing the capitalist class’ profits back to the levels of the ‘boom’ years. The centre-left, then, survived as a mere instrument for the involved political parties to maintain power, and the centrist-Socialist governments that ruled Italy until June 1968 were characterised by

“sterile immobilism and irresponsibly-wasted time” (Silvio Lanaro, quoted in Crainz, 2005a: 240).

In the second half of the 1960s, state organs largely limited themselves to lamenting the critical state of the country. For instance, according to the Ministry of Labour, in 1966 “the average net salary received by industry workers is 70,000 lire per month”, while the Italian Institute of Statistics calculated that, in the same period, “the minimum expenses for basic survival of the average nuclear family reach 100,000 lire per month”. Indeed, ever since late 1964 Doxa polls had been revealing that – having to face the “working-hour curtailments” (read: faster working rhythms for less salary) and “layoffs” enforced by industrialists all over the country to compensate for the increased cost of labour – “22.7% of Italian families” were in debt (Crainz, 2005b: 17). Meanwhile, the Bank of Italy estimated that the legal exportation of capital from Italy to foreign countries went “from the 336 million dollars of 1963 to the 3.4 billion of 1969” (as for the illegal exportation of Italian currency to Switzerland, the figures are unofficial, but “far superior”) (Ibid.: 38). In such a situation, with rampant inflation rapidly eroding the salary rises of 1960-1963, it was the fear of relapsing into pre-‘boom’ poverty that prevented the working class from reprising the early-1960s class struggle, as noted in 1965 by the prefect of Turin, who wrote with some satisfaction to the Ministry of the Interior that strikes generally tended to fail after 1964 because “workers are in fear of losing their job in this moment of economic crisis” (quoted in Crainz, 2005b: 48). From the opposite side of the ideological spectrum, at the inception of the *Sessantotto*, Marxist intellectual Pasolini (1979: 39) provided the same diagnosis and used the vampire metaphor to warn against the post-*congiuntura* season of proletarian conformism and retreat into the private sphere, indicting it as a ‘embourgeoisement’ of the working class:

When I say ‘bourgeoisie’ I mean [...] a veritable disease, [...] so contagious that it has infected all those who try to fight it: Northern workers, migrant workers from the South, the bourgeois of the opposition, the lone opposers like myself. The bourgeois – this is said in wit – is a vampire who can’t rest until he has bitten his victim on the



neck, for the sheer satisfaction of seeing people become pale, sad, ugly, devitalised, twisted, corrupted, anxious, guilt-ridden, calculating, aggressive, terroristic, like himself.

It took the anti-establishment youth rebellion of 1968 to rekindle the students-workers alliance first established during the anti-Tambroni revolts of summer 1960, and to reignite the mass-protests of the exploited working class. Students would occasionally join factory workers' strikes throughout the early 1960s, but it was during the big strike at Turin's FIAT factories in spring 1968 that the slogan 'Studenti e operai uniti nella lotta' ('Students and workers united in the struggle') first appeared (Crainz, 2005b). The Italian youth's demystification of the university system as "an unproductive storage of reserve labor" (Righi, 2011: 111) had in fact been so radical that the students didn't see academic institutions as central anymore for the future of the country and preferred to 'go to the people' in order to revolutionise capitalist society as a whole, starting from factories and urban peripheries. To do so, the student movement fragmented into several factions and the first extraparliamentary left-wing groups were formed in 1968-1969 (Potere operaio, Lotta continua, and so on), aiming to take the class struggle out of the hands of the Italian Socialist Party, the Italian Communist Party and the unions, which were accused of being traitors happily integrated in the "bourgeois power-machine" of parliamentary politics, yet another counterrevolutionary weapon of repression in the "capitalist arsenal" (Lotta continua, 1970: 1).

When, in 1968-1969, employment and productivity figures began to rise again in the automobile and electric-appliances factories of Northern Italy, prompting the press to speak of another upcoming 'boom' after the 1963 *congiuntura*, the worker-student front didn't simply ask for salary raises. Instead, it demanded the thorough subversion of class relations: the long, grinding hours of labour at the assembly line were denounced as alienating; the distinction between white- and blue-collar workers was indicted as the most effective instrument for capitalists to dilute class struggle 'from the inside'; the needs for forming grass-roots factory

soviets and disengaging salary increases from productivity levels were stressed. Here, a rhetoric freely mixing Marx, Lenin, Che Guevara and Mao was accompanied by spontaneous, unannounced mass-strikes, absenteeism, occupations, acts of sabotage, violent picketing against scabs/foremen/managers, blockings of motorways and train stations, and guerrilla-warfare-like clashes with the police. Southern Italy quickly became a battleground as well, in both rural areas and urban centres, as shown most blatantly by the massacre of Avola (December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1969) and the popular revolts of Battipaglia (April 9<sup>th</sup> 1969) and Reggio Calabria (July 1970-February 1971) (Ginsborg, 1990; Crainz, 2005b).

Nation-wide disorders were accelerated by the Turinese and Milanese factories' *autunno caldo* of 1969-1970, which coincided with the beginning of a period of state-colluded right-wing terrorism falsely attributed to the extraparliamentary left-wing (the so-called *strategia della tensione*, or 'strategy of tension', inaugurated by a Milan bombing on December 12<sup>th</sup> 1969). Social unrest lasted until the end of the 1970s, because any salary rise was to be immediately nullified by an inflation left largely unchallenged by the post-1968 governments, especially following the devaluation of lira, the rampant growth in public debt and the 1973-1974 austerity connected to the 1971 international monetary crisis and the 1973 oil crisis (Ginsborg, 1990). It's in this situation of permanent conflict – further exacerbated by the anti-state/anti-capitalist terrorist activities of ultra-left-wing groups – that Italian vampire cinema production reprised after an almost five-year hiatus, more politicised than ever, with the indictment of the status quo going hand in hand with an apocalyptic stance that sees true, revolutionary change as unachievable.

A hotbed for worker and student protests from the 1962 events of Piazza Statuto to the 1968 university occupations and the 1969-1970 *autunno caldo*, Turin was also the city in which ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* – the first explicitly-political declination of the vampire metaphor in 1970s Italian genre cinema – was conceived. Born in 1939 in Turin, where he got his university diploma in law in the early 1960s, ...*Hanno cambiato faccia*'s writer and

director Corrado Farina was ‘too old’ to be involved with the 1968 student movement, while his wealthy-bourgeois background estranged him from 1960s-1970s workers’ struggles and left-wing political militancy. The genesis of his vampire-themed feature-film debut is therefore to be linked to his post-graduation working experiences in the tertiary sector. In 1963, Farina started working for one of the biggest advertising agencies in Italy, Armando Testa’s, writing and directing commercials aired on Italian State Television or screened in cinemas. In the second half of the 1960s, **the movie *I’ll Never Forget What’s isname* (Michael Winner, 1967)** and the reading of by-then countercultural classics like Vance Packard’s 1957 *The Hidden Persuaders* and Marcuse’s 1955 *Eros and Civilisation. A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* and 1964 *One-Dimensional Man* (first translated into Italian in 1958, 1964 and 1967 respectively) precipitated an existential crisis for Farina, who increasingly felt uneasy about his daily work concerned with the profit-bent manipulation of consumers’ conscience. As a result, between 1966 and 1969, while he was still living in Turin and considering to quit his job in advertising and move with his wife and children to Rome to make a name for himself in the film industry, Farina authored a comic-strip titled *Il Grande Persuasore* (‘The Great Persuader’), which satirised his own profession and bosses, and drafted the first treatment for **a modern-Italy-set retelling of Stoker’s *Dracula*** that was to become ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* (Appendix B; Farina, 2016).<sup>7</sup> The shoestring-budget nature of ...*Hanno cambiato faccia*, financed by some members of the artistic and technical cast united in a cooperative, has been described in Chapter 3. What’s crucial, here, is to investigate how **the film conjugates the Gothic paraphernalia of Hammer’s late-19<sup>th</sup>-century/early-20<sup>th</sup>-century-set *Dracula*, *The Brides of Dracula*, *Dracula: Prince of Darkness*, *Dracula Has Risen from the Grave*, *Taste the Blood of Dracula* and *Scars of Dracula*** with a countercultural stance on post-war consumer capitalism, thereby adapting mostly-Anglophone narrative and theoretical traditions to the post-*Sessantotto* Italian situation as filtered through Farina’s own personal experiences.

Written, shot and released during a period in which the Italian working class reached its numerical apogee (42% of the working population, according to the 1971 census) and its highest level of radicalisation (in 1969 the unprecedented and hitherto-unsurpassed number of 232 million hours of strike was recorded) (Crainz, 2005b), ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* focuses on the trials and tribulations of white-collar rather than blue-collar labour, thematising the anti-authoritarian revolt of Alberto Valle, a thirty-something university-degree-holder with an expertise in advertising, like Farina himself. One day Valle, a low-rank employee of heavy-industry colossus Auto Avio Motors, is sent by his bosses on a business trip to a remote villa in the Piedmontese countryside, in order to meet the owner of Auto Avio Motors, Ingegnere Giovanni Nosferatu. The trip to Ingegnere Nosferatu's villa is clearly meant to mirror Jonathan Harker's trip to castle Dracula from the 1897 novel (not coincidentally, Valle's direct superior at the factory is called Harker), but the vampire of ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* shares more similarities with the owner of FIAT, Avvocato Giovanni Agnelli, than with Stoker's Count: both Giovanni Nosferatu and Giovanni Agnelli are white-haired captains of industry walking around with a cane; they both are formally outside the world of parliamentary politics and yet they control it via economic pressures and the mass-media they own. "The leaders act under my control..." and "I own the newspapers, I own the police...", says Ingegnere Nosferatu to Valle – an innuendo to Agnelli's ownership of newspaper *La Stampa* and ties with the various post-war governments, whose pro-capitalist-class measures in matters of state financing to private industry, taxation of high incomes and repression of worker protests have been previously outlined.<sup>8</sup> This basic equivalence, which Farina (2016) has always claimed to be unintentional/unconscious, tinges the film with paranoidly-conspiratorial connotations:

Ingegnere Giovanni Nosferatu is not simply a master, a man who has power. Rather, he is [...] 'the master of the masters'. He sucks the blood of everybody, to keep alive [...] a structure of power, a system, an organism that is not made of flesh. Ingegnere Nosferatu is [...] 'the master of all the villains', and it is not by chance that actor

Adolfo Celi was cast in the role, since he had already played a supervillain in *Thunderball* (Terence Young, 1965) and *Diabolik / Danger: Diabolik* (Mario Bava, 1967) (Appendix B).

Secluded in an isolated villa, his existence ignored by the vast majority of his employees, 170-year-old Ingegnere Nosferatu incarnates a “secret power” (Ibid.), a ‘great puppeteer’ that allows Farina to update Stoker’s Victorian-era classic with Marcuse’s indictment of “the destructive power and repressive function of the [post-war] affluent society”, which

exact[s] the overwhelming need for the production and consumption of waste; the need for stupefying work where it is no longer a real necessity; the need for modes of relaxation which soothe and prolong this stupefication; the need for maintaining such deceptive liberties as free competition at administered prices, a free press which censors itself, free choice between brands and gadgets (1968: 7).

While writing that the “totalitarian tendencies of the one-dimensional society render the traditional ways and means of protest ineffective – perhaps even dangerous because they preserve the illusion of popular sovereignty” (Ibid.: 256), the German-American critical theorist still provides a glimmer of hope in that he believes in the existence of truly-revolutionary forces able to “explode the society” (Ibid.: xv), namely “the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and the persecuted of other races and other colors, the unemployed and the unemployable” (Ibid.: 256). In appropriating and reworking Marcuse’s thought, however, Farina focused on the apocalyptic side only. In particular, the Italian screenwriter and director seized upon one concept – “beat ways of life [...] are no longer contradictory to the status quo [...]. They are rather [...] its harmless negation, [...] quickly digested by the status quo as part of its healthy diet” (Ibid.: 14) – and made it the narrative backbone of his film. Indeed, through two intertwined plotlines, ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* revolves around the idea of a system of power so strong and all-pervasive that it’s able to co-opt and reabsorb even the most violent, visceral, genuine forms of youthful rebellion.

In the main plotline, Valle visits Ingegnere Nosferatu's lair and, upon discovering that his host is using the sexual commodification of the human body, hallucinogenic drugs and the most modern, psychoanalysis-derived techniques of mind conditioning on a mass-scale to control people's life from cradle to casket, shoots the capitalist vampire and runs away from the villa.<sup>9</sup> In the downbeat ending, though, Valle realises that waging war against somebody who owns the whole of society (the government, the opposition, state bureaucracy, the police, the army, the banks, the means of production and circulation of goods, the high-ranks of the Catholic church, the media, left-wing, right-wing and even feminist intellectuals) is futile, so he returns prodigal-son-like to 'father' Ingegnere Nosferatu and accepts becoming one of his henchmen: the last shot of the film is a freeze frame of Valle shaking the vampire's hand, superimposed with the caption "nowadays terror is called technology - h. marcuse".<sup>10</sup> In the secondary plotline, we follow the destiny of Laura, a free-spirited hippy girl who aimlessly roams the countryside bare-breasted in order to scandalise repressed petty bourgeois like Valle. In her case, too, the encounter with Ingegnere Nosferatu spells the end of her youthful rebellion and quest for freedom: bitten on the neck by the vampire and offered a job as the head secretary of a big company, she sells out her ideals for "a quiet, serene life, maybe a husband, sons, economic security". It's precisely upon meeting the newly-vampirised Laura – brainwashed into bourgeois conformism and sporting tied hair, a black formal dress with matching gloves and an elegant green coat instead of her usual free-waiving hair, red trousers and hippy-style jacket – that Valle abandons all hopes and resigns to serve Ingegnere Nosferatu.

A few months before bleak tale of blue-collar alienation *La classe operaia va in paradiso / Lulu the Tool* (Elio Petri, 1971) won the Grand Prix for Best Film at Cannes Film Festival 1972 and the most important film-related Italian prizes, white-collar parable ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* was awarded the Golden Leopard for Best Debut Film at Locarno Film Festival 1971. However, in its country of production, Farina's movie had little circulation,

made no money at the box office (see Chapter 3) and was bashed by critics, except for a couple of laudatory reviews (Laura, 1971; Carnazzi, 1972; Giacci, 1973). Left-wing intellectuals were particularly harsh with ...*Hanno cambiato faccia*, labelling it as “reactionary” because the film’s analysis of “the complex structure of capitalism and the consumer society” is reduced to a “schematically-narrow” and “exasperated Manichaeism [...] typical of those who don’t intend to denounce a situation in order to transform it, but simply to contemplate it, consciously or unconsciously, in its immobility” and immutability (Peruzzi, 1972: 216-218).<sup>11</sup> Notwithstanding the Italian left-wing film press’ calls for works promoting an optimistic determination to fight the system, the impotent resignation to the ruling capitalist class’ *trasformismo* – i.e. the ability of those in power to adjust to political, socio-economic and cultural changes, co-opt revolutionary ferments and preserve the status quo – soon proved to be the dominant political mood of the 1970s Italian ventures into vampire narratives, as shown by another debut film released in 1971, *La corta notte delle bambole di vetro*, and by the 1973 releases *Il prato macchiato di rosso* and *L’uomo che uccideva a sangue freddo*.

“We make no distinction between the past and the present...”, a vampire’s minion tells Valle, who then quickly realises that “Myths don’t die, they mutate. You have changed your faces, but you keep sucking the blood of the people!”. *La corta notte delle bambole di vetro* shares this very premise, merely transposing it from post-*Sessantotto* Italy to post-1968 Prague, where decrepit aristocrats from the Austro-Hungarian-empire era and the Communist regime’s middle-aged politicians, bureaucrats, artists and esteemed professionals from science and academia join forces to perpetuate their existence through orgiastic satanic rituals culminating in blood sacrifices of young people: “We are the force of the past...”, *La corta notte delle bambole di vetro*’s vampires explain, “We will hold the reins of power in the world as long as there are people willing to be killed, to shed their blood, and nothing must ever change. Our only enemies are people with a free-thinking mind and an awakened

consciousness, so we don't tolerate any rebellion... We need the young to keep ourselves alive. They must become like us, they must think like us. And those who refuse are put to sleep!". Evidently, the climate of conspiratorial paranoia – a must for Italian auteur cinema and Italian genre cinema of all kinds after the beginning of the *strategia della tensione* in December 1969 (Bisoni, 2014) – is the same one that pervades ...*Hanno cambiato faccia*, as both films thematise the secret power of vampires pulling the strings of common people's existence from behind the scenes, unseen. However, contrary to Farina, *La corta notte delle bambole di vetro*'s screenwriter and director Aldo Lado privileged the narrative tropes of the newly-discovered giallo *filone* over Stoker's Gothic classic, as attested by the fact that, for the sake of verisimilitude, the screenplay's supernatural scene in which old dignitaries rejuvenate during the blood sacrifice of a girl (Lado & von Spiels, 1971) never made it into the final film.

*La corta notte delle bambole di vetro* opens with the mysterious disappearance of twenty-year-old Mira Sherkova, the Czechoslovakian girlfriend of Gregory Moore, an American journalist in his late thirties temporarily working in Prague as a foreign correspondent. Following the Dario-Argento tradition, the 'stranger in a strange land' starts his own private investigation, which leads him to link the disappearance of Mira and several other Czechoslovakian girls to an association of chamber-music lovers, stamp collectors, entomologists and chess players called Klub 99, where "a toothless nobility, some politicians, some rich guys with nothing to do and a bunch of tedious, illustrious professionals" gather to "bore themselves to death". Behind this apparently harmless, respectable façade lurks the vampiric conspiracy described above, and when Gregory discovers the truth, the Klub 99 members – "the greatest personalities in Europe" – use their socio-economic and political influence to prevent him from 'blowing the whistle'. Gregory is first reduced to a cataleptic state, then stabbed to death, and the vampire villains, who in the screenplay boast to be undefeatable since they are "as old as the world itself" (Ibid.), triumph: yet another downbeat



ending after ...*Hanno cambiato faccia*, all the more defeatist in that Gregory's catalepsy is meant to convey the ultimate impotence of the new generations and the futility of resistance against "the force of the past".

As in the case of Farina, Lado felt very much disconnected from the political and generational struggles of 1960s Italy: born in Venice in 1934, he spent most of the 1960s in Paris, studying at the Sorbonne and working as an assistant director in Italo-French co-productions. Moreover, upon his return to Italy in 1967, he "wasn't that young anymore", which prevented him from taking an active part in the youthful rebellion building up at that time (Lado, quoted in Švábenický, 2014: 21). Yet, the student years in the Paris of "Sartre, the great *chansonniers* and the avant-garde painters" made it easier for him to understand, if only as an outsider, "the political situation and the generational clashes" of the end of the decade (Ibid.). With the aim to make money but at the same time "imbued with left-wing ideology" (Ibid.: 27), Lado teamed up with producer Enzo Doria (by then a veteran of 'young' Italian auteur cinema, having produced the debut works of Marco Bellocchio, Salvatore Samperi and Silvano Agosti ever since 1965) to make a film indicting not this or that specific regime of the Eastern or Western bloc, "but, more widely, the power system that ruled, and still rules, the whole world [...] us[ing] the blood of the young, like a vampire" (Ibid.: 37). Indeed, the Klub 99 is said to "have branches in Paris, London, New York, Tokyo, everywhere" – a planetary perspective that cleverly blends the countercultural indictment of technocracy as a form of totalitarianism encompassing Left/Right dichotomies (Marcuse, 1968; 1969; Roszak, 1969) with the necessity of crafting a universally-understandable, internationally-sellable genre product.

The result is a pessimism that takes no prisoners: those in power are evil, corrupted and corrupting, with no ideology/interest other than their self-preservation/self-perpetuation; the youths either capitulate to the ruling class' promises of "wealth and sex" and are 'assimilated', or rebel only to be easily "put to sleep" like Mira. The narrative design, as the

Italian left-wing film critics of the time would have had it, is strictly Manichaeic, with invincible villains to be impotently hated and powerless victims to be pitied. Pity is also the feeling inspired by the third category of characters, that of the foreigners who hang around the Czechoslovakian capital as ‘tourists of the revolution’ after the Prague Spring of 1968. This category is twofold. Firstly, it includes young American hippies using their wealthy families’ money to live a bohemian life behind the Iron Curtain and shock ‘square’ people back home. Secondly, external observers include older men and women who, to quote a monologue of Gregory’s edited out from the finished film, “would like to become protagonists” and therefore “fight a little bit to understand the courage [...] of the younger generation”, but then find out it’s “too late” for them and must settle for the role of admiring “spectators” of anti-authoritarian struggles or, at worst, “accomplices” of the status quo (Lado & von Spiehs, 1971). Here, Gregory is talking about himself in a moment of mid-life crisis, but the discourse can be extended to his fellow-bourgeois, middle-aged friends and successful professionals Jacques, Jessica and Ivan, whose cynical, often self-mocking sense of humour barely manages to mask their mourning for having lost their youthful energy, rage and ideals, and having become useless to the revolution (like Gregory, Jacques ends up killed for discovering too much, while Jessica and Ivan go on being unaware pawns in the hands of the vampire rulers).

*Il prato macchiato di rosso* and *L’uomo che uccideva a sangue freddo* essentially follow the path opened up by ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* and *La corta notte delle bambole di vetro*, introducing, as a surplus attraction, the mad-scientist stereotype, in a mix of vampiric and Frankensteinian mythologies already seen in *I vampiri*, *Il mulino delle donne di pietra*, *L’orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock* and *Amanti d’oltretomba*. *Il prato macchiato di rosso*, whose screenplay bore the provisional title *Vampiro 2000* (Ghione, 1972), is the third and last feature directed by Riccardo Ghione, who started his career in the late 1940s working on independent newsreel projects with left-leaning filmmakers and screenwriters like Visconti, De Santis, Michelangelo Antonioni, Carlo Lizzani, Francesco Maselli, Marco Ferreri and

Cesare Zavattini (Curti, 2018). As in Ghione's two previous features – the Wilhelm-Reich-inspired erotic drama *La rivoluzione sessuale* (1968) and the 'hippy-go-lucky' thriller *A cuore freddo* (1971) – the central theme of *Il prato macchiato di rosso* is the tension between the *haute bourgeoisie's* reactionary traditionalism and the anti-authoritarian instances from both the academia and the various liberation movements of the 1960s. Specifically, Ghione's vampire story starts from Marx's indictment of the capitalist bourgeoisie as vampiric to build a countercultural hodgepodge of anti-Nazism/anti-Fascism, anti-imperialism and technophobia: the Genoveses, a money-hungry upper-class family from Northern Italy convinced of belonging to the *Übermensch* master race, use a black-caped robot to bleed dry social outcasts (“worthless beings like prostitutes, tramps, gipsies, vagabonds, [...] those who have no job, no family, no roots... those whom nobody mourns when they die...”) and then sell the purloined blood in war-ravaged countries “like Vietnam”, to people who can afford to pay “a price higher than that of oil and gold”. The vampire family consists of Antonio Genovese, a raving-mad scientist who likes to play God, and of his attractive wife Nina, whose lameness is meant to be a physical mark of sexual perversion, indulging as she is in an incestuous relationship with her brother Alfiero, a man who likes to dress in Nazi uniform and joke about the body-cremations taking place in the Genoveses' bread oven.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, Alain Jessua's Italo-French co-production *L'uomo che uccideva a sangue freddo* is centred around mad scientist Doctor Devilers, a social Darwinist who, in exchange for money, keeps French industrialists, bankers, magistrates, politicians and intellectuals young thanks to the blood and organs of destitute immigrants from the clerico-Fascist dictatorships of Portugal and Spain (the *bel paese* is never mentioned as a 'blood reserve' but, as noted by a then-contemporary Italian reviewer, given Italy's huge internal and external migratory fluxes throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, the 'Italian connection' is at the very least implied) (Lucato, 1973). In Doctor Deviler's own words, his clinic-cum-seaside-resort is “a miniature of our society”, where solidarity is based only on power affinities and the

stronger ones who “have fought and won” for themselves a “privileged position” in life have the right to “take advantage” of the weaker. Consequently, in the film’s climax, Doctor Devilers urges one of his guilt-ridden wealthy patients (and, by extension, the spectator) to abandon all hypocrisies and have the guts to contemplate a dead Portuguese boy hanging from a meat-hook in the cold-store of a hyper-technological laboratory, the poor immigrant’s torso slashed open and devoid of organs.

For all the above vitriolic socio-political critique often bordering class-hate, *Il prato macchiato di rosso* and *L'uomo che uccideva a sangue freddo* once again end on a downbeat note, just like Farina’s and Lado’s vampire-themed *engagé* parables. In *L'uomo che uccideva a sangue freddo*, Doctor Devilers is stabbed to death by a middle-aged businesswoman who refuses to rejuvenate at the expenses of destitute migrant labourers, but a twist-ending has the soft-hearted bourgeois charged with voluntary manslaughter and the clinic’s bloody business go on as usual, under the direction of another doctor. “We’ll always need foreign workers here. They are indispensable to us!”, the police commissioner concludes while driving the heroine to her imprisonment, thereby revealing that the upper-class vampires’ conspiracy is so rooted into the control rooms of society that it’s ultimately undefeatable. Then, the samba *Paraíso de pobre* (‘Paradise of the poor’) accompanies the end-credits sequence, which shows a new ‘cargo’ of migrant workers, smiling and full of hopes for a better future, being carried by truck to the slaughterhouse-clinic.

Although in a far less apocalyptic mood, *Il prato macchiato di rosso*’s ostensibly-happy ending also exudes bitter irony, impotence and defeatism. Firstly, the ultimate triumph of the reactionary, capitalist villains is prevented only by the police force that the outcasts of society victimised by the Genoveses have always hated so much. Secondly, upon being rescued at the very last-minute by the authorities, the two young protagonists – a hippy couple of bourgeois extraction (he a scholarship-owning American student; she the daughter of a wealthy Italian goldsmith) – hit the road and disappear into a meadow lush with flowers,

suggesting that their dreams of freedom are a utopia for which there's no space in the industrial society of today. Such an ending, combined with the film's characterisation of the two hippies as sympathetic but passive, perpetually-stupefied simpletons, childish pleasure-seekers unprepared to face the threats of the real world, definitely resonates with Roszak's (1969: 32-39) indictment of the progressive "'adolescentization' of dissenting thought and culture" over the course of the 1960s, i.e. the transformation of youthful rebellion against the authoritarian, technocratic society into a fashionable lifestyle based on the pursuit of "unrestricted joy", a "carefree drifting" that is "much more a flight *from* than *toward*".<sup>13</sup>

Within the framework of politicised Italian vampire cinema from the early 1970s, dominated as we have so far seen by feelings of impotence and defeatism in the face of the ruling/capitalist class' *trasformismo*, Paul Morrissey's comedy/horror hybrid *Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!* seemingly stands out as an exception. This is because its plot, by all appearances set in the 1930s, revolves around Count Dracula's failure to move on with the times and consequent gory demise at the hands of a Marxist peasant "who eventually makes a revolution and becomes the new master of the house" (Curti, 2017b: 118). Having run out of female virgins in his ancestral Transylvanian domain, an aging, sickly Count Dracula is convinced by his servant Anton to move to Italy, where, given the age-long influence of the "Holy Mother Church" on the population, there should be no shortage of virgin girls of marriageable age to feed on. Moreover, Anton adds, Italians are the kind of people who are "impressed" by nobility titles and, by implication, deferential to social superiors. The *bel paese*'s reality, though, soon proves to be different from the villains' expectations: the Catholic prohibition of premarital sex isn't observed that scrupulously by the Italian youth anymore, and an egalitarian, anti-aristocratic ideology has begun to spread among the lower classes. Enter Mario Balato, a young peasant employed as a handyman by the impoverished, debt-ridden Marquises Di Fiore. Living in a cottage adorned with a red hammer-and-sickle graffiti and calling himself a "worker", not a "servant", Mario spends his

free time reading left-wing pamphlets, waiting for another revolution “just like Russia” that would wipe out “the rich scum” and bring about a classless society in which toil and wealth are equally distributed among citizens. At the same time, the radicalised handyman offers sexual services to twenty-year-old Safiria and Rubinia, two of the four daughters of the Marquises’, and vainly tries to convince the girls during coitus that “the only hope for the future is in Socialism”. Upon realising that the Transylvanian Count seeking a virgin bride among the Marquises’ daughters is a vampire, Mario wastes no time and, obeying the insurrectionary Marxist slogan inviting proletarians to use their working tools as weapons, grabs his axe, chops off Dracula’s limbs one by one, and finally stakes him. The film ends with a shot of Mario and Perla, the Marquises’ fourteen-year-old daughter whom Mario had previously raped to prevent her from raising Dracula’s appetite: the young Communist seizes upon the teenage aristocrat, leads her into the family manor and shuts the door – the death of the Marquise (stabbed by Anton) and the absence of the Marquis (an inveterate gambler spending most of his time in London casinos) turning Mario from employee into first-in-command.

If *Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!*’s peasant revolution only ‘seemingly’ constitutes an exception to 1970s Italian vampire cinema’s pessimism about the possibility of subverting the status quo, it’s because – contrary to Farina, Lado, Ghione and Jessua – Morrissey is unsympathetic to left-wing ideology, famously labelling the post-war Italian filmmakers “talk[ing] very seriously about how wonderful communism will be” as “silly” (1974: 27). As a matter of fact, at closer inspection, the film doesn’t only ridicule the hypocrisy and moral bankruptcy of the withering aristocratic class desperately thirsting for new blood (Dracula, using his socio-economic capital to buy himself nourishment and calling it a marriage) and new money (the Marquises Di Fiore, willing to sell their own daughters no-questions-asked, if the price is reasonable and the buyer has the right social background), but also indicts the revolutionary ideals incarnated by the working-class hero. That Mario’s

Marxist promise of freedom is nothing but tyranny in disguise, and no less hypocritical than its historical predecessor feudalism, is made clear on numerous occasions. Firstly, peasant Mario's sexual behaviour is just as predatory as Count Dracula's, as shown by the brutality with which the young man treats his sexual partners. For instance, in one scene, "under his vaulted hammer and sickle, [Mario] slaps Rubinia and forces her to fellate him", his pleasure evidently coming from the slave-becoming-master erotic scenario. Not coincidentally, in an earlier scene, "Mario withdraws from raping [Safiria]" because her unexpected "confession of love" and request for an egalitarian relationship based on mutual affection kills his erection fuelled by fantasies of socio-sexual payback (Yacowar, 1993: 86). Secondly, Mario's selfless justification that he raped Perla because the loss of virginity would protect her from Dracula's attacks is satirised as "self-indulgent [...] rationalising": on the one hand, Mario expresses the desire to violate Perla well before the vampire's arrival to Italy; on the other, the deflowering of the teenage girl takes place under "a large tapestry" depicting a defenseless deer assaulted by a nobleman and his hounds, thereby "suggest[ing] that the Marxist is simply replacing one predatory politic with another" (Ibid.).

Shot in spring 1975 and domestically released in summer 1975, a couple of weeks after *Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!* finally had its Italian premiere after a two-year shelving (see Chapter 3), Lucio Fulci's horror parody *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* also brings to the screen an *émigré's* struggle for survival away from his ancestral homeland, and expresses scepticism about the coming of a true, revolutionary change in the order of things. As announced by its title, Fulci's movie revolves around a wealthy industrialist of Sicilian origins living in the Northern-Italy region of Lombardy – an extraneous, hostile environment to which he has to adapt in order to obtain a dominant position within the social arena. Given the narrative premises, it's not surprising that Palermo-born actor Lando Buzzanca was cast in the titular role. The character of the Sicilian who moves from his native island northward across the Italian peninsula to climb the

social ladder is in fact the *pièce de résistance* of Buzzanca's late-1960s and early-1970s repertoire, as testified by commercially-successful *commedie all'italiana* and sexy comedy/*commedia all'italiana* hybrids like *Don Giovanni in Sicilia / Don Juan in Sicily* (Alberto Lattuada, 1967), *Homo eroticus* (Marco Vicario, 1971), *Nonostante le apparenze... e purché la nazione non lo sappia... all'onorevole piacciono le donne / The Eroticist* (Lucio Fulci, 1972), *Il sindacalista* (Luciano Salce, 1972), *L'uccello migratore* (Stefano Vanzina as Steno, 1972), *Jus primae noctis* (Pasquale Festa Campanile, 1972) and *Il magnate* (Giovanni Grimaldi, 1973).<sup>14</sup> Specifically, just like Giovanni Percolla from 'boom'-years-set *Don Giovanni in Sicilia*, Ariberto da Ficulle from Middle-Ages-set *Jus primae noctis* and Furio Cicerone from austerity-years-set *Il magnate*, Costante Nicosia obtains an economic and social promotion through marriage. As explained at the beginning of the movie, in the mid-1960s petty bourgeois Nicosia moved from Sicily to Cantù, in the highly-industrialised Brianza zone of Lombardy, in search for speculation opportunities, and solved his economic problems by marrying Mariù Bosisio, the daughter of *commendator* Bosisio, a local industrialist. A "smart, swift guy" according to his fellow-businessmen, in exchange for the woman Nicosia built his father-in-law a toothpaste factory and, by the late 1960s, he became the new owner. *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* opens in 1975, about five years after the title character's successful geographical and socio-economic rise, and thematises the protagonist's adaptation anxieties triggered by the traumatic change of habitat.

As Fulci and his screenwriters take pains to establish, for Nicosia becoming a captain of industry has been less difficult a task than continuously having to carry out the duties connected to the newly-acquired social position. In fact, after taking over aging *commendator* Bosisio's place, the Sicilian entrepreneur has to fight on 'foreign' soil to be socially recognised not only as a *haut bourgeois*, but also as a thoroughbred Northerner. As for the first objective, the rules of the game are rather straightforward. In order to join the long-



established élite, the new rich must show his distance from necessity by acquiring all the luxury goods that are considered part of the *haute bourgeoisie*'s standard package: a variety of automobiles ranging from sport car to economy car, city apartments and countryside villas, house servants, artworks, antiques, purebred dogs, fur coats, jewels, club memberships, sport patronage, and young mistresses. Not lacking money, *parvenu* Nicosia happily obliges converting his economic capital into social and symbolic capital via conspicuous consumption, particularly distinguishing himself as the wasteful owner of a hopelessly-bad basketball team. Troubles arise when he tries to meet the second criterion for accessing the Brianza's upper crust – becoming a Northerner.

The impossibility for Nicosia to leave his Sicilianness behind is attested most blatantly by his uncertain command of the Brianza dialect, which results in a comic linguistic pastiche openly satirising the “anxious hyper-identification” that characterises “the ‘parvenus’ who presume to join the group of legitimate, i.e. hereditary, possessors of [a given status], without being the product of the same social conditions” (Bourdieu, 2010: 88). Another major obstacle to Nicosia's adaptation-integration is his morbid superstition connected to the folklore beliefs of his native island: no matter how hard he tries to conform to the demands of the technocratic, increasingly-secular high society of Northern Italy and play the role of the rational, 20<sup>th</sup>-century ‘enlightened’ bourgeois, the Sicilian magnate just can't help obsessively enacting a series of apotropaic magic rituals blending paganism with Christianity. As a result, in spite of a decade of business success ‘on the continent’, Nicosia still ranks among the dominated. On the one hand, for his Lombard fellow-*hauts-bourgeois*, he's nothing but a *terrone* (‘soil-eater’), i.e. an ignorant peasant from Southern Italy, no matter how rich. On the other hand, and most humiliatingly, he's the plaything of his own superstitious Sicilian relatives who, albeit economically and socially inferior to him, use the threat of *malocchio* (‘the evil eye’) to scare him into hiring them in managerial positions in his factory, even if they are vastly unqualified for the job – a privileging of the symbolic

blood ties of pre-capitalist “domestic economy” over the pragmatic rationalism of capitalism’s “economic economy” (Bourdieu, 1998: 92-112) if there ever was one. It will take a business trip to Romania and the contact with the highest social class of them all for aspiring *haut bourgeois* Nicosia to solve his adaptation problems and find his way to the top of the social pyramid.

Although the Italian heteronormative sexual mentality prevents Nicosia from approving of the Transylvanian nobility’s bisexual mores (see Chapter 4), during his trip to castle Dragulesku the Sicilian entrepreneur comes to admire his vampire host and take him as a role model: Count Dragulesku, too, is caught in a tangle of ancestral blood-and-soil bonds but, contrary to Nicosia, he masters them instead of being subjected to them – the aristocrat’s social and symbolic capital being so strong that it has survived both the October Revolution and the post-war Soviet occupation of Romania, as best exemplified by the fact that in Communist Transylvania Count Dragulesku still enjoys private property and nobility title, and his name keeps inspiring awe, fear and obedience among the population. Then, consciously or unconsciously, during a moment of drunken stupor aspiring *haut-bourgeois* dominator Nicosia lets himself be bitten on the neck and, upon his return to Italy, develops a thirst for blood to match his appetite for social power. For all his admiration for and desire to emulate the aristocrat, though, Nicosia soon finds out he can never become the Italian Count Dracula: nobility’s *privilegia* are a matter of “nature and essence”, i.e. inherited “by birth” (Bourdieu, 2010: 331). Indeed, all of the industrialist’s sexually-predatory attacks on unsuspecting victims miserably fail, making him the slave of a dominatrix prostitute and the laughing stock of an upper-class nymphomaniac, a gold-digging girl from the countryside and a rival businessman. Nicosia’s attempts at asserting his dominance on his employees by prolonging working shifts and increasing working rhythms are also a failure, because the workers grow so disgruntled with his arrogant ways and exploitative demands that they start to embrace the

extraparlimentary left-wing's ideology and to hinder the functioning of the factory. Yet, after this initial crisis, the vampire contagion turns out to be a blessing for the protagonist.

It's precisely the new condition of vampire that suggests Nicosia a way to reconcile the ancestral family ties and the diktats of modern capitalist production: since for the vampirised industrialist blood has become a basic necessity, he can treat it as a consumer goods, and apply the rational laws of economic economy to the symbol of pre-capitalist domestic economy. Therefore, he has an *autoemoteca* (a 'blood bank on wheels') installed in the courtyard of his toothpaste factory, granting his employees a salary bonus for every litre of blood they donate on Sundays. Having diversified his product-line to 'produce' blood for his own private consumption, Nicosia finally obtains a master role in socio-economic and familial relations. The introduction of the *autoemoteca* has in fact allowed him to increase both his socio-economic prestige in Lombardy (the well-rewarded employees-donors adore him and work harder than ever, the toothpaste business is booming, money is pouring, his fellow-businessmen envy him) and his symbolic credit within the Sicilian clan (he provides for all his Cefalù relatives, who now see him as a benevolent patriarch and are ready to literally give their blood for him). The bourgeois happy ending par excellence thus closes Nicosia's long and painful journey of adaptation and identity negotiation: contrary to the aristocratic vampire, condemned to sterility and an inexorable, if slow and golden, decline, the bloodsucking captain of industry becomes a father. A guarantor of the continuation of the blood lineage and a heir to an industrial empire, Nicosia and Mariù's male baby Costante junior has the privilege of being born a Northerner *haut bourgeois* already and, as shown in the next-to-last shot, endowed with a pair of sharp canines to prey on the weaker – in sum, all it takes to affirm his dominant position in the social arena without incurring in the trials and tribulations endured by Nicosia senior.

In stressing the importance of a halfway mediation between opposites, and in foreshadowing the rise of a 'carnivorous' middle class hungry for money and power, the

ending of *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* – the last vampire film to be made in the golden age of Italian genre cinema – evidently harks back to Steno's 1959 horror parody *Tempi duri per i vampiri*.<sup>15</sup> Only this time we aren't in the 'economic miracle' period, but in austerity year 1975, the blackest economic year since the war, with investments, gross national income and gross domestic product dropping, and inflation increasing more than 20% yearly (Ginsborg, 1990; Crainz, 2005b). As a consequence, although by 1975 the critical mass of protesting students and workers that formed during the 1969-1970 *autunno caldo* had substantially decreased due to police repression and fear of both the capitalist class' reprisals and right- and left-wing terrorism, thousands of people would still go on strike and flood the streets of the main Italian cities to shout slogans against the "governo vampiro" ('vampire government') letting the "sanguisughe del capitale" ('capitalist leeches') feed on the "sangue degli operai" ('blood of the workers') (Lotta Continua, 1971; 1972a; b; c; d; e; 1974a; b; 1976). In the first half of the 1970s, Christian Democracy had indeed become so unpopular among the working masses, and was therefore haemorrhaging so many votes to the parliamentary extreme Left, that some currents of the leading centrist party were thinking of accepting the Italian Communist Party's 1973 proposal of *compromesso storico*, a 'historical compromise' to be implemented after the 1976 general election and allowing Communists into the government coalition for the first time in the history of the Italian Republic (Balestrini & Moroni, 1988; Ginsborg, 1990).

Yet, for all its adoption of Marx's vampirism-capitalism equation and of Lotta Continua's revolutionary slogans ("Traitor, hypocrite, leech! [...] What more do you want from us proletarians? Our blood?", asks a radicalised unionist to Nicosia), *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* once again ends by showing that the status quo is immutable: in exchange for a heftier pay cheque, the workers happily agree to serve their employer during the week and to be bled dry in the *autoemoteca* on their day off, while a new vampire capitalist is born in the Nicosia family to ensure that the bloodletting would

continue for at least another generation. In this umpteenth restatement of the pessimism and defeatism of 1970s vampire cinema, Fulci and his screenwriters make the *compromesso storico* the main target for their satire. By having triumphant vampire Nicosia call “*compromesso sanguigno*” (‘blood compromise’) the salary raises through which he tricks his employees into accepting a literally-blood-draining exploitation, the *compromesso storico* is indicted as yet another *trasformismo* tactic of the reactionary ruling powers. In spite of Fulci’s aversion to social commentary in movies (see Chapter 1) and careerist, fundamentally-apolitical view of filmmaking as profit-bent entertainment (Appendix C), *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* can ultimately be said to drive the last nail in the coffin of Italian revolutionary hopes – a surrender to the immutability of the status quo all the more gloomy since the 1927-born director had been a Communist idealist in his youth, even serving jail time in 1948 for protesting against a right-wing attempt to assassinate Italian Communist Party leader Togliatti (Albiero & Cacciatore, 2004).

### **Concluding remarks**

This chapter has kept on exploring the cultural specificity of the vampire metaphor in Italy by analysing the political and socio-economic implications of 1956-1975 Italian vampire cinema. Far from mindless exercises in escapism, Italian vampire movies are imbued with their then-contemporary zeitgeist, from the ‘economic miracle’ of the late 1950s to the mid-1970s austerity. Always careful in avoiding explicit political references, the vampire movies of the 1958-1963 ‘economic miracle’ nevertheless absolve a cautionary function, warning against the downsides of the ‘boom’ and, possibly, against the failed defascistisation of the Italian Republic epitomised by the neofascist resurgence of the early 1960s. As the ‘economic miracle’ gave way to recession and the massive student and worker protests of 1968-1970, Italian vampire cinema becomes more politicised, explicitly referencing left-wing thinkers, from Marx to Marcuse. Yet, its mood is as far as it can be from the traditional revolutionary

optimism of the Left. In fact, although written, made and released at the peak of class and political struggle in Italy, 1970-1975 Italian vampire films present the political and socio-economic order of Western bourgeois capitalism as ultimately unchangeable: the vampiric exploiters of youth and workers – the self-serving political caste and the greedy capitalist class – are undefeatable.

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<sup>1</sup> The migration of Italian peasants to the mining/industrial districts of West Germany and Belgium was equally massive, although the Italians moving abroad “regarded their stay as temporary” and “rarely remained more than a year at a time, and even more rarely did their families leave to join them” (Ginsborg, 1990: 228).

<sup>2</sup> There are substantial discrepancies between the first treatment (Anton, 1959), the screenplay submitted to the Italian State Cinema Bureau (ACS 3149-243, 1959) and the finished film. The main difference is that in both the treatment and the screenplay Osvaldo isn't a fallen aristocrat forced to take on a menial job, but a poor bellboy all along, meeting the vampire by chance. It's also worth noting that, in spite of its final appeal to moderation, *Tempi duri per i vampiri* wasn't appreciated by Vatican censors: “The satire of vampirism is just an excuse to make a frivolous, superficial film [...] weaving together scenes and situations that are equivocal and improper. Forbidden to all” (Centro Cattolico Cinematografico, 1959b).

<sup>3</sup> *Tempi duri per i vampiri*'s demagogical equivalence between tax authorities and vampirism was deemed harmless enough by state censors, and reprised in the vampire skit of *spogliarello* movie *Sexy proibitissimo*, where it's stated that “since vampires never die [...] the state gave them all a lifelong working position at the tax office”. Curiously, the film Cecchi Gori and CEI-Incom co-produced immediately before *Tempi duri per i vampiri* was Aldo-Fabrizi-and-Totò-star-vehicle comedy *I tartassati / The Overtaxed* (Stefano Vanzina as Steno, 1959), which revolves around a wealthy bourgeois' clumsy attempts at tax evasion and ultimate surrender to the rightful punishment.

<sup>4</sup> The most graphic of such sequences, in the opening of *Maciste contro il vampiro*, was conceived and directed by Triestian Jew Giacomo Gentilomo, who survived real-life raids in Nazi-occupied Rome by hiding in a convent (Lughi, 2008). In Gentilomo's other vampire-themed peplum, *Maciste e la regina di Samar*, the word “holocaust” is used to describe the human sacrifices for vampire Selene organised by the puppet-government.

<sup>5</sup> The “symbol of a ferocious dictatorship”, according to *Ercole contro Moloch*'s screenplay (Unknown, 1963).

<sup>6</sup> According to Della Casa & Giusti (2014), Lionello Santi, the head of Galatea – the production company of many horrors and pepla, including the hybrid *Roma contro Roma* – was a Communist, but of course, as a businessman, his main allegiance was to moneymaking, as shown by the fact that, throughout his career, he exploited his ties to the Italian Communist Party to strike production/distribution deals with Soviet countries while collaborating with US companies such as Embassy Pictures and AIP (Venturini, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> A fan of horror fiction since his teenage years, in 1960 university student Farina had already made an 8-mm amateur short film parodying Fisher's *Dracula – Il figlio di Dracula* (‘Dracula's son’) (Venturini, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Like Ingegnere Nosferatu does in the film, between 1955 and 1971 Agnelli used the Italian police, army and secret services to keep his employees under surveillance – a fact that Farina and the whole of Italian public opinion discovered thanks to the work of magistrate Raffaele Guariniello in July-August 1971 (Crainz, 2005a), i.e. in the very same days ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* was having its Italian premiere (see Chapter 3).

<sup>9</sup> Valle's stay at Ingegnere Nosferatu's villa allows Farina to quote a few key theorists of consumer capitalism and its discontents: the litanies about mass-persuasion strategies and the repression of human instincts echoing in the corridors of the villa come from Packard (2007) and Marcuse (2015). In ...*Hanno cambiato faccia*'s screenplay, there's even a scene in which Valle finds in Ingegnere Nosferatu's private office a first edition of *Das Kapital* bearing the autograph dedication “To my great opponent Giovanni Nosferatu. Karl Marx. London, 1868” (Berruti & Farina, 1970).

<sup>10</sup> The caption refers to the following passage taken from Marcuse's 1958 study of Soviet Marxism: “In the Soviet state, the terror is of a twofold nature: technological and political. [...] With the elimination of all organised opposition, and with the continued success of the totalitarian administration, the terror tends to become predominantly technological” (1969: 112-113). In the screenplay, a montage sequence was to conclude the film after Valle's capitulation: a supermarket full of costumers buying discounted goods; heaps of trash; workers at the assembly line; automobile carcasses in a junkyard; advertising bills and gadgets; factories regurgitating black smoke in the countryside; dying trees and flowers; a polluted river (Berruti & Farina, 1970). Farina's original idea for the ending, “probably inspired by the ending of [Polanski's] *Dance of the Vampires*”, was the following: “Valle and the hippy girl seem to be able to run away and save themselves, but the taxi in which they are travelling is actually driven by Ingegnere Nosferatu” (Appendix B).

<sup>11</sup> The 1970s Italian film journals' ideological bias against all Italian horrors is sketched in Noto (2016: 215-218), where the author demonstrates that the horror genre was invariably seen by both Marxist and Catholic intellectuals as an escapist form of entertainment “doomed to reaffirm the existing power relations”, no matter how hard the filmmakers tried to infuse the movies “with the best intentions of societal critique”.

<sup>12</sup> Nazi innuendos abound in the film, including the Genoveses' praises of Richard Wagner, whose music “makes us feel bigger, more important”, part of a “superior race”. In the screenplay, Nina and Alfiero are explicitly said to be of German origin (their surname is von Müller), and the story is set in the Prati neighbourhood of Rome, at that time a bulwark of the extreme-right-wing Italian *haute bourgeoisie* (Ghione, 1972). For the cliché equation

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between Nazi-Fascism and sexual perversion in post-war Italian literature and auteur cinema, see Forgacs (1999) and Prono (2001).

<sup>13</sup> Theodore Roszak's 1969 critique *The Making of a Counter Culture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition* first appeared in Italian translation in 1971, so it might have directly inspired Ghione. It's worth noting that, in the screenplay, the hippy protagonists aren't helpless victims as in the finished film, but enact poetic justice by having Nina bled dry by the vampire-robot during the final police raid (Ghione, 1972).

<sup>14</sup> By casting Buzzanca as sanguinary captain of industry Nicosia, Fulci's producers most probably wanted to replicate the box-office success of biting anti-capitalist satires *Il sindacalista* and *Il magnate*, in which the Sicilian actor plays a radicalised unionist and a reckless *nouveau riche* respectively. Incidentally, though born and raised in Rome, Fulci was of Sicilian origins himself (Albiero & Cacciatore, 2004), and throughout his career wrote and directed numerous films featuring Sicilian comedians (several 1962-1968 Franco-and-Ciccio-star-vehicles and the 1970s Buzzanca-star-vehicles *Nonostante le apparenze... e purché la nazione non lo sappia... all'onorevole piacciono le donne* and *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza*) or set in Sicily [the giallo *Non si sevizia un paperino / Don't Torture a Duckling* (Lucio Fulci, 1972) and the horror *Demonia* (Lucio Fulci, 1990)].

<sup>15</sup> Having started his career in the early 1950s as a screenwriter for and an assistant to Steno, Fulci has always been calling him a "teacher", even a "father" (Albiero & Cacciatore, 2004: 19).



## CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSIONS

*Sanguisughe Sexy: Vampires in Italian Genre Cinema between 1956 and 1975* has taken as its subject thirty-five vampire movies made, distributed and exhibited during the peak years of genre film production in Italy, and certified to be of Italian nationality by governmental institutions such as the Italian State Cinema Bureau and the Italian Censorship Office. By employing a blend of textual and contextual analysis, the thesis has investigated the connections between the filmic texts and their then-contemporary industrial, political and socio-historical context, thereby showing that the vampires of post-war Italian genre cinema reflect their national zeitgeist from the ‘boom’ of the late 1950s to the mid-1970s austerity (two decades of large political and socio-economic change in which gender politics were also in relative flux). In its first subsection, this chapter points out the two content-related original contributions to knowledge provided by the research with regard to both vampire cinema in general and Italian film history specifically. The second subsection, on the other hand, expounds on the method-related original contribution to knowledge, and summarises the thesis’ findings. Finally, the third subsection puts forward some suggestions for further research to be carried out at the intersection of a nation-state’s film history, horror studies and cultural studies.

### **Content-related original contributions to knowledge**

The first original contribution to knowledge relates to the thesis’ subject matter. As noted in Chapter 2, Maurice Richardson’s 1959 essay “The Psychoanalysis of Ghost Stories”, in which Freudianism was applied to Stoker’s 1897 novel *Dracula* for the first time, was of paramount importance in that it offered cultural legitimacy to a previously-ridiculed work of Gothic mass literature and, over the course of the following decades, stimulated many psychoanalytic investigations of vampire movies, a commercially-successful cinematic subgenre that until the

1970s had been similarly affected by the prejudice that identifies the popular with low culture. Whether adopting the universalising approach of psychoanalysis or its historicist antithesis Marxism (or a combination of the two under the aegis of feminism), 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century studies of vampire literature and film have tended to focus on psychosexual, political, socio-economic and gender-related readings of world-famous Anglo-American works, with the novel *Dracula*, the Universal *Dracula* from 1931 and its sequels, the Hammer *Dracula* from 1958 and its sequels, and, more recently, the 2005-2012 *Twilight* novel and film sagas taking the lion's share of academic attention. As for the 'cinematic vampires' field specifically, a gap in knowledge has thus been identified in the lack of scholarly consideration for non-American and/or non-British national declinations of the vampire metaphor – the exception being Murnau's *Nosferatu*, a privileged entry point into the zeitgeist of Weimar Republic ever since the publication of Siegfried Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler* in 1947. Crucially, the vampire cinema production frenzy triggered all over the globe by the worldwide box-office success of the Hammer *Dracula* in the late 1950s, with an estimated total of around 400 vampire movies made between 1959 and 1979 only, has been vastly under-researched. Inscribing itself in the small body of literature that has recently started to put the cinematic vampires' Anglocentrism into question, this thesis has provided its first original contribution to knowledge by studying the vampire films made during the so-called golden age of Italian genre cinema, i.e. the years of intensive genre film production that, boosted by the Christian-Democrat regulations, American investments and European co-productions described in Chapter 3, went from the peplum boom of the late 1950s to the 1977 productive crisis that greatly diminished the yearly output of genre movies 'made in Italy'. By so doing, the research has revealed, indicted and partially counterbalanced the neglect towards world-cinema vampires.

As explained in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, prior to the Italian release of the Hammer *Dracula* in December 1958, Italy never fostered a horror tradition worthy of the

name, neither in literature nor in film. Besides political and religious pressures against ‘immorality’ in the press and the show business (especially during Fascist *ventennio* and the Christian-Democrat absolute rule of the immediate post-war), the absence of a conspicuous Italian heritage of horror was due to the fact that the most prominent Italian intellectuals of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century – notably Giacomo Leopardi, Alessandro Manzoni and Benedetto Croce – had been championing rationalism, classicism and realist literary genres as the true expressions of the Italian character, bashing Anglo-American Gothic fiction and English and German Romanticism for their focus on the disproportionate, the undefined, the macabre, the oneiric and the supernatural. The Leopardi-Manzoni-Croce authority proved to be so strong in Italy that not only throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century horror movies and other films belonging to the various genres of the fantastic became synonymous with foreign pictures; even after the Italian Gothic horror *filone* began piggy-backing on the box-office success of the Hammer *Dracula* under the watchful eye of Christian-Democrat and Vatican censors, it was common to find 1960s and 1970s film practitioners and critics agree on the foreignness, i.e. the imported and derivative nature, of Italian horrors. Not coincidentally, in view of their domestic release, a substantial amount of Italian horrors from the late 1950s onwards tried to mask, blur or mitigate their local origin through a wide variety of ‘counterfeit’ strategies. Within this cultural framework, Italy’s left-wing intellectuals were the fiercest adversaries of horror and other fantastic narratives, which were mostly dismissed as dangerously-escapist flights from the analysis of then-contemporary social reality. Real cinema, that is to say the cinema worthy of in-depth study and discussion, was identified with 1945-1949 neorealism and its epigones – a prejudice that has been continuing in both the Italian- and English-language academia to this very day, when the majority of journal articles, essays and monographs about Italian cinema brand horror and the other commercial film genres as lower forms of cinematic culture. The second original contribution to knowledge, then, is also related to the thesis’ subject matter: as the first sustained attempt to take

seriously, historicise and analyse the Italian vampire subgenre, which spanned several, more or less popular film genres across three decades, the thesis has distinguished itself from most of the existing literature about Italian film history. Equally importantly, by shifting the focus of attention from auteur cinema to genre cinema production, the research has contributed to a better understanding of the functioning of the post-war Italian film industry. In fact, as demonstrated in Chapter 3, the economic backbone of the system weren't only the well-budgeted, world-renowned, unique oeuvres by Roberto Rossellini, Vittorio De Sica, Luchino Visconti, Federico Fellini, Michelangelo Antonioni and Pier Paolo Pasolini, but also the myriad run-of-the-mill genre movies rushed through a cheap production and into domestic and international distribution to parasitically (vampirically?) exploit a given commercially-successful film.

### **Method-related original contribution to knowledge**

Of course, investigations of post-war Italian genre cinema aren't totally unprecedented, especially as far as the various genres of the fantastic are concerned. For instance, as shown in Chapter 2, since the 1990s English- and Italian-speaking scholars have been occasionally studying Italian horror, with particular attention given to the early-1960s Gothic *filone*'s female vampires, typically seen under the universalising prism of psychoanalysis as dread figures connected to universally-shared pre-Oedipal complexes. What's new, here, is not only the thesis' broader focus in terms of gender (both male and female vampires are taken into consideration), movie genre and production years (the horror parodies of the 'boom' and 'austerity' years, the 1960s pepla, the 1970s countercultural horror and erotic horror films are studied), but also the method of analysis employed, which eschews the eternal, immutable fears supposedly buried in each and every human being's unconscious in favour of a historicist approach that embeds the filmic texts within the particular socio-historical context of their creation and initial reception.

As explained in Chapter 1, such method is a reworking of Kracauer's reflectionist paradigm outlined in *From Caligari to Hitler*. Basically, while following the German scholar in analysing both diegetic content and cinematic form/style to highlight recurrent narrative patterns and representational motifs, and adopting his idea that there's a link between a nation-state's cinema and the socio-cultural milieu in which it develops, this thesis has dropped any ambition to decode the whole of a country's filmmaking output from a given period to diagnose collective psychological dispositions and shed light on subsequent historical events. Instead, the research has reconstructed the original context of production and consumption of a single Italian subgenre, pinpointing the selected films' nationally-specific characteristics and their relations to then-contemporary socio-cultural issues. What matters is not the movies' symptomatic value (meaning, quite literally given Kracauer's Freudianism, their containing the germs of an illness bound to manifest itself in the future), but the cultural work films perform as mirrors of the historical moment in which they were made, a society's more or less distorted portrait of itself. Hence the movement away from Kracauer's fuzzy psychology of film, based as it is on the ultimately indemonstrable notion of a public (un)consciousness/soul, towards a rigorously-materialist film sociology, seeing the creative work of a country's film industry as influenced by nationally-specific political and socio-economic factors.

To convincingly connect the audio-visual texts to the national zeitgeist and provide a culturally-specific monsterology, the starting point has been delineating the main characteristics of the films and the national zeitgeist separately. The former aim has been achieved through textual analysis: over the course of repeated viewings, each of the thirty-five movies listed in the corpus – acquired in the Italian-dubbed cut originally approved by the Italian Censorship Office for domestic release – has been subjected to close reading. This has led to a preliminary sketch of Italian vampire figures in terms of gender, physical appearance, personality traits, behavioural patterns, and so on. The latter aim has been a matter of

**contextual analysis**: the broader socio-historical context of *bel paese* from the immediate post-war until the late 1970s has been reconstructed in detail through the existing works by Italianist scholars. Collating a wide range of materials (including first- and second-hand interviews with film workers involved in 1956-1975 Italian vampire cinema, state-loan and nationality-certificate applications, state and Vatican censorship files, unpublished screenplays, articles in the film press and box-office data), **the auteurist perspective prevalent in most studies of Italian cinema has then been integrated into an institutional, ‘enlarged authorship’ framework**, which has proven of vital importance to reveal how a figure that is alien to the Italian tradition, and potentially controversial/transgressive on moral grounds, was appropriated and adapted to 1956-1975 Italy, as private and public financiers, producers, screenwriters, filmmakers and state and religious censors – each one with his/her own ideology and agenda – took on a creative, authorial role and negotiated cost-competitive, highly-appealing-yet-morally-acceptable film goods suitable for release in the domestic market.

Obtained through the above methodological approach, the findings presented in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 have clearly demonstrated that **Italian vampire cinema’s imported and derivative nature**, and its great reliance on profits coming from distribution on the international market, are no obstacles to the functioning of Italian vampire figures as culturally-specific metaphors. Let’s now sum up the research results that have emerged. Chapter 4 has been dedicated to the struggle for gender definition and domination in the Italian post-war society as reflected by 1956-1975 Italian vampire cinema. It has focused on both female and male vampires, and has placed these imaginary monsters into their real-life, nationally-specific socio-historical context with an unprecedented degree of precision if compared to the few existing studies on the topic, which are dominated by psychoanalysis or psychoanalysis-influenced feminism and therefore mention Italian males’ anxieties over the post-war female emancipation rarely and only vaguely. As for vampire women, Chapter 4 has

problematised their to-date-monolithic portrait as villainous femmes fatales conspiring to overthrow masculine domination. Importantly, vampire women aren't only power-hungry sexual predators that misogynistic narratives put to death as a punishment for attempting to subvert the patriarchal status quo, but also empathy-inducing characters caught between rebellion and hyper-identification with traditional values – victims seeking revenge against their male oppressors, and tragic lovers dreaming of a monogamous heterosexual relationship that looks strangely similar to marriage. As for the hitherto-uncharted territory of Italian Draculas, Chapter 4 has put forward the idea that, while acting as scapegoats within a rigidly-moralistic, Catholic framework where Good must inevitably triumph over Evil, the male bloodsuckers can be considered champions of traditional masculinity, undead Latin lovers or *patres familias* of sorts, as part of reparative/compensative strategies trying to reassure Italian males of their gender leadership in times when women began challenging traditional gender roles by entering the public sphere of work and politics *en masse* and by organising themselves in combative feminist collectives.

Chapter 5, on the other hand, takes its cue from Karl Marx's 1867 *Das Kapital* and other 20<sup>th</sup>-century critiques of the capitalist bourgeoisie, and tackles the political and socio-economic implications of 1956-1975 Italian vampire cinema. Shot while Italy was transforming from a backward, agricultural country into a modern, industrial one, *Tempi duri per i vampiri* brings to the screen a class-struggle parable in which Transylvanian *émigré* Dracula is portrayed, contra Stoker, as a positive character, a magical helper from whom the Italians of the 1958-1963 'boom' period must learn how to adapt to the changing social environment. As for the vampire-themed pepla, with their rigidly-Manichean division of characters into good and bad, they restore the traditional equivalence between Otherness and Evilness: made in the aftermath of the 1960 governmental alliance between the Christian Democrats and the neofascist Movimento Sociale Italiano, *Ercole al centro della Terra*, *Maciste contro il vampiro*, *Ercole contro Moloch*, *Roma contro Roma* and *Maciste e la regina*

*di Samar* draw a parallel between the vampire tyrannies of Classical Antiquity and the Nazi occupation of Italy in the last years of World War Two as a way to reflect on both the 1943-1945 Repubblica Sociale Italiana and the neofascist resurgence of the early 1960s. Finally, 1970s movies ...*Hanno cambiato faccia*, *La corta notte delle bambole di vetro*, *Il prato macchiato di rosso*, *L'uomo che uccideva a sangue freddo*, *Dracula cerca sangue di vergine... e morì di sete!!!* and *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* use the vampire metaphor to portray the ruling political caste and the capitalist class of the time as greedy, self-serving vampires that are undefeatable due to their ability to adjust to political, socio-economic and cultural changes, co-opt revolutionary ferments and preserve the status quo. Made in a period of nation-wide, violent social conflicts and great hopes for a revolution, these 1970s Italian films are dystopias or negative utopias sharing a resignedly-pessimistic, apocalyptic view on the post-‘boom’ period, from the failure of the reformist program of the 1963-1968 centre-left governments, through the *Sessantotto* and the *autunno caldo* of 1969-1970, until the *compromesso storico* between Christian Democrats and Communists that was to take place sometime after 1975.

### **Suggestions for further research**

Possibilities for further research about 1956-1975 Italian vampire cinema are primarily contingent upon accessing documents that weren't in the public domain when the data collection for the present thesis was conducted. For example, as stated in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, the Archivio Centrale dello Stato files relating to Italian films made after 1965 are currently unavailable (officially for lack of a digitised index), so that a production history of 1969-1975 Italian vampire cinema based on hard facts and figures has yet to be written. Similarly, a detailed comparative study of the vampire-themed entries in the Gothic *filone* and the vampire-themed original *fotoromanzi* from the *Malia* series has to wait until the section of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence that preserves 1960s periodicals will be opened



to the public, or until a private collector will agree to make the relevant *Malìa* issues freely available. As of now, both events seem unlikely to happen anytime in the near future, while according to some Italian-cinema researchers it's possible to 'informally' have a look at the post-1965 ACS files for those who have 'the right connections'. Finally, whilst the home-video market nowadays offers plenty of opportunities to access the French, Spanish, German, English and American versions of the thirty-five movies in the corpus, official data about how much money each Italian vampire film made upon its original release on foreign markets are nowhere to be found.

More in general, due to word-count limitations, *Sanguisughe Sexy: Vampires in Italian Genre Cinema between 1956 and 1975* is but a condensed study of its subject, which leaves space for further investigations. Firstly, since the main aim is to provide a synchronic and diachronic overview of the Italian vampire subgenre, the thesis has dealt exclusively with the major thematic concerns of 1956-1975 Italian vampire cinema, that is to say those gender-related, political and socio-economic themes that could be traced in many of the films contained in the corpus across the three decades in question. Therefore, in order to tackle specific aspects and motifs featured in single vampire films, case studies will be needed. For instance, the patriarch bleeding dry his own children from *I Wurdalak* resonates with the notes on the economic function of reproduction in peasant societies to be found in Antonio Gramsci's *Quaderni del carcere*, while *La notte dei diavoli* provides a reflection on the depopulation of the Italian countryside after the 'boom' and, if read under the light of Ernesto de Martino's anthropological studies about Southern magic, on the Italian peasantry's attempts to soften the shock of modernity. Not to mention *Riti, magie nere e segrete orge nel Trecento...*, whose blasphemous take on vampirism (the resurrection of vampirised Christa) and fierce anti-clericalism (the priest is one of the Satanist vampires; the girls who spend their time fornicating and contradicting the Catholic Church's teachings are the only ones untouched by the vampire contagion) may be worth serious consideration in relation to the

zeitgeist of early-1970s Italy – a Christian-Democracy-run, Catholic country slowly turning into a secular one by introducing contraceptive pills, divorce, and so on.

Secondly, some of the material gathered from Italian archives and libraries during the three-year research period hasn't been used in the thesis or has been used only partially. For instance, documents from the Biblioteca Luigi Chiarini in Rome relating to three never-made vampire movies haven't been taken into consideration: an anonymous, undated, typewritten treatment for a neorealism-inspired tale of traumatised children, vampire-like nuns and homosexual partisans set in 1943 Italy (*I vampiri*); Luigi Batzella's 1973 screenplay for a horror-tinged giallo featuring Satanist killers resurrecting Dracula in a present-day metropolis (*Una vergine per Dracula*); and the 1974 screenplay for a western/horror/giallo hybrid penned by a certain Gianni di Giulio alias Manuel Sartana (*Sangue per il vampiro*). State documents like censorship reports, on the other hand, have been used only sparingly. This is unfortunate because, with no word-count limitations, the Italian Censorship Office files could have led to an in-depth censorship history of the thirty-five films of the corpus, showing the systematic toning down of trailers until 1962 (*I vampiri*; *Il sangue e la rosa*; *Ercole al centro della Terra*), the strict collaboration between state censors and the police to check on circulating copies of approved films (*L'amante del vampiro*; *Il sangue e la rosa*), confidential notes to high-rank bureaucrats by censorship commissioners bashing approved films (*L'ultima preda del vampiro*) and the pleas of film producers to have age-restrictions lowered or abolished (*Il sangue e la rosa*; *Ercole al centro della Terra*; *I tre volti della paura*; *Danza macabra*; *Nella stretta morsa del ragno*; *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza*). The same is true for the Centro Cattolico Cinematografico's ratings published in *Segnalazioni cinematografiche*, whose indictments of vampirism as unfounded superstition begs for an in-depth study inserting the Vatican film censorship office's pastoral judgements into a long theological tradition inaugurated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by Trani Archbishop Giuseppe Antonio Davanzati and Pope Benedict XIV.

Having the self-confidence Kracauer displayed in the preface to his 1947 psychological history of German cinema, it would perhaps be possible to argue for the universal applicability of the reflectionist paradigm, and conclude by suggesting that the methodology used here to analyse Italian cinematic vampires between 1956 and 1975 could be profitably extended to studies of any monster from any given nation-state's cinema, from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. This thesis, however, settles for the more modest goal of having contributed original information and perspectives to the ongoing debates on post-war Italian film history, and for the hope that the research's content will stimulate (as a negative model, if nothing else) new studies of Italian genre cinema's vampires, Franksteins, werewolves, zombies, cannibals and serial killers.

**Appendix A:**  
**Horror-themed *fotoromanzo* series (1961-1971)**

**Malìa – I Fotoromanzi del Brivido (1961-1967)**

- 01 (February 1961) – *L'urlo del vampiro*, original *fotoromanzo* by J. Fer – 100 lire
- 02 (March 1961) – *L'ultima preda del vampiro*, based on *L'ultima preda del vampiro* (Piero Regnoli, 1960) – 100 lire
- 03 (April 1961) – *Malefica adescatrice*, original *fotoromanzo* by J. Fer – 100 lire
- 04 (May 1961) – *La preda del mostro*, original *fotoromanzo* by G. H. Bosk – 100 lire
- 05 (June 1961) – *Il fantasma vivente*, original *fotoromanzo* by Joe H. Bosk – 100 lire
- 06 (July 1961) – *Il vampiro etrusco*, original *fotoromanzo* by Giorgio Boskero – 100 lire
- 07 (August 1961) – *Il mostro dell'isola* – 100 lire
- 08 (September 1961) – *L'ultima notte del vampiro*, original *fotoromanzo* – 100 lire
- 09 (October 1961) – *Notte di terrore* – 100 lire
- 10 (November 1961) – *L'amante d'oltretomba* – 100 lire
- 11 (December 1961) – *Il vampiro di mezzanotte* – 100 lire
- 12 (January 1962) – *Il vampiro dell'autostrada* – 100 lire
- 13 (February 1962) – *Il vampiro dell'Opera*, based on *Il mostro dell'Opera* (Renato Polselli, 1964) – 100 lire
- 14 (March 1962) – *L'amante del vampiro*, based on *L'amante del vampiro* (Renato Polselli, 1960) – 100 lire
- 15 (April 1962) – *Il vampiro di Montmartre* – 100 lire
- 16 (May 1962) – *Il castello maledetto*, original *fotoromanzo* – 100 lire
- 17 (June 1962) – *Il cuore del vampiro*, original *fotoromanzo* – 100 lire
- 18 (July 1962) – *La strage dei vampiri*, based on *La strage dei vampiri* (Giuseppe Tagliavia as Roberto Mauri, 1961) – 100 lire
- 19 (August 1962) – *Il bacio del vampiro* – 100 lire
- 20 (September 1962) – *Il vampiro di Dubna* – 100 lire
- 21 (October 1962) – *Incubo sotto la luna* – 100 lire
- 22 (November 1962) – *Minaccia occulta*, original *fotoromanzo* – 100 lire
- 23 (December 1962) – *Sola contro il mostro*, original *fotoromanzo* – 100 lire
- 24 (January 1963) – *Vampiri a Bucarest*, original *fotoromanzo* – 100 lire

- 25 (February 1963) – *Il regno del terrore*, original *fotoromanzo* – 100 lire
- 26 (March 1963) – *Il vampiro di Londra* – 100 lire
- 27 (April 1963) – *Il vampiro del villaggio* – 100 lire
- 28 (May 1963) – *Il risveglio di Dracula*, original *fotoromanzo* – 100 lire
- 29 (June 1963) – *Il culto dei vampiri* – 100 lire
- 30 (July 1963) – *Dracula nella casa degli orrori*, based on *House of Dracula* (Erle C. Kenton, 1945) – 100 lire
- 31 (August 1963) – *La bara del vampiro*, based on *El ataúd del vampiro* (Fernando Mendez, 1958) – 100 lire
- 32 (September 1963) – *Il terrore viene d'oltretomba*, based on *La momia azteca contra el robot humano* (Rafael Portillo, 1958) – 100 lire
- 33 (October 1963) – *La stirpe dei vampiri*, based on *El vampiro* (Fernando Mendez, 1957) – 100 lire
- 34 (November 1963) – *La casa dei mostri*, based on *The Unearthly* (Brooke L. Peters, 1957) – 100 lire
- 35 (December 1963) – *Metempsico*, based on *Metempsyco* (Antonio Boccacci as Anthony Kristye, 1963) – 100 lire
- 36 (January 1964) – *Macabro*, based on *Macabre* (William Castle, 1958) – 100 lire
- 37 (February 1964) – *Terrore* – 100 lire
- 38 (March 1964) – *Il sangue del vampiro*, based on *Blood of the Vampire* (Henry Cass, 1958) – 100 lire
- 39 (April 1964) – *Panic*, based on *The Tell-Tale Heart* (Ernest Morris, 1960) – 100 lire
- 40 (May 1964) – *La donna e il mostro*, based on *The Lady and the Monster* (George Sherman, 1944) – 100 lire
- 41 (June 1964) – *I peccatori della Foresta Nera*, based on *La chambre ardente* (Julien Duvivier, 1962) – 100 lire
- 42 (July 1964) – *La cripta e l'incubo*, based on *La cripta e l'incubo* (Camillo Mastrocinque as Thomas Miller, 1964) – 100 lire
- 43 (August 1964) – *La città dei morti*, based on *The City of the Dead* (John Moxey, 1960) – 100 lire
- 44 (September 1964) – *I misteri della magia nera*, based on *Misterios de la magia negra* (Miguel M. Delgado, 1958) – 100 lire
- 45 (October 1964) – *Il vampiro*, based on *Dead Men Walk* (Sam Newfield, 1943) – 100 lire
- 46 (November 1964) – *La vendetta del vampiro*, based on *El mundo de los vampiros* (Alfonso Corona Blake, 1961) – 100 lire
- 47 (December 1964) – *La vergine di cera*, based on *The Terror* (Roger Corman, 1963) – 100 lire
- 48 (January 1965) – *Il prezzo del demonio*, based on *El hombre y el monstruo* (Rafael Baledón, 1959) – 100 lire

- 49 (February 1965) – *I misteri dell'oltretomba*, based on *Misterios de ultratumba* (Fernando Mendez, 1959) – 100 lire
- 50 (March 1965) – *I racconti del terrore*, based on *Tales of Terror* (Roger Corman, 1962) – 100 lire
- 51 (April 1965) – *La vergine di Norimberga*, based on *La vergine di Norimberga* (Antonio Margheriti as Anthony Dawson, 1963) – 150 lire
- 52 (May 1965) – *La settima tomba*, based on *La settima tomba* (Garibaldi Serra Caracciolo as Finney Cliff, 1965) – 150 lire
- 53 (June 1965) – *I maghi del terrore*, based on *The Raven* (Roger Corman, 1963) – 150 lire
- 54 (July 1965) – *I vivi e i morti*, based on *House of Usher* (Roger Corman, 1960) – 150 lire
- 55 (August 1965) – *Il pozzo e il pendolo*, based on *Pit and the Pendulum* (Roger Corman, 1961) – 150 lire
- 56 (September 1965) – *Sepolto vivo!*, based on *Premature Burial* (Roger Corman, 1962) – 150 lire
- 57 (November 1965) – *La città dei mostri*, based on *The Haunted Palace* (Roger Corman, 1963) – 150 lire
- 58 (December 1965) – *5 tombe per un medium*, based on *5 tombe per un medium* (Domenico M. Pupillo as Ralph Zucker, 1965) – 150 lire
- 59 (January 1966) – *Il mostro di Venezia*, based on *Il mostro di Venezia* (Dino Tavella, 1965) – 150 lire
- 60 (February 1966) – *Il boia scarlatta*, based on *Il boia scarlatta* (Domenico M. Pupillo as Max Hunter, 1965) – 150 lire
- 61 (March 1966) – *Amanti d'oltretomba*, based on *Amanti d'oltretomba* (Mario Caiano as Allan Grünwald, 1965) – 150 lire
- 62 (April 1966) – *La sorella di Satana*, based on *The She Beast* (Michael Reeves, 1966) – 150 lire
- 63 (May 1966) – *Le notti della violenza*, based on *Le notti della violenza* (Giuseppe Tagliavia as Roberto Mauri, 1965) – 150 lire
- 64 (June 1966) – *Sinfonia per un sadico*, based on *La mano de un hombre muerto* (Jesús Franco Manera as Jess Frank, 1962) – 150 lire
- 65 (July 1966) – *L'urlo del vampiro* (reprint issue 01) – 150 lire\*
- 66 (August 1966) – *Malefica adescatrice* (reprint issue 03) – 150 lire\*
- 67 (September 1966) – *La preda del mostro* (reprint issue 04) – 150 lire\*
- 68 (October 1966) – *Il fantasma vivente* (reprint issue 05) – 150 lire\*
- 69 (November 1966) – *Il vampiro etrusco* (reprint issue 06) – 150 lire\*
- 70 (December 1966) – *Il mostro dell'isola* (reprint issue 07) – 150 lire\*
- 71 (January 1967) – *Notte di terrore* (reprint issue 09) – 150 lire\*
- 72 (February 1967) – *L'ultima notte del vampiro* (reprint issue 08) – 150 lire\*

\* The series' title changes to *Malìa. I Grandi Ritorni – Selezione di Fotoromanzi del Brivido*.

### **Suspense (1970-1971)**

1 (May 1970) – *Troppo bella per morire* – 250 lire\*\*

2 (June 1970) – *Per te ho scelto l'inferno* – 250 lire\*\*\*

3 (July 1970) – *Una croce per Daina* – 250 lire\*\*\*

4 (August 1970) – *La maschera di cera*, based on *House of Wax* (André De Toth, 1953) – 250 lire

5 (September 1970) – *Dracula il vampiro*, based on *Dracula* (Terence Fisher, 1958) – 250 lire

6 (October 1970) – *La strage dei vampiri*, based on *La strage dei vampiri* (Giuseppe Tagliavia as Roberto Mauri, 1961) – 250 lire

7 (November 1970) – *La vendetta del vampiro*, based on *El mundo de los vampiros* (Alfonso Corona Blake, 1961) – 250 lire

8 (December 1970) – *Il pozzo e il pendolo*, based on *Pit and the Pendulum* (Roger Corman, 1961) – 250 lire

9 (January 1971) – *Utopia dell'immortalità*, original *fotoromanzo* – 250 lire

10 (February 1971) – *La bara del vampiro*, based on *El ataúd del vampiro* (Fernando Mendez, 1958) – 250 lire

11 (March 1971) – *Black Horror (Le messe nere)*, based on *Curse of the Crimson Altar* (Vernon Sewell, 1968) – 250 lire

12 (April 1971) – *La vendetta di Lady Morgan*, based on *La vendetta di Lady Morgan* (Domenico M. Pupillo as Max Hunter, 1965) – 250 lire

13 (May 1971) – *Operazione paura*, based on *Operazione paura* (Mario Bava, 1966) – 250 lire

\*\* This *Suspense* issue bears the subtitle *amore erotismo magia terrore*.

\*\*\* This *Suspense* issue bears the subtitle *erotismo magia – terrore*.

### **Wampir (1970-1971)**

01 (June 1970) – *La casa degli orrori*, based on *House of Dracula* (Erle C. Kenton, 1945) – 200 lire°

02 (??? 1970) – *Frankenstein contro il Lupo Mannaro*, probably based on *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* (Roy William Neill, 1943) – 200 lire°°

03 (??? 1970) – *La rivolta di Frankenstein*, based on *The Evil of Frankenstein* (Freddie Francis, 1964) – 200 lire°°

04 (??? 1970) – *Il mostruoso dottor Crimen*, based on *El Monstruo Resucitado* (Chano Urueta, 1953) – 200 lire°°

05 (November 1970) – *Cyclops*, probably based on *Dr. Cyclops* (Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1940) – 200 lire °°

06 (December 1970) – *La cripta e l'incubo*, based on *La cripta e l'incubo* (Camillo Mastrocinque as Thomas Miller, 1964) – 200 lire°°

07 (January 1971) – *L'isola degli zombies*, based on *Voodoo Island* (Reginald LeBorg, 1957) – 200 lire°°

° This *Wampir* issue bears the subtitle *Films del brivido*.

°° This *Wampir* issue bears the subtitle *I più grandi films del brivido*.



## **Appendix B: Interview with Corrado Farina (summer 2015)**

Michael Guarneri: You directed ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* in 1970-1971. Why did you decide to make a vampire movie in Italy at the beginning of the 1970s, when the Italian Gothic horror *filone* was dead and buried?

Corrado Farina: I have always been fascinated by the vampire figure. As a young man, I had liked a lot the vampire films by Riccardo Freda and Mario Bava, and Terence Fisher's *Dracula* too, of course. Moreover, I have always been interested in the figure of Vlad the Impaler, suspended as he is between historical facts and legend. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, I was a *cineamatore*, which means that I occasionally made 8-mm films with a group of friends, purely for fun. One of these short, amateurish movies was a parody of the vampire films that were flooding Italian screens in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The title I chose was *Il figlio di Dracula*, i.e. 'The son of Dracula'. It was made in 1960, I think. As for ...*Hanno cambiato faccia*, I didn't really want to make a parody of horror movies. At the same time, though, making a 'classic' vampire film would have been too expensive. It was Herbert Marcuse's 1964 book *One-Dimensional Man* (which came out in Italian translation only in 1967) that triggered my imagination. Thanks to *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse quickly became one of the leading theorists of the 1968 protests and the ensuing *contestazione* ('anti-authoritarian revolt') years: he wrote about our everyday reality as a world in which technology allows those in power to suck humanity's blood in order to artificially prolong their lives. This metaphor fitted well with the post-1968 class struggle in Italy: students and workers versus *i padroni* ('the masters, those in power'). However, it is necessary to clarify the concept of *padrone*. In ...*Hanno cambiato faccia*, Ingegnere Giovanni Nosferatu is not simply a master, a man who has power. Rather, he is *il padrone dei padroni*, that is to say 'the master of the masters'. He sucks the blood of everybody, to keep alive not himself but a structure of power, a system, an organism that is not made of flesh. Ingegnere Nosferatu is *il padrone di tutti i cattivi*, 'the master of all the villains', and it is not by chance that actor Adolfo Celi was cast in the role, since he had already played a supervillain in *Thunderball* (Terence Young, 1965) and *Diabolik* (Mario Bava, 1968). It is possible that while I was outlining the Ingegnere Nosferatu character I had the Avvocato Gianni Agnelli in mind (both have a walking stick and white hair, for instance). The idea I wanted to express through the Ingegnere Nosferatu character was that of a *potere occulto*, a 'secret power', a master of the masters, a member of a sort of financial-industrial-aristocratic elite. In fact, at that time, Agnelli was not a politician, he didn't hold any political power formally, but he owned everything: industry FIAT and newspaper La Stampa.

MG: You mentioned the fact that you couldn't afford to make an expensive movie. How much did ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* cost?

CF: ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* was produced by a cooperative called Filmsettanta. Myself, the crew and the cast (with the exception of Adolfo Celi and a few others) were *in partecipazione*, that is to say we were financing the movie ourselves. The budget was around 50 million lira.

MG: What do you think ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* is: a horror, a satire, a genre movie, an auteur film?

CF: To me, it is a hybrid: it is a genre movie (namely a horror movie), and it is also a post-1968 political film. I like to define it a 'political-fantastic' film or, maybe, a 'dystopic' film. In a way, it is an auteur film and a satire. It is a patchwork: each spectator can see what he or she wants in it!

MG: Is the character of Valle your alter ego? You worked as an advertiser for many years prior to making ...*Hanno cambiato faccia*, so I was wondering if employee Valle's alienation somehow reflected your feelings during your career in the advertising industry.

CF: During the 1960s I worked for the biggest and most important advertising agency in Italy, the one owned by Armando Testa. The beginning of my career was wonderful, I wrote and directed about 500 *caroselli* [brief TV commercials aired on Italian State Television]. Then, I started developing a critical attitude towards the advertising world, as shown by my comic strips titled *Il Grande Persuasore*, 'the Great Persuader', which I made in 1966-1967. I slowly started to see the advertising industry as co-responsible for all the problems that afflicted, and still afflict, the Western world. A period of impatience on my part began, which led to my leaving Armando Testa's advertising agency. After two years, I moved from my hometown Turin to Rome with my family and, after making a lot of commercials, I finally had the chance to work for cinema – first as an assistant on various film sets, then as a director of ...*Hanno cambiato faccia*, whose treatment I wrote when I was still living in Turin.

MG: You and your friend and co-screenwriter Giulio Berruti were active in left-wing organisations in the 1960s and 1970s? Turin, for instance, was a Lotta Continua stronghold. I ask you because the violent revolt the Valle character talks about at a certain point echoes the post-1968 extraparliamentary left-wing's rhetoric.

CF: Giulio and I were never active in any political party or organisation, and we were not hanging out with students during the *contestazione* years. I would say that ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* is an 'unconsciously 1968' film. In 1965-1966 I had already made two sci-fi, 8-mm short movies because I was a great fan of dystopic science fiction, or – as I like to call it – 'sociological sci-fi': George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, Ray Bradbury, Robert Sheckley, and so on. In the first 8-mm short I showed the end of humanity because of humanity's excessive pride (Man thinks He can control the machines, while it is actually the machines that control Him); the second 8-mm short was something similar to *Alphaville* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1965). All this is to say that I have been a sort of protester well before the 1968 protests exploded worldwide, and that at that time there was no unified cinema movement, but just a bunch of directors working on a series of ideas that were 'in the air', often making films that were quite similar in their assumptions and/or conclusions.

MG: Talking about this idea of being influenced by the zeitgeist, in your film there is a hippy girl who tries to convince bourgeois Valle to change his life. Hippy characters start appearing in Italian cinema at the end of the 1960s.

CF: The hippy girl of ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* comes from the American flower children of the pre-1968 period. In my film I mixed the typical hippy character with the Marcusean idea of rebellious youths being co-opted by a vampiric technocracy. At that time I was quite fascinated by the 'swinging London' myth, and in 1968 I saw this film called *I'll Never Forget What's 'isname* (Michael Winner, 1967), which really impressed me. It was a film about the powers that be 're-absorbing' the rebellion of an individual who wants to get out of 'the system'. Incidentally, *I'll Never Forget What's 'isname* was set in the world of advertising, a world I was increasingly growing weary of at that time, just like the character played by Oliver Reed in the film.

MG: The original ending of ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* is different from the one you actually shot.

CF: Yes, in the original ending – which was probably inspired by the ending of *Dance of the Vampires* (Roman Polanski, 1967) – Valle and the hippy girl seem to be able to run away and save themselves, but the taxi in which they are travelling is actually driven by Ingegnere Nosferatu.

MG: During your career as an advertiser, you shot hundreds of *caroselli*, and in ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* you have inserted three fake *caroselli*.

CF: Yes, one is a satire of the Godardian militant cinema of the *contestazione* years; one is a satire of Fellini; one is a satire of sexploitation, which was slowly starting to take root in Italian cinema, as in the late 1960s the Italian Censorship Office was not harsh and inflexible as it used to be.

MG: Well, the Italian Censorship Office hadn't become all *that* permissive. ...*Hanno cambiato faccia*, for instance, was rated VM18 in Italy, "for the scenes of sadism and eroticism".

CF: Yes, but I actually think it was because of the nude scenes only, because of the naked breasts I mean. I remember that in the screenplay of ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* there was a line mentioning a crucifix, uttered in relation to the third, Sade-inspired *carosello*. Giulio [Berruti] and I removed the word 'crucifix' from the finished film because we wanted to avoid problems with the Italian Censorship Office.

MG: Personally, I don't find the film offensive to the Church as a religious institution, even though on *Segnalazioni cinematografiche* the Vatican rated your film as gravely offensive to Catholicism.

CF: The 'basis' of the Church, in my view, is heroic. Regardless of one's own beliefs in matters of religion, it must be recognised that many priests did, and still do, great, heroic work. The problem is the high ranks of the Church, which use the moral alibi to influence politics, as decades of Christian-Democrat rule in Italy have demonstrated. Somebody even mentioned to me that Ingegnere Nosferatu could be an allusion to the secret power of Christian Democrat Giulio Andreotti.

MG: Well, both Giulio Andreotti and Adolfo Celi are from Sicily. But to go back on the main track: you mentioned Sade, who is the main author for intellectuals reflecting on issues of power starting ever since the mid-1960s.

CF: I read Sade's *Justine* (1791) at the end of the 1960s. I went to Paris to meet Éric Losfeld, the publisher of sexy sci-fi comic-book *Barbarella*. At that time in Paris there was this publisher called Pauvert, who specialised in books about fantastic and erotic cinema. Pauvert was also publishing Sade's whole body of work and I read some of the books in the original French.

MG: I asked you about Sade because the central metaphor of ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* (youth rebellion is vampirised and co-opted by the powers that be) reminded me of *Salò, o le 120 giornate di Sodoma* (Pier Paolo Pasolini, 1976), which was based on Sade's writings.

CF: Thank you for the interesting comparison, but the main inspiration for ...*Hanno cambiato faccia* is Marcuse, not Sade.

## **Appendix C: Interview with Fabio Frizzi (autumn 2016)**

Michael Guarneri: How did you get involved in the making of Lucio Fulci's *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza*?

Fabio Frizzi: In 1975 I was 24 years old, I was at the very beginning of my career. A few years earlier, I had started studying Law at the University in Rome. My real interest, however, was music, and my ambition was to become a musician. I started as a guitarist and of course. Ever since the early 1970s, I was part of a rock band. My father – Fulvio Frizzi – was an important film distributor. He worked as *direttore commerciale*, i.e. business, sales and marketing manager, for Euro International Film first, and then for Cineriz. Since my father was a prominent figure in the Italian film business, I had the idea of trying my hand at composing music for films. Thanks to my father's connections, I got into contact with music producer Carlo Andrea Bixio – nephew of Cesare Andrea Bixio, the man who composed hugely popular songs such as *Parlami d'amore Mariù*, and the founder of Edizioni Musicali Bixio, a company producing soundtracks for Italian movies ever since the 1930s. Carlo decided to give me a chance and his brother Franco taught me the know-how. At that time, in fact, I knew nothing about the technical/material process that leads to the creation of a movie soundtrack. Carlo had me work on TV shows first, to see if I was good enough to be hired for more important jobs. After some successful trials, I made the music for the film *Amore libero – Free Love* (Pier Ludovico Pavoni, 1974). From 1974, I started to work in the film business on a regular basis, as part of a trio comprising myself, Franco Bixio (mainly a composer), and Vince Tempera (an extraordinary arranger and well-versed in post-production issues). As I was the youngest, least experienced member of the trio, I did a bit of everything, trying to learn as much as I could from my colleagues. Franco, Vince and I made the music for Lucio [Fulci]'s *I quattro dell'Apocalisse* (1975), and we were immediately asked to work on *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza*. Lucio needed to work all the time to make a living, so he was making one film after the other. Back then, hundreds of films were made in Italy every year and for us musicians there was no shortage of work.

MG: Can you tell me about the workflow of the trio during the collaborations with Fulci?

FF: Lucio always had very clear ideas. When we were meeting to discuss the music for this or that film of his, he always used very specific adjectives to describe the atmosphere and the effects that he wanted to create through the music. I remember, for example, that when he wanted some soft, unobtrusive background music he used the adjective “transparent”. In other words, the first creative input always came from Lucio: the whole film was in his mind and he had to approve all creative choices in the end, including the music.

Practically, my work with Lucio consisted of a series of phases. First of all, while Lucio was shooting the film, I was given the script, which I had to read in order to get an idea of the mood, of the atmosphere of the film. Then I usually met Lucio to exchange ideas and opinions. It was during these meetings that Lucio used to give me the adjectives I told you about. Then, starting from these adjectives, Franco, Vince and I started preparing some music themes, from which Lucio had to choose the ones he preferred. After the film was shot and edited, I watched it on a moviola and did the ‘time keeping’, i.e. I took notes about where exactly Lucio wanted the music within the film (from minute X second X to minute Y second Y, and so on). After that, we recorded the music based on my ‘time keeping’ notes and we had a final meeting with Lucio to check the final result.

MG: In the Italian genre cinema of the 1970s, producers would normally insist on saving as much money as possible, and I imagine it was the same for Fulci's films. Did the low budget ever affect your work?

FF: Not only was Lucio a very cultured person, interested in jazz and painting, he was also a great artisan. As I told you, he made films for a living. Making a spectacular movie that could earn good box-office receipts proportional to the low budget was essential: the producer would have made profit and Lucio would have had the chance to make a new film straight away. So, yes, saving on production costs was crucial, and Lucio and his collaborators were exceptional professionals, great artisans able to create something exceptional with very little means. The ending of *...E tu vivrai nel terrore! L'aldilà* (1981), for instance, was shot in a small room but, thanks to the work of Lucio, director of photography Sergio Salvati and plenty of other technicians, it seems to be shot in a boundless wasteland... in the Great Beyond, indeed...

As for my work as a composer: of course, Lucio's films were made with very little money compared to the big Italian and American productions, but we never allowed ourselves to be sloppy. Both as a member of the trio and in my 'solo' career, I have always had enough financial means to do decent (and occasionally even very good) work. We usually worked for about one or two months on each project, from first conception to final recording, it never was something that we did in five minutes. And I think that our care shows, if you watch and listen to the films closely. Yesterday I re-watched *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza*, and I must admit that Vince did an outstanding job on the arrangements: they sound good even in the crappy digital copy of the film that I watched! However, I was a bit ashamed when I saw the scene of the dinner in the house of the Sicilian relatives of the protagonist. You know, I completely erased from my memory that I did this blatant rip-off of the main theme of *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972)... We didn't have the rights for the original because they were too expensive, so I was told by the producer to compose "something similar" to *The Godfather's* score... It would have been better to buy the rights of the original, given my poor imitation! [Laughter]

MG: Do you know the reason why Fulci decided to make *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza*? Would you say it was a personal project or a work for commission?

FF: As I told you, Lucio was a commercial filmmaker, in the sense that he made his living with cinema. Directing films was his job – a job in which he made use of both his extraordinary culture and his artisanal know-how. So *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* definitely wasn't 'the film of his life'. Lucio needed to work in order to earn his living and solve his own problems: he was constantly pitching his ideas around or being asked to direct this and that, because he was trying to shoot as many films as possible. Back in the 1970s, hundreds of films were produced every year in Italy, and most of the producers were not 'film people', film experts, or film buffs, but businessmen, entrepreneurs who decided to enter the 'film world', and invest in film production to make money. They exploited some genres that were profitable at that time – western, giallo, horror, etc. But there were also some producers who were totally obsessed by cinema, people who could go bankrupt just to be able to say: "This is the film that I produced, this is my film". Some producers made profit, some went bankrupt, some made loads of films with mixed box-office results and then changed their line of business completely. An example of the latter is Fabrizio De Angelis, who produced several successful horror movies directed by Lucio and then tried his luck in fields other than cinema. For most producers, filmmaking was like betting on horseracing: they had to choose a product to make and place their bets on it. Generally, producers had these long lists of titles and ideas: comedy, horror, western, adventure, erotica, musical, etcetera. These titles and ideas circulated and if somebody liked a certain idea, he would try to develop it and convince a producer to find the money to make it into a film, often in the attempt to exploit the success of a similar movie at the Italian or US box-office. I don't know exactly how *Il*

*cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* was born: I started working on the project when the film was already in production.

MG: I presume that the idea of having a Sicilian ‘transplanted’ to Northern Italy was due to the fact that Sicilian actor Lando Buzzanca was to star in the film.

FF: I can only make guesses, as I wasn’t involved in the film’s conception. It could be that the film stemmed from a meeting between Lucio and the crazy Milanese guys Beppe [Giuseppe] Viola (a sport journalist), Enzo Jannacci and Franco Nebbia (who became famous in the 1960s as singers and stand-up comedians). Buzzanca was a very popular film comic in 1970s Italy and it could be that he was hired by the producer for reasons of commercial appeal. But you also have to keep in mind that Buzzanca is Sicilian and Lucio also had Sicilian origins. Plus, they had already worked together for *Nonostante le apparenze... e purch  la nazione non lo sappia... all’onorevole piacciono le donne* (1972), directed by Lucio and starring Buzzanca.

MG: It could be that *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* was trying to exploit the Italian success of horror parody *Young Frankenstein* (Mel Brooks, 1974), or of one of the many comedies about class struggle made in Italy ever since *La classe operaia va in Paradiso* (Elio Petri, 1971) won the Grand Prix for Best Film in Cannes. I am thinking of *Il sindacalista* (Luciano Salce, 1972) (also starring Buzzanca as a Sicilian ‘transplanted’ to Northern Italy) and *Il padrone e l’operaio* (Stefano Vanzina as Steno, 1975). Do you remember if Fulci was satisfied with the finished film? In Paolo Albiero and Giacomo Cacciatore’s book *Il terrorista dei generi. Tutto il cinema di Lucio Fulci*, I read that Fulci was unhappy because the producer hired Buzzanca as a lead and by that time the actor’s popularity was waning. Moreover, I read that Fulci was also unhappy about the film’s box-office result (which seems a bit harsh on his part as the film did fairly well, making about 200 million lira and ranking as the 79<sup>th</sup> out of more than 400 Italian films released in the same season).

FF: Let’s go back to the horseracing metaphor... Do you have friends who are into betting on horseracing? Even when they win, they always complain, it’s never enough. Lucio was probably unsatisfied because the film didn’t make enough money for the producer to hire him to make another film straight away. As I told you, Lucio needed to work all the time, and ranking 9<sup>th</sup> out of 400 is always better than ranking 79<sup>th</sup> out of 400, isn’t it? [Laughter] 200 million could have been a good box-office result for a film made with economy, but it was nothing compared to the billion lira earned in the same years by *Fantozzi* (Luciano Salce, 1975) and *Il secondo tragico Fantozzi* (Luciano Salce, 1976)...

MG: My PhD thesis about vampires in Italian genre cinema deals with the idea that cinema reflects ideas, anxieties and fears that circulate in a given society during the historical period in which the film is made. Do you remember if, during the making of the film, Fulci or screenwriters Mario Amendola, Pupi Avati, Bruno Corbucci, Enzo Jannacci and Giuseppe Viola ever mentioned an explicit desire to do so with *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza*? For instance, a desire of talking about the workers’ struggle during the austerity and the lead years.

FF: No, I don’t remember them saying anything like this. I have experienced the *Sessantotto* and the *contestazione* years myself as a young student in Rome, and I can assure you that at the University in the 1970s there were a lot of student protests and young people talking just like the unionist character played by Francesca Romana Coluzzi in *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza*.

Lucio certainly wasn’t a right-wing person, but I wouldn’t say he was a left-wing militant. I believe (but this is just my personal opinion) that he simply wanted to make people laugh during those very

dark and heavy times of our history known as the lead years. At the same time, though, I believe that the film is not purely escapist entertainment. In my view, Lucio used grotesque, farcical, surreal, fantastic and horror elements to make us think about the real-life situation of 1970s Italy, where workers were tricked into giving blood to the capitalist *padroni*. So in a way the vampire triumphs in the end: this is certainly no laughing matter! Even if the film is a comedy, it contains serious elements as well.

MG: Tell me about your work on the song *Vampiro S.p.A.*, which sounds very attuned to the post-1968 zeitgeist.

FF: It really is a nice, funny song. But in making it, none of us had explicit political aims. The song was born from an on-set meeting between the trio Bixio-Frizzi-Tempera and Franco Nebbia, who had worked on the film's script and played the small role of businessman Meniconi. Franco was a man of many talents: musician, stand-up comedian, an extraordinary man, well-read and nice. Today he is mostly remembered for a great song he made in the 1960s, *Vademecum Tango*. Lucio immediately realised that we (the trio) got along well with Franco, so he told us: "Why don't you guys make a song together for the end credits?". Thus, the song *Vampiro S.p.A.* was born and put at the end of the film as a way to summarise the plot.

MG: *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* is told from the point of view of the employer, of the capitalist. *Fantozzi* and *Il secondo tragico Fantozzi*, on the other hand, are told from the point of view of the exploited employees. Tell me about your work on the soundtrack of the two Fantozzi films.

FF: Besides the difference that you have noted, there are a lot of similarities between *Il cav. Costante Nicosia demoniaco, ovvero: Dracula in Brianza* and the two Fantozzi movies, especially as far as themes are concerned (the focus on the workers' conditions, capitalist exploitation, etc). It could be that Lucio wanted to do something similar to *Fantozzi*, but changing the point of view, as you said. Surely he wanted to make a smash-hit comedy, just like the films of the Fantozzi series proved to be.

As for my work on the first two Fantozzi movies, I worked with actor Paolo Villaggio, who was also the author of the books on which *Fantozzi* and *Il secondo tragico Fantozzi* were based. Salce was a great professional, but he focused exclusively on preparing the shots and directing actors. Villaggio took care of the music: we met and he told me he had fallen in love with this Cat Stevens song from the soundtrack of *Harold & Maude* (Hal Ashby, 1971). Basically, he wanted something similar for *Fantozzi*. Starting from this concept, I developed the main musical theme for the film.

## **Appendix D: Interview with Ernesto Gastaldi (autumn 2018)**

Michael Guarneri: I'd like to start with a very general question. As a writer of genre movies active since the late 1950s, what is your opinion about the dichotomy between 'auteur cinema' and 'genre cinema' in the Italian film industry of the 1960s and 1970s? Did you feel discriminated against by the critics at that time?

Ernesto Gastaldi: We screenwriters knew all the critics: most of them were failed authors. We used to laugh about their (mostly scathing) reviews of our movies. We knew that genre cinema was important because the money it made allowed producers to try and make bigger, more demanding and prestigious films. We used to distinguish between true Authors and big-mouthed posers [*quaquaraquà*] like Francesco Maselli. Then Quentin Tarantino came to the Venice Film Festival and kneeled in front of Sergio Martino calling him 'Maestro', and all Italian critics suddenly became interested in Italian genre cinema...

MG: Let's talk about Renato Polselli's *L'amante del vampiro*, your official debut as a screenwriter. During my research at the Archivio Centrale dello Stato in Rome, I couldn't find any production data about the film. Could you tell me something about the producer and the production company Consorzio Italiano Films?

EG: I got to know the producer Bruno Bolognesi and his wife on the set of *L'amante del vampiro*, in late 1959. I was the screenwriter and the director's assistant. Bolognesi was a good and honest man, but he was not a professional. Everything was improvised and disorganised, a total mess, including his company Consorzio Italiano Films.

MG: Was *L'amante del vampiro* a film financed through the distribution's *minimo garantito*?

EG: Yes, it was. *L'amante del vampiro* was financed by a regional distributor, who provided the *minimo garantito* via promissory notes [*cambiali*].

MG: Do you have an idea of how much the movie cost? A similar vampire film from the same period, Piero Regnoli's *L'ultima preda del vampiro*, cost 37 million lire, according to the cost statement I found in the Archivio Centrale dello Stato.

EG: Yes, *L'amante del vampiro* cost around 40 million lire.

MG: I'd like to ask you about this sentence from your 1991 autobiography *Voglio entrare nel cinema*: "The vampire [in *L'amante del vampiro*] is Walter Brandi, who brought the deal. The friend of the vampire must be a young man from Tuscany, as he is willing to invest some money". In what sense had Walter Brandi "brought the deal"? Did he invest his own money in the production of *L'amante del vampiro*, as he would do a few months later for *L'ultima preda del vampiro*?

EG: No, Walter Bigari ("Walter Brandi" was a pseudonym) didn't have capital to invest in *L'amante del vampiro*. He simply introduced his friend Gino Turini to the producer. Turini wanted to be an actor really badly and he was willing to invest a few millions in the film in order to kickstart his acting career. The producer then gave Turini a role in exchange for the money.

MG: From what I read, I understand that Walter Brandi/Bigari was homosexual in real life?



EG: No, no, not at all! Walter was a true Don Juan! I don't know how he managed, but he had sex with one woman after the other. I became a friend of Walter's later in my career and every time he met a woman who embraced him, his problem was to remember if he had slept with her already. All his relationships with women lasted a maximum of three or four days.

Walter's career was a rollercoaster, with high peaks and deep abysses, both as an actor and as a producer. As an actor, he became a hero because during the shooting of a film at the Passo del Furlò he saved a colleague from drowning. Then he worked as Michel [sic] Sernas's body double for a while. In the end, he became a producer and he got some success with a couple of commercial movies.

MG: French actress H  l  ne R  my receives top billing in *L'amante del vampiro*. Was she hired in order to make an Italo-French co-production deal?

EG: H  l  ne was living in Rome at that time. I don't think the producer tried to make any kind of co-production deal. In any case, H  l  ne was useful to reach the foreign market. I guess that's why she was cast.

MG: Many of the people hired for *L'amante del vampiro* (yourself included) studied and graduated at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in Rome. According to the Italian law of the time, hiring personnel who graduated at CSC granted fiscal benefits for the producers, didn't it?

EG: Yes, it did. As former CSC alumni, we tried to create a union, but we didn't succeed. The CSC law could have given us the keys to Italian cinema. In fact, this law forced producers to hire in every Italian film one artistic cast member and one technical cast member who were CSC graduates. If the producers didn't abide by the CSC law, they could lose the Italian nationality certificate and all the connected benefits.

MG: Did you ever shoot any scene of *L'amante del vampiro* in the Istituto Nazionale Luce studios mentioned in the opening credits?

EG: No, the film was shot in Artena. The Istituto Nazionale Luce studios were hired only as a formality, to fulfil legal obligations.

MG: Contrary to the Italian Gothic horrors to come, *L'amante del vampiro* is set in Italy (see the opening pan and the typically-Italian names of the characters)... Were there particular reasons behind this 'autarchic' choice?

EG: No, there were no particular reasons. Simply, we were still very na  ve. Only later did we start using foreign names, pseudonyms and settings.

MG: Were the dance scenes of *L'amante del vampiro* an attempt to exploit the success of *Europa di notte* (Alessandro Blasetti, 1959)?

EG: No.

MG: The ending of *L'amante del vampiro* is a bit unclear in my opinion, as we don't really know if Luisa (H  l  ne R  my) is alive, dead or vampirised. Was this ambiguous ending chosen in order to have a chance to make a sequel?

EG: No.

MG: The title of Riccardo Freda's *L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock* was chosen to exploit the popularity of Alfred Hitchcock in Italy and worldwide. The title that you originally chose, though, was *Raptus*...

EG: I was still naïve, I guess. The producers Donati and Carpentieri were not, and they chose the 'Hichcock' title instead of *Raptus*...

MG: What follows is the preventive-censorship report on your screenplay for *L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock*. I'd like to know what you think about it... "If we are not mistaken, necrophilia has already been mentioned in other films but, until now, it has never been used as the central theme of a movie. In this sense, the necrophiliac protagonist [of *L'orribile segreto del Dr. Hichcock*] is a rather original idea. However, this originality was nipped in the bud because, after the first few scenes, the screenplay immediately starts to follow the most abused clichés of the horror genre [...]. No remarks to be made about obscenity".

EG: The criticism is fair enough from a stylistic point of view, but director Riccardo Freda was a genius and the film made a lot of money abroad.

MG: Let's move on to Camillo Mastrocinque's "Carmilla"-inspired *La cripta e l'incubo*. Sheridan Le Fanu's 1871 novella "Carmilla" was published for the first time in Italy in 1960, in a Feltrinelli anthology edited by Ornella Volta and Valerio Riva. Did you read, or were you asked to read, "Carmilla" before writing *La cripta e l'incubo*?

EG: My co-screenwriter Tonino Valerii told me about that novella.

MG: Tell me about the idea of having a 'young hero' character in *La cripta e l'incubo*. This young male hero is nowhere to be found in "Carmilla"...

EG: What can I say? A young hero was important for the commercial potential of the film.

MG: What would you think if you read an essay in which the lesbianism of *La cripta e l'incubo* is connected to the crisis of post-war Italian masculinity and the post-war female emancipation?

EG: Now you sound like Maselli... ;-)

MG: In the opening credits of Polselli's *Il mostro dell'Opera*, the story and screenplay are credited to you, Giuseppe Pellegrini and Polselli himself. However, I remember an interview you gave a few years ago, in which you denied writing the film. If so, why were you credited?

EG: I don't remember the exact reason. Maybe the producer needed a CSC graduate.

MG: *Il mostro dell'Opera* had a lot of troubles. It was shot in 1961, but was released only in 1964, apparently because the producer had financial problems. The film was produced by a company called "Nord Industrial Film di Ferdinando Anselmetti" and based in your hometown, Biella. Did you know this Biella-based producer called Ferdinando Anselmetti?

EG: Yes, I knew the poor wretch: he pretended to be a count, but he was penniless.

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