

Energy Vampires: Traumatic Consumption and Emotional Excess

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The idea of vampiric entities feeding off human energies is not new in Western culture. This is not just about people and creatures who can make you feel unwell or weak when you are in their presence, but also those who visit you in your dreams, such as incubi and succubi — John Fuseli's painting *The Nightmare* (1781) is perhaps one of the most well-known representations of this. Indeed, the arts and literature in the Romantic period proved fruitful for energy-draining vampiric entities, with the popular imagination filling up with figures such as the Wandering Jew — *The Monk* (Lewis 1796), *Melmoth the Wanderer* (Maturin 1820), *Trilby* (du Maurier 1894) — and the Flying Dutchman — ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’ (Coleridge 1798), *The Memoirs of Herr von Schnabelewopski* (Heine 1833), *Der fleigende Holländer* [The Flying Dutchman] (Wagner 1843) — or the less human kind seen in ‘What is it: A Mystery’ (O’Brien 1859) and *The Horla* (Maupassant 1886) that not only brought misfortune with them, but drew energy and health from those in their vicinity. Even John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), arguably based on the author's experience of traveling with the vampiric Lord Byron, who literally sucked the life out of him,¹ saw the vampire feeding on emotions as much as it did on blood (Gaspirini 2019: 102).

In many respects this would seem apt in the Romantic period, an era that itself can be seen to have fed on strong emotions and feelings (see Faflak and Sha 2014: 3). By the end of the following century, possibly due to growing fears around miscegenation and degeneration in the British Empire, the types of vampires involved and the kinds of energy they consumed quickly evolved beyond the sole domain of the dapperly dressed gentleman, as seen in *The Vampyre*, which inspired stories such as *Margery of Quether* (1891) by Sabine Baring Gould (which sees a baby-like rat creature latch on to the chest of a young man with its single

tooth, slowly drawing energy from him until she is a beautiful young woman and he a dried-out old man); *Blood of the Vampire* (1897) by Florence Marryat, featuring a young woman born in the Caribbean whose father was a vivisectionist and mother a voodoo priestess, and who begins to realize all whom she loves become ill and die, and thus who finally decides to kill herself to save her betrothed; *The House of the Vampire* (1907) by George Sylvester Viereck, featuring an impresario who drains his prospective protégés of their creative energies so that he may remain the darling of society; and *The Transfer* (1912) by Algernon Blackwood, which centers on a piece of ground that draws the life energy from any that come near it.

Whilst a large amount of current vampire narratives focus on the more spectacular blood drinkers, or what Jacqueline Lichtenberg notes as the ‘monster’ approach (1992: 4), energy absorbers have never gone away. In fact, since the inter-war years and Dion Fortune’s *Psychic Self Defense* (1930), there has been much written about ‘real-life’ energy vampires, or people who seem to cause those around them to feel emotionally drained. The idea gained greater traction in the 1960s with writers such as Anton LeVey, founder of the Church of Satan, using it to describe emotionally or spiritually weak people who draw energies from those around them, though singer-songwriter Peter Hammill used it in the 1970s in regard to intrusive and over-zealous fans. More recently it has been used in relation to wellbeing and self-help books in terms of toxic relationships and the dangers of certain personality types (see Northrop 2019 and Vendeweghe 2019 for examples), and also in relation to certain members of the vampire community — those who identify as being vampires or sanguinarians (Belanger 2004).² In comparison to their blood-sucking kin, though, energy vampires have received far less explicit representation on screen, other than notable exceptions such as *Lifeforce* (Hooper 1985) and *Lost Girl* (Lovretta 2010-16). This last example also shows why many energy vampires are not recognized on screen, as they are often named as being some-

thing else, in this case a succubus, rather than categorized by what they do — feeding on human energies. In this sense, the present article will categorize entities, whether ancient gods or sentient wormholes, by what they do and not by what they are called. More so, it will show how such inherently vampiric manifestations have evolved to garner their food in elaborate, yet culturally apposite, ways. Following Nina Auerbach’s observation that every generation creates the vampire it needs or deserves (1995: 9), this article will show how these manifestations draw their strength from what might be seen as one of the defining characteristics of the early twenty-first century, following the events of 9/11 and the War on Terror: that of emotional and psychic trauma (see Kaplan 2005; Rothe 2011; Hinton and Good 2015).

To see how this works, the present article will look at four films depicting such entities that sustain themselves through consuming various kinds of human emotional energies: *Event Horizon* (Anderson 1997), *Nothing Left to Fear* (Leonardi III 2013), *The Ritual* (Bruckner 2017), and *In the Tall Grass* (Natali 2019). *Event Horizon* is rather early to include here, but it serves as an example of what was to follow and neatly sums up ideas around trauma and consumption, as well as the vampiric century being anti-or pre-Christian in some way.

Because of the unusual nature of the entities discussed, it is worth defining exactly what is meant by ‘vampire’. Vampires are not only entities that appear as human, but can manifest in almost any shape or guise. Indeed, Bram Stoker’s Count Dracula is so transformative that he (it) can more aptly be described as a miasmatic entity that chooses to coalesce as a bat, wolf, or human at various times in the story.³ Consequently, the designation ‘vampire’ will be used here to describe an entity that has a long enough lifespan to be considered immortal/eternal,⁴ that must require some form of human essence/energy to survive — Nina Auerbach observes these energies can be as diverse as ‘self control, creativity, talent, memories’ and even ‘writing time’ (1995: 102), and that has an intentionality in finding and de-

vouring its preferred food choice, as in it actively searches out or lures humans towards itself.⁵ *Event Horizon* provides an interesting example of this, showing its vampiric entity deep in space and yet engineering a way back to its food source on Earth. It is worth noting that *Hellraiser* (Barker 1987) informs the core idea of *Event Horizon*, and in many ways the device that creates the wormhole in the later film is reminiscent of the Lament Configuration in the earlier movie. However, *Event Horizon* is vampiric in a way that *Hellraiser* is not through the intentionality of the device, as will be discussed below.

The film begins in 2047 with the deep-space research ship, *Event Horizon*, reappearing, after a seven-year absence, near Neptune. The *Lewis and Clark* is sent to investigate the craft, and as they approach, the crew are awakened from cryostasis⁶ and told what is so special about the ship they are rescuing; onboard is an experimental wormhole-making device that allows the ship to travel anywhere in the universe almost instantly. However, when first activated, the device made the *Event Horizon* disappear without trace. The device's creator, Dr. Weir (Sam Neill), is onboard the *Lewis and Clarke*, and unbeknownst to the rest of the crew, he has already been experiencing disturbing dreams — dream states are often a convenient way for vampiric entities to create and feed off strong emotions, as seen in the films *Solaris* (Tarkovsky 1972; Soderbergh 2002) and *Interstellar* (Nolan 2014).⁷ Once docked with the *Event Horizon*, two of the crew, Peters (Kathleen Quinlan) and Justin (Jack Noseworthy), board the ship — with Peters going to the bridge and Justin going to the gravity drive. The drive is a huge metal ball covered in spikes, suspended in a large metal ring. The room around it mirrors this design by being circular with spikes protruding from its surface. As Justin enters the room, the ball suddenly activates and creates a vertical pool of viscous black liquid in the ring, which pulls the crewman into it whilst emitting a gravity pulse that reverberates throughout the ship and ultimately damages the *Lewis and Clark*. Fortunately, Justin

is tethered to another crew member, and they manage to pull him out of the viscous fluid, but he is in a catatonic state.

The gravity drive is the main focus of the narrative and is worth looking at more closely, as although it has the look of a huge, metal medieval torture device, it is also strangely organic. Once gravity is restored, the device sits in a large pool of water, making it look like a huge, metal thistle head with the spiked panels covering the walls and resembling large pieces of beetle or crab shell and also giving it the feel of a huge seed pod, though not one to release new life (seeds) into the air, but to trap it tightly within. Unsurprisingly, then, this feeling of it being a living entity increases throughout the film. At one point, Weir accesses the service ducts around the device by lifting off one of the spiked panels that configures its skin or shell. Once Weir is inside, the ducts glow bright green with light, as though the circuitry of the device are veins filled with chlorophyll, and that the machine is some kind of huge exotic plant that does not require sunlight, or the energy from the ship to feed itself, but something else — this is oddly reminiscent of H.G. Wells's short story, 'The Strange Orchid' (1895), where a plant lures collectors towards it, 'glamouring' them and then feeding off them. This 'something else' is of course provided by humans, and the crew begin to realize that the device is reacting to their presence, not only causing the waking nightmares that they all seem to be having since boarding the ship, but also reacting to when people are in close proximity to it. As Miller (Laurence Fishburne), the captain of the Lewis and Clark, and Lt. Starck (Joely Richardson) discuss later:

Starck: "I think that there's a connection between the readings and the hallucinations [the crew are experiencing], like, like they're all part of a defensive reaction, some sort of immune system. [. . .] I'm saying that this ship is reacting to us and the reactions are getting stronger. It's as if the ship brought something back with it, a life force of some kind'.

Miller: “What are you telling me? That this ship is alive?”. (Anderson 1997)

This is not strictly true, as it is not the ship but the drive itself that is alive, as shown by its centrality to all that happens and by its framing as the heart of the Event Horizon. In this sense, it is something of a Venus flytrap that draws its prey towards it, and then restrains the prey within itself to be slowly drawn off/digested.⁸ Interestingly, the drive does not just want fear from those it traps, but actively craves the emotions caused by traumatic events; Weir’s hallucinations involve his wife who committed suicide; Peters sees her son whom she had to leave back on Earth; and Miller sees a friend who was burnt alive.

As the film races towards its conclusion, the crew are progressively terrorized and ‘eaten’ by the drive, which in true vampiric fashion glamours Weir so that he becomes a surrogate — a ‘Renfield’ or vampire’s assistant — and leads the attack on the remaining crew by luring them into the device’s embrace. As the narrative ends, the Event Horizon is split in two, allowing for the bridge to act as an escape craft and take Starck and Cooper (Richard T. Jones) in cryostasis back to Earth. Starck is awoken during a nightmare and scrambles out of the stasis tube just as their rescuers enter the chamber. Still spluttering, Starck looks at one of the rescue crew as they remove their helmet and, to her horror, sees Weir’s grinning, damaged face — at various points in the film he appears with gouged-out eyes or large cuts across his face, effectively using trauma to incite trauma in others. Screaming, she suddenly finds herself waking up again as the rescue crew are helping her out of the stasis pod. Stark is hysterical now and Copper, revived from his own pod, restrains her and asks for her to be given a sedative. However, behind them the automatic door to the chamber mysteriously shuts by itself, suggesting that the nightmare is never going to be over, with one traumatic reawakening followed by another. In this way, there is no way of knowing where they are, or if Stark and Copper ever left the Event Horizon at all, seeing them eternally caught in the vampiric embrace of the gravity drive; where it can digest the fear and terror created by a

never-ending nightmare.⁹ In this sense, the Hell that *Event Horizon* cites as its final destination is, rather, the ongoing experience of never-ending trauma which the vampiric gravity drive requires to keep itself alive. The next film, *Nothing Left to Fear*, again uses the idea of Hell to describe how a vampiric entity holds a town in constant fear so that they will become its willing servants and provide it with a constant source of traumatic energy.

The location changes from outer space to small-town America, but equally revolves around a doorway between worlds and feeding on fear and trauma; though here it is the entity and not the door that is the vampire. This film sees a pastor, Dan (James Tupper), and his young family move to the small town of Stull, Kansas.¹⁰ His retiring predecessor, Pastor Kingsman (Clancy Brown), does all he can to help them, as do the other town members. However, things start to go wrong, first with his youngest daughter, Mary (Jennifer Stone), finding a large tooth in a cake and being extremely ill, then subsequently she is kidnapped at the annual Summer Festival. Mary finds herself tied to a post next to the gateway to Hell, hidden at the town centre, and Pastor Kingsman is about to sacrifice her to the Devil to guarantee the ongoing survival of the town. However, sacrifice here actually means being possessed by an entity so that it can run amok for one night before being sent back to Hell. Of interest to us here is the vampiric nature of the entity and the terror it inspires in those it chooses as its victims.

The town appears to have grown around the dimensional portal, which seems little more than a shallow stone hole in the ground surrounded by indeterminate carvings and some water at its base. This is actually not unlike *Jugface* [The Pit] (Kinkle 2013), which also features a vampiric hole in the ground with a community that serves its needs. In *Nothing Left to Fear*, though, the vampiric hole is shown as being pre-Christian, or at least pre-European settlers, and suggests some primeval entity that has always been in America and that supports, feeds-off, and in many ways describes the communities around it (Day 2002: 4).

Pastor Kingsman cuts Mary, and her blood flows down towards the pool as though drawn by an unseen force. As the blood enters the water, rather than dispersing it takes on the appearance of a long, thin cord, snaking its way to the centre of the pool. Once there, the blood releases an entity that possesses Mary, turning her eyes black. Mary is returned to her bed at home, and as she awakens, her eyes are still completely black but now her skin is deathly white, suggestive of her now undead nature. She immediately attacks her family, beginning with her mother, Wendy (Anna Heche), in an abject parody of the loving daughter she once was, moving in an insect-like fashion and stretching her mouth impossibly wide to try and draw her mother in.¹¹ Wendy, now hysterical with fear, is finally grabbed by Mary, who begins to drain the energy from her (as black veins that pop-up on her skin) and eventually leaves her mother as a dried-out husk of ash, indeed in a way that is similar to the alien vampires in *Lifeforce*.

It is worth noting here that much of the terror inspired is predicated on the abjection of the familial, reversing Julia Kristeva's idea of the abject mother so that it is the child that becomes alien and other (McAfee 2004: 8). This sees the previous safety of familial bonds becoming violent and destructive, a literal expression of domestic abuse and trauma. This is an important theme that returns later as Mary proceeds to drain the life out of her father and younger brother, all of whom die in abject terror.¹² The undead Mary seems inordinately drawn to her own family members, as though they alone produce the only kind of emotional excess and trauma that she can feed on.¹³ The surviving sister, Rebecca (Rebekah Brandes), helps lure Mary into the wooden building housing the gate using her own blood to send the vampiric entity back into Hell, which sees the same black viscous fluid drain from Mary and flow back into the stone pool, leaving her an empty shell. It transpires that the townspeople regularly invite new pastors with families to their town, as only they seem able to provide the very specific kind of abject terror based on domestic trauma that the vampiric entity can feed

on.¹⁴ The next film, *The Ritual*, moves location again, this time to Northern Sweden, but remains with the idea of ancient vampiric entities and the centrality of human trauma and suffering to their diet.

The Ritual revolves around four friends hiking in the Sarek National Park in Sweden in remembrance of their friend who was killed the previous year. The group's mood is as dark as the skies above them, and one of their number, Luke (Rafe Spall), is obviously plagued by the trauma of what he feels was his part in his friend's death. They decide to cut through a forest to speed their journey, but quickly lose their bearings. The forest reacts to their presence by producing strange noises and shifting in front of their eyes; it seems a physical representation of the disorientating trauma that Luke is still experiencing. More than this, the forest creates a space that purposely heightens the emotional states of those entering it, making it something of an extended spider web for the energy vampire at its core — in this sense, the vampire is drawn to the traumatic energy the group emits, and it builds its web around them.

Sheltering from a storm in a wood cabin, the four friends discover strange symbols and a wooden effigy of a decapitated human with antlers for hands. They all have vivid nightmares, and Luke awakens to find puncture marks on his chest (the bite of the vampire). The friends begin to act strangely as though locked in their own, individual, traumatizing worlds; they eventually realize they are being stalked by something, and one of them is snatched and dragged off into the trees. Luke and the other survivor, Dom (Sam Troughton), come upon a torchlit village where they are quickly beaten and tied up. It transpires that the village is populated by the devotees to an ancient forest god called Jötunn, who requires their terrified worship in exchange for immortality. Dom is to be sacrificed to this god whilst Luke is offered the chance to become a devotee — his ongoing trauma making him the perfect supplicant to the trauma-energy vampire. After Dom is sacrificed to Jötunn (he is given a

horrific vision for the vampire to feed upon his fear before killing him), Luke escapes his bonds and hears prayers and screaming coming from a room above him. Entering it, Luke finds the twisted, desiccated bodies of Jötunn's immortal worshipers locked in a never-ending cycle of trauma and supplication — there is much here that is reminiscent of the desiccated lovers that Miriam Blaylock keeps with her in *The Hunger* (Scott 1984).¹⁵

Horrified, Luke sets fire to the room and the supplicants, and escapes whilst the enraged Jötunn, cut off from his food supply, randomly strikes out at his remaining worshippers. However, realizing that its only source of trauma energy is leaving, Jötunn pursues Luke through the forest and gives him hallucinations. The visions continually re-enact Luke's trauma, making it difficult to distinguish between reality and nightmare, and increasing the sense that, maybe, the entire trip has just been a traumatic repetition in the guilt-ridden man's head. The god finally catches Luke and tries to force him to become a worshipper, but the young man has an axe from the village with him and buries it in the monster's head before running out of the forest and into the sunlight.

The Ritual's ending can be read various ways. It could be as simple as the contemporary, rational city-dweller overcoming the monstrosity of the old-world superstition of the rural past, or even a man defeating a monster in a horror film. However, the prominence of the idea of trauma throughout the film strongly suggests another interpretation. This would see *The Ritual* more in the mold of films like *Triangle* (Smith 2009) and *Shutter Island* (Scorsese 2010), both of which depict extremely traumatic conditions that produce internal or parallel worlds separating their respective protagonists 'not only from their former selves, but from the "real" of their world' (Müller 2014: 123-4). In *The Ritual*, Luke is indeed consumed by his trauma, but it is that trauma which attracts the energy vampire in the first place. This also explains the marks of the vampire upon him, left by a night-visit of the monster — a central trope of the vampire genre. Once in the village in the heart of the forest, the vampire's

lair, Luke is so strongly under Jötunn's influence that he has little sense of what is real and what is not, not unlike when Bram Stoker's Jonathan Harker is in Dracula's Castle. As Luke escapes the village the tension between reality and traumatic fantasy, which has pervaded the whole film, becomes untenable and collapses, thus leaving him lost in a traumatic world he can never escape and a new disciple of the trauma-energy vampire Jötunn. This makes him like Starck in *Event Horizon*, who is caught in a never-ending nightmare providing a continual source of traumatic energy for the vampire to feed upon.

The final movie discussed here, *In the Tall Grass*, returns us to America, but again in an environment that shows the traumatic rupture between the present and the distant past — a forward orientation that purposely forgets the past (Hantke 2016: 43) — as well as the ancient powers that live upon the potential of the future. Not unlike the monster in *Nothing Left to Fear*, the energy vampire in *Grass* is hidden in plain sight; but rather than in the middle of town in the mid-west, this monster resides in a field of tall grass. The grass, which from the outside looks about shoulder height, seems perfectly normal until you enter it: at which point, not unlike other vampiric environments mentioned above, the grass seems to change and ensnares its victim inside. The field is by a minor road that only seems to have occasional traffic and has an abandoned church next to it. A car containing brother and sister, Cal (Avery Whitted) and a heavily pregnant Becky (Laysla De Oliveira), stop in the church parking lot and hear the voice of a young boy, Tobin (Will Buie Jr.), calling for help from the field. Becky goes into the field to find the boy, but as Cal follows her into the grass, he loses her. Indeed, Becky cannot find Cal either, although they can hear each other's voices. More so, their respective voices seem to move even when they are both standing still.

What follows is an hallucinatory nightmare of meetings and violence between the characters trapped in the grass; Cal, Becky, Becky's estranged boyfriend Travis (Harrison Gilbertson), Tobin, his father Ross (Patrick Wilson), and mother Natalie (Olivia Wilson) —

the last three trapped on a never-ending cycle of domestic abuse — all centered on a large standing stone in the middle of the field. It seems the stone controls the experience of both space and time around it so that the various actors involved may have been lost in its orbit for minutes or years, allowing them to see themselves in the past and the future, and both dead and alive. As the film reaches its crescendo, Becky is raped by the grass and passes out, Ross kills Cal and then finds Becky, she stabs him in the eye and runs off; but as Becky does so she is grabbed by creatures made from the grass itself, who then take her to the stone. Here Becky sees carvings that describe her pregnancy, and it starts to become clear just how old the stone is. Becky has visions that show it to be ancient and to have been situated where it is well before the arrival of the European settlers, or even the birth of humanity itself. Somehow the ancient stone has developed a need for human pain and trauma to survive, and it can manipulate time and space to do this.

Travis realizes the only way he will understand what is occurring is by touching, thus being bitten by, the stone; in that moment he knows what he must do.¹⁶ He takes Tobin to the edge of the field — suddenly being able to navigate his way through the grass — and points him towards an escape route that comes out inside the church. Once there, Tobin leaves the building just as Becky and Cal arrive, and he convinces them to drive away. They leave, taking Tobin with them, and Travis, seeing this, dies peacefully in the grass.

Whilst this would seem to offer some kind of ending to the story, it obviously does not. The fracturing and layering of time caused by the stone means that once you have entered its lair (the field), there are multiple versions of you that will never be able to leave. More so, even though some versions of you will have never entered the grass, there are versions that are now and forever being raped, killed, dying, giving birth, being attacked, and running away from would-be killers — all of which creates a never-ending traumatic repetition of fear, pain and violence. Indeed, once Travis touched the stone, he would have been

‘bitten’ by the vampire himself, calling in to question everything he sees and experiences afterwards; did he really help Tobin escape and prevent Becky and Cal from entering the field (especially as we have seen both of them dead at one point), or is this just part of another loop that will see him awaken and endlessly repeat another trauma-laden narrative in the tall grass?

Traumatic Nonconclusions

The four vampiric entities mentioned above all fall into the idea of what Margaret L. Carter describes as ancient ‘tyrannical [. . .] Lord and master[s]’ that live invisibly amongst us (2019: 22). Yet, whilst being in many ways timeless, these vampiric entities are very much of the moment in which their stories are written. Indeed, such vampires have always been with us, but now they have transformed their appearance in relation to the spirit of the cultural imaginary in the twenty-first century.

In this, sense *Event Horizon* might seem a bit of an outlier with respect to the other films mentioned here, not only because of its earlier date, but also because it is set in outer space; however, the film is worth including in my analysis because of the tropes it establishes around never-ending nightmares and the creation and sustaining of traumatic events and experiences. More so, much of the emotional excess in the film revolves around familial trauma; Weir is caught in the recurring trauma of his wife killing herself due to his absence; Peters both ‘mothers’ Justin, whom she calls ‘baby bear’, and has recurring nightmares about her son back on Earth, seeing them both die. In similar vein, *Nothing Left to Fear* is all about the trauma of family/domestic violence. *The Ritual* would seem to be less concerned with family (we do see Dom hallucinating about his wife, which points more clearly to the idea that many in the group of friends have left their partners and families to go on the trip), though there is much to do with childhood and the ‘family’ of friends one can make when

younger. *In the Tall Grass*, as discussed above, very much centers on family and the abuse of fathers and the horrors of abortion — indeed, one can read the film as Becky’s trauma over deciding to keep her child, no matter her fears over what ‘family’ life might look like (Ross, Natalie, and Tobin).¹⁷

What emerges from this comparison of films is the suggestion that all the vampiric entities manifest something akin to the culturally repressed (e.g., ignored domestic and familial violence) that lurks beneath the veneer of civilization and is purposely ignored until it erupts to the surface. Of particular note here, and which indicates the importance of the figure of the vampire in this context, is how the entity feeds on the very trauma that it creates and ‘glamours’ the environment around it to make it seem normal, even though the violence and abuse continue unabated. Ultimately, then, all four films suggest that such violence, and the trauma associated with hidden domestic and familial abuse, resists all forms of reparation or resolution and that the vampiric entity that embodies it is both insatiable and indestructible. Indeed, *Event Horizon* and *In the Tall Grass* further suggest that any association at all with the vampire or its lair will entrap you in its embrace forever. The world in these films, then, is one that has a violence at its core that we can never escape — its vampiric proclivities seeing it as one that exists on the violence it creates. Consequently, all four films suggest that such hidden or ignored violence creates a traumatic repetition that will exist in perpetuity for all the time it is allowed to stay in the darkness, becoming a nightmare that twenty-first century society refuses to wake up from.

Notes

¹ Indeed, Polidori ended his life in 1821, arguably due to the ongoing commotion/scandal of whether *The Vampyre* was written by himself or Lord Byron (a misleading attribution encouraged by the book’s original publishers). Through the scandal Byron quite literally sucked out Polidori’s will to live.

² Indeed, the various iterations of *The Mummy* (Freund 1932) have consistently featured a vampiric undead entity that drains its victims of their life force.

³ See Bacon (2021)

⁴ Evolutionary vampires, i.e., those which are not supernatural and have evolved separately to humans — as seen in Miriam Blaylock in *The Hunger* (Streiber 1981), Shori in *Fledgling* (Butler 2005), the family in *The Hamiltons* (The Butcher Brothers 2006), and even The Strangers in *Dark City* (Proyas 1998) — often have hugely extended life spans in relation to humankind and so can be considered immortal in some way.

⁵ In many ways, texts such as *The Ring* (Suzuki 1991-2019) and *The Grudge* (Shimizu 2001-present) exhibit many such vampiric elements in line with this, and although the spirit in the latter tends to inspire anger and violence rather than feed on it, it can be argued that Sadako in the former actually feeds on fear.

⁶ Interestingly, Aspasia Stephanou talks of cryostasis as creating the undead, holding the bodies in an eternal moment where they neither age nor degrade (2014: 42). This reading would also see the crew already being undead in some way and therefore more open to the influence of the vampire onboard the Event Horizon.

⁷ See Bacon (2017: 164-80).

⁸ F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922) uses the image of a Venus Flytrap to represent the vampire and its connection to nature.

⁹ A similar scenario is seen in Season 5, episode 10, 'Soul Purpose' (January 21, 2004) of *Angel*, where a vampiric parasite latches onto Angel causing him to remain in a never-ending dream whilst it feeds on him.

¹⁰ The film was inspired by the urban legend that Stull, Kansas, is home to one of the seven known gateways to hell.

¹¹ There is much in her construction that is similar to that of Sadako from *The Ring* franchise (1999-2018) and satanic possession films, such as *The Last Exorcism* (Stamm 2010), that also feature a pastor unsuspectingly entering a cultist community.

¹² Interestingly, this reverses the normal trope of vampire films where only the intended victim is aware of the existence of the vampire (see Silver and Ursini 1997: 161); here, they are the only ones who do not know.

¹³ Returning to one's loved ones being a common characteristic of folkloric vampires (Tichelaar 2012: 210).

¹⁴ There is a certain logic to this if the vampiric entity is seen as oppositional to God and the Holy Family, and by extension the sacrosanct nature of the American family (which the film makes explicit). The entity's exclusion from the former is revenged by feeding on the trauma it causes in the latter.

¹⁵ An endless food supply, not unlike the human farming seen in vampire films like *Thirst* (Hardy 1979), *The Matrix* (The Wachowski's 1999) and *Daybreakers* (Spierig Brothers 2009).

¹⁶ The idea of becoming vampiric to defeat the vampire is not uncommon within the vampire genre and has occurred from Kay Caldwell in *Son of Dracula* (Siodmak 1936) through to Eben Oleson in *30 Days of Night* (Slade 2007).

¹⁷ As with many horror films, its message of abjection and/or transgression often reinforces very 'traditional' views, as noted by Robin Wood (2003) in terms of the family, and by Angela M. Smith (2011) in terms of disability (which can also be seen to work for trauma) and how those who transgress or lack the ability to conform are punished.

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