RESTRICTED

The Many Lives of Lord Ruthven: Somatic Adaptation, Reincarnation and (Mass) Consumption of Polidori's *The Vampyre*

Jane M. Kubiesa

Before the Transylvanian Count Dracula took on the moniker of the nineteenth century's archetypal vampire in *Dracula* (1897), there existed a much more famous vampire for contemporary readers — John Polidori's Lord Ruthven. *The Vampyre* (1819) was written by Polidori almost a century before *Dracula,* and almost thirty years before *Dracula* author Bram Stoker was born. It was so well received by appetitive audiences that more than twenty nineteenth-century authors, playwrights and librettists across Europe adapted and reincarnated Polidori's vampire antagonist, Lord Ruthven, to meet the needs of readers and audiences for the rest of the century, with many more taking inspiration from the novella's successes for vampire retellings.

Ruthven was the first literary vampire to exploit, and be exploited by, popular culture in this manner, and the first vampire to both consume and become a product of consumption as we understand it today. The concept that the vampire is subject to returns, rewritings and resurrections is commonplace, as can be seen in the vast vampire canon spanning centuries in folklore, poetry and fiction, and more recently in film and television. However, it can be argued that this cycle of rebirth, mass reproduction and large-scale audience consumption began with Polidori's vampire and his subsequent adaptations. These adaptations started to appear just a year after the original was published, and continued to be produced until the end of the 1800s. Critics have regarded these rewritings or reinventions with varying degrees of appreciation. These adaptations also range from reproduction to outright plagiarism (Morlock 2004: 7-19). The accusation of plagiarism is not new where Lord Ruthven is concerned, as

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

Polidori himself was labelled a plagiarist for claiming authorship of *The Vampyre* (Butler 2013: 29). That there was such a commercial interest in these reinvented and multiple Lord Ruthvens speaks to the popularity of the character and to its resonance with audiences in that specific cultural climate. After all, it is no coincidence that multiples of the same figure written within similar narratives became highly popular in an era that saw the birth of mass manufacturing and mass consumption as a result of the Industrial Revolution.

The genesis of *The Vampyre* is somewhat confused. It is well-known that the story was originally attributed to Lord Byron and published under his name in several reprints before being claimed by his former physician, Polidori; however, many did not believe the truth of the matter even after Byron's rebuttal. Therefore, at the very outset this vampire is already doubled in the public's perception as being simultaneously 'Byron's Ruthven' and 'Polidori's Ruthven'. Reading the vampire as the product of the flamboyant and dangerous aristocrat had very different literary implications when compared to seeing him as the creation of the unknown doctor whose fame came largely from his association with Byron. As a result, Ruthven was divided into two imagined Ruthvens even before the first reinvention of this antagonist was penned. In terms of the literary marketplace's consumption of him, he was already two distinct fictional products.

Polidori admitted that his novella was founded on Byron's vampire story, 'Fragment of a Novel' (1819). It has also been surmised that the relationship between Ruthven and protagonist Aubrey is, in fact, a fictional representation of the relationship between Byron and Polidori (Macdonald and Scherf 1994: 17). What is more, Christopher Frayling notes the connection between Lady Caroline Lamb's 1816 literary character Ruthven Glenarvon, which was based on Byron, and Polidori's subsequent self-same use of that unusual name (Frayling 1992: 16). This somewhat muddied and complex multiplicity of origination also includes inspiration from a German ghost story (Frayling 1992: 16), which attracted reader

RESTRICTED

attention and grounded the Lord Ruthven figure firmly in the realm of the malleable, a position only accentuated by the fact that the vampire himself has unstated and mysterious origins within the narrative. Lord Ruthven is at once a character whose very existence is unknowable and whose continued survival beyond death is shrouded in mystery. Thus, this vampire begins his literary life with doubled origins both inside and outside its pages, and the scene is appropriately set for the numerous Lord Ruthvens who were to follow and for the consumerist mentality that they gave rise to amongst its audiences.

Ruthven's birth and vampiric rebirths coincided with a cultural phenomenon that heralded far reaching changes across Europe; his rise in popularity can be linked to the rise of the First Industrial Revolution and the spread of new technology. These changes wrought profound societal and historical consequences not just in Great Britain, where it was greatest felt, but across the world. The First Industrial Revolution saw the shift to mechanised production processes where innovative machinery took over manufacturing in many industries. Ruthven's ability to exist beyond a typical lifespan spoke to the infinite possibilities implied by new technologies, and to a dark kind of optimism, at the heart of which lay nineteenth-century British notions of expansion, both technologically and globally. Not only could this being live longer than other 'men', he could defy death and be reborn to live multiple lives in a way that mirrored the seeming relentlessness of real-life industrial production processes.

As the first modern vampire, Lord Ruthven moved beyond his characterless forebears to truly exist as the variety of vampire we recognise today. Erik Butler explains:

> For the whole of the eighteenth century, the vampire had little personality. No literary or artistic depiction gave life to the monster as a being that could really engage the fantasy of a broad public. The fortunes of the undead changed in 1819 with the publication of a short tale called simply '*The Vampyre*'. (2013: 5)

RESTRICTED

Polidori undoubtedly 'gave life' to his vampire. In fact, Ruthven is remembered for his multiple lives and his ability to negate death. His very 'amphibiousness' (Butler 2013: 28), as Butler terms it, is where the horror of Lord Ruthven lies — in boundary-crossing and social and physical adaptability. It is hard to say which poses more danger: a nobleman who blurs the lines between high society and criminal life, or a vampire who distorts the very divisions between life and death. Both of these aspects represent corresponding risks in coeval nineteenth-century life. Ruthven's reincarnate nature parallels the seemingly never-ending production capabilities of industrialisation and technological advancement, and offers a warning against unfettered fabrication in an era fuelled by consumer demand and unprecedented levels of manufacturing. The unguarded fluidity of his genealogy speaks to the future rise of the middle-classes and the wealthy technocrats and industrialists at the heart of Britain's mechanisation who threatened to steal influence from the landed classes.

Butler notes the lack of detail in Lord Ruthven's physical descriptions and the 'studied vagueness' of his actions, ascribing both to the author's attempts to invite readers to fill in the blanks with information about Byron (2013: 28). It is true that the bodily accounts of Ruthven are limited to 'the deadly hue of his face' (Polidori 2014: 74), his 'superhuman' (2014: 86) power, his cyclical mortality and his need to feed on a woman's life in order to prolong his own. Such vagueness is beneficial in two ways. Firstly, it feeds (upon) the infamous Byron's notoriety, and secondly, it allows the public to endow this vampire with whatever social ills are most prevalent at the time, in turn allowing them to feed upon this literary phenomenon as readers. Hence, this vampire could exist in a multiplicity of guises at once depending upon what his audience demanded of him.

1820: *Lord Ruthwen ou les Vampires/The Vampire Lord Ruthwen*

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

The first of Lord Ruthven's replications came from little-known French writer Cyprien Bérard, whose 1820 novel was envisioned as a sequel to Polidori's tale. *Lord Ruthwen ou les Vampires*, translated into English as *The Vampire Lord Ruthwen* (2011), shared its source material's shadowy and multiple beginnings, and was similarly attributed to a writer with greater renown. At the time it was thought notable playwright Charles Nodier was the author. It was later publicly revealed he had merely written an introduction of sorts for the book, but there is still conjecture that he wrote the text and published under his friend Bérard's name (Stuart 1994: 47), adding to the mystery of the vampire's origins and to the furore surrounding the text.

As a 'very obvious imitation' (Summers 2008: 253) of Polidori's work, Bérard's Ruthwen superficially adds nothing new to the mythos surrounding the Ruthven vampire body, and the textual descriptions of that body are almost identical. The book may have been pompous, lurid and clumsy, but it was an immediate success with readers (Morlock 2004: 16). The fascinating thing about this Ruthwen, and an element which must surely have increased its popularity, lies in the appetitive nature of his body as revealed when dead female victims begin to accumulate. From Bettina, the banker's ward, and the Princess of Modena, to court beauties Edolinda, Countess Azelina, Zerbina and Petrilia, the vampire's numerous fatalities imply more than Polidori's infrequent need to feed. In comparison with other versions of Lord Ruthven and the one-victim-per-narrative-norm, the victim count here is almost a feeding frenzy, and it acutely foreshadows the audience's reception of this character as a whole. Ruthwen's voracious hunger is announced by the bodies he leaves behind throughout Europe, while he himself is largely absent from the story. Thus, his vampire body is marked by its appetites, which punctuate the narrative as corpses, and which are only confirmed once Ruthwen himself is a corpse in a grave and is discovered (in true folkloric fashion) with his 'bloodied red lips [. . .] moving, writhing, seemingly still feasting

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

on a frightful meal' (Bérard 2011: 195). Such an increased appetite for blood says much about the increased public interest in and appetite for the Ruthvens of the period, and the large number of victims within the text points to a rapidity of vampiric consumption never before seen, much like the new-found rapidity with which goods were manufactured and consumed in the 1800s.

If *The Vampire Lord Ruthwen* is about the voracious vampire, then it must be equally about the female body as consumable. Ruthwen's victim Bettina is described after the attack and before her death as '[w]himpering, colorless, her hair in disarray, scarcely able to drag herself along' (Bérard 2011: 54). She further endures a painful resurrection with fire in her veins and burning lips when she is reborn as a vampire, before dying in 'horrible convulsions' (Bérard 2011: 194) at the end of the story once her purpose is fulfilled. This drawn out and repeated physical distress seems disproportionate in its severity considering multiple murderer Ruthwen is quickly dispatched with a hot iron through the eyes and heart once he is already dead. And whilst Bérard is lauded for his innovative inclusion of female vampires, he is equally chastised for the timidity with which he introduces them (Stableford 2011: 18). Bettina may be labelled as a vampire, but she does not kill anyone; her sole purpose is to reveal Ruthwen's true nature and cause his death, which could easily be achieved in the plot with or without her. In fact, Bettina's only real role is to suffer, just as Ruthwen's other female victims do.

These victims are fecund young women who have lost their hold over life and, as such, have forfeited their ability to procreate. These are women whose reproductive power has been removed by a male consumer who uses their very lifeblood to ensure his own survival. It could be said that Ruthwen takes the potentiality of these women to create new life and secure his own rebirth. Thus, natural reproductive power has given way to a far greater productive technology. The female reproductive apparatus is surpassed by a male-

RESTRICTED

created system whereby unnatural technologies of production are prioritised. Read in a cultural context, those unnatural technologies are allegorical of industrial machine-led mass production and its male-authored processes of birthing consumables. This is a situation not unlike the one created by the male authors under scrutiny here and the consumable vampires they give birth to. It is notable that, in Bérard's fictional world, prominent females die and/or are given the potential to cause death, but have their potency curbed and their ties with life or the creation of life severed.

1820: *Le Vampire/The Vampire*

Charles Nodier took advantage of the free publicity his association with Lord Ruthwen gave him and wrote his own version of the story with Pierre François Adolphe Carmouche and Achille Jouffroy. In 1820, Nodier produced the play *Le Vampire/The Vampire*, with its antagonist Lord Rutwen. It was so successful, according to Montague Summers writing in 1928, that the theatre was packed nightly, with audiences repeatedly calling for encores from its stars. The production was revived to much the same reception three years later in the same venue (Summers 2008: 256-257). Nodier's play was so popular that it is considered to be the archetypal theatrical retelling of Lord Ruthven, and as a result, 'vampire plays of every kind from the most luridly sensational to the most farcically ridiculous pressed on to the boards' (Summers 2008: 265).

Rutwen may be depicted as an aristocrat from the remote Scottish Hebrides, where the action of the play takes place, but he is very much written for the thronging metropolitan audiences of Paris, where *The Vampire* was staged. The incongruity between a countryside setting and a uniquely Parisian undertone creates tension between the concept of nature and Rutwen's divorce from it. Nodier writes his vampire as a creature apart from what is natural; he appears as a 'handsome young man', but this facade belies his true appearance, having

RESTRICTED

cavernous eyes, 'His face decomposed, his features shattered, his lips enlarged with a horrible convulsion' (Nodier 2004: 96). This horror aligns with the ever-increasing urbanisation of districts rich in industry, such as Paris, and the bodies that inhabit them. These bodies, not unlike Rutwen's, are distinctly at odds with the natural world, and are increasingly subject to overcrowding, disease, and deprivations. Correspondingly, their bodies are marred by these unnatural conditions arising from the technological advancements in their working lives and employer drives to forge ahead with more profitable commercial production.

Rutwen's mercurial drives and his links to the dark side of metropolitan financial transactions reflect this. In *The Rise of the Vampire*, Erik Butler likens him to 'thousands of other undistinguished social parasites' (2013: 31), and even goes so far as to attribute the vampire's need to marry to survive as a euphemistic device by which he can gain financial purchase. He notes that 'insolvency threatens him and he will cease to be if he cannot make his payments to forces greater than he is' (Butler 2013: 31). This statement refers to Rutwen's financial situation, but it also refers more keenly to his bargain with higher powers whereby he must provide blood to avoid physical dissolution. That blood must come from virgins. This too harks back to a financial transaction. According to Butler, virgins were popular with vampires of melodrama because 'pure women tend to have bigger dowries' (Butler 2013: 55).

Imagining the female body as transactional is nothing new. However, linking the financial provisions of a woman's dowry with the supernatural qualifications of her blood, and therefore her body, is actually not so different to the kind of classification that took place when factory owners were employing their workers. Men, women and children each had different levels of pay in factories based on the perceived capabilities of their bodies, with men earning the most, women as the second highest paid, and children as the lowest earners. The commodification of women in *The Vampire* becomes the commodification of the human body in contemporary cultural practices and can be read through Nodier's desire to exploit

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

modern anxieties (Butler 2013: 31) related to capital and labour. In the play, Rutwen is a spectre borne of supernatural means into an entombed, formerly living body of indistinct shape, and he must animate that body to find new life. This disavowal of the norms of the somatic form goes hand-in-hand with the reshaping of notions of the body and what it could endure during this period when the working body was expected to form itself anew as a servant to machinery, thus reiterating its dissociation from the natural and the vampire's Marxist metaphorization as both labour and capital, machine and product.

When Rutwen feeds upon and kills his victims, he circumvents normal human reproduction by killing the potential mother, just as Berard's Ruthwen does. This is only emphasised by the fact that this vampire drinks from the victim's breast, just as a babe might suckle. Thus, a terrible parody of the (female) body's ability to feed a child, and the variety of child that might be created in the contemporary cultural climate, is produced. Roxanna Stuart notes that the name 'Rutwen' was pronounced 'Root-wain' by French theatre-goers (Stuart 1994: 48). This is of interest because much is made of the fact that the name 'Ruthven', in Anglo-Scottish circles, is actually pronounced as 'Riven'. Therefore, Polidori's original 'Riven', which literally means to split violently, has been remade as Nodier's 'Root-wain', which can be defined literally as 'root' or source, and 'wain' which is a Scottish word for child. Rutwen is a vampiric child who survives at the detriment of other biological children, not unlike the machines who are fed with the blood and sweat of working-class children and their high mortality rates. This is a vampire who was born from dead matter and who subverts the moon's beams to facilitate unnatural rebirths that are supplemented by the infernal mother's milk he leeches from victims' breasts. In the end, it is the thwarted mothers who banish Rutwen to nothingness when he fails to meet his quota of blood. These ghostly mothers, who are apparitions of former victims and resemble Berard's host of female dead, surround the vampire and point to the wounds on their bloody breasts. Amidst thunder, the

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

vampire is struck by lightning and is 'consumed' (Nodier 2004: 61). The natural female body is avenged and the unnatural child succumbs to a consumption of his own making, viewed by theatregoers anxious to partake in their own acts of vampiric consumption.

1821: *The Vampire; or The Bride of the Isles*

James Robinson Planché was the first to translate Nodier's play into English as his own under the title, *The Vampire; or The Bride of the Isles* (1821), to give yet another incarnation to Lord Ruthven. It was a melodrama written for the London stage and sparked imitation from several other theatrical writers wanting to profit from audience enthusiasm and the fashion for vampires. Planché himself went on to add two more vampire productions to his oeuvre (Summers 2008: 269). New stage shows were based on Planché's melodrama, itself a translated adaptation of Nodier's play, which was a reworking of Polidori's novella, which in turn took inspiration from Byron's work and from eighteenth-century German vampire poetry (Clements 2011: 4). Such theatrical manufactory took from multiple inter-related sources to construct a product for every audience, whether it be British readers, German opera lovers or Parisian theatre-goers. This hunger for replication foreshadowed the real-world production boom that would see the manufacture and exportation of raw materials such as textiles, metals and items manufactured from those same source materials. Ruthven was himself such a multifaceted commodity, as both raw material and product, and thus is uniquely situated as a construct of his age ready to be commodified.

Planché's Ruthven continued the successes enjoyed by his fictive forebears, playing to full houses — one would expect nothing less from what is essentially an English replication of Nodier's play with added songs and some Scottish dialogue (Summers 2008: 269). Just as Planché claimed Ruthven as his own creation, contemporaneous translators and adaptors Frank J. Morlock and Brian Stableford could claim Nodier's and Berard's vampires

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

and works as their own due to their efforts in translating these stories from French to English. Of course, that would not happen today, but in nineteenth century melodrama what would be called plagiarism now was readily accepted as part and parcel of theatrical reproduction. Therefore, Planché's further replication of Lord Ruthven comes not from his reimaging as a Ruthven variant in subtly different circumstances, but from the literal imitation of Nodier's work picked up wholesale in France and deposited in England. One could say that this Ruthven is the ultimate production commodity, capable of being translated from (Nodier's) French to (Planché's) English in one fell swoop. This cross-Channel leap facilitated the fresh dispersal of Ruthven's alienable mythology to audiences in England, and his mass (re)productions took on new impetus thanks to Planché's long-running melodrama and its repeated revivals, its many play script reprints (Stuart 66), and the future stage productions that would seek to mimic it.

Critics agree that there is one aspect of *The Vampire; or The Bride of the Isles* that is revolutionary and that brings perceived technological advancements into the heart of this production in a very real and effective way: the vampire trap. In his 1872 memoirs, Planché asserts, 'The trap now so well known as the "Vampire trap" was invented for this piece, and the final disappearance of the Vampire caused quite a sensation' (1872: 40). The trap was a device that allowed the actor playing the vampire to physically disappear at will by means of a trap door of sorts in the stage floor. A set of spring-loaded doors made of rubber would open with pressure from the actor standing above, and he would drop down into what was essentially a hammock to break his fall, appearing to vanish right in front of the eyes of the unsuspecting audience with 'the unnatural dynamism of the Industrial Revolution' (Butler 2013: 36). Some scholars, including Butler and Nina Auerbach (1995: 23), suggest that the vampire trap was used frequently throughout the performance. There are some intimations that it was present in the stage floor and in vertical scenery, and that it was both an exit and

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

an entry point. Visions of the vampire entering and exiting the stage 'with the rapidity of a firing piston' certainly bring to mind notions of demonic machinery and infernal mass production, but Planché's assertion of the audience's surprise at the vampire's final disappearance into the very fabric of the theatre would seem to moot those notions (Butler 2013: 36). That this is a vampire who is literally consumed by the theatre night after night provides an apt metaphor for the levels of theatrical consumption involved in reproducing the vampire figure and of the audience's voracity for such rebirths. The vampire body becomes a spectacle to be consumed, and its repeated consumption by the theatre as a financial institution, and by fee-paying audiences intent on devouring this manner of entertainment, pushes this character firmly into the realm of the victimised villain as the consumed consumer.

Roxanna Stuart discusses an eyewitness account of the spectacle of the vampire trap, which describes the fear felt at witnessing actor Thomas Potter Cooke (as Lord Ruthven) throwing himself 'headlong' into the stage before disappearing (Stuart 1994: 78). It does not clarify if this literally means 'head first', or if it is merely a turn of phrase to impute a reckless dash, so it is difficult to reconstruct an exact visualisation of what audiences experienced and what they saw happen to Lord Ruthven's body. The account does, however, mention red fire from below as the body vanishes, so that offers some indication of the theatricality involved in this production. Added to that, the play contains no less than three separate storms that coincide with or forewarn of dastardly vampiric action to heighten tension. The first occurs when Lady Margaret enters Ruthven's tomb as 'the thunder rolled, and the lightening flashed' (Planché 120), the second takes place as Lord Ronald is carrying out the vampire's resurrection ritual, and the third happens at the end of the play when loud peals of thunder punctuate Ruthven's final scene, like the tolling of his death knell. He dies by being struck by lightning, and his body disappears. Of course, it reappears and is

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

reproduced for each performance ‘given nightly to packed houses’,[1] which Summers attributes somewhat to its ‘scenic effects’ (268), including thunder, lightning, fire, vanishing bodies and plumes of smoke. Thus, the manner of the body’s consumption reaches great dramatic heights and becomes a centralised aspect of audience perception of this retelling. The vampire body does not merely disappear, its disappearance and total imbibition by the theatre is orchestrated in such a way that the defining aspect of this Ruthven is his absorption into the very fabric of the institution which seeks to promote it to assuage the audience’s consumptive mores.

The association with lightning, or more particularly its electricity, draws parallels with the scientific preoccupation of the day with Galvanism[2] and the animal electricity within the body that was said to restore life. Planché’s vampire has undoubted links to lightning, and the body he occupies is indeed one he has animated from the grave. What is more, the public sensation caused by the real-life reanimation attempts of the criminal dead using electricity in the 1800s (Lai 2017: np) only increases the melodramatic effect of a reincarnated vampire whose original spirit is said to come from a criminal called ‘Cromal [. . .] the bloody’ (Planché 1972: 114). So, whilst this vampire may expire nightly in front of theatre-goers, he is equally assured to return for the following performance as if compelled by a combination of Galvanism and consumer demand.

Katie Harse pays particular attention to the play’s ending in her paper discussing the merits of Planche’s vampire in comparison to Polidori’s. Harse describes characters who, ‘regardless of social status’, come together in ‘a reactionary celebration of solidarity between classes’ (2001: 4) to ensure the vampire is vanquished. This optimistic view of the final scene sees the victorious ensemble cast united in one purpose. Thus, the vampire unwittingly unites the classes to ensure his end. However, when considering this vampire in line with and as a kind of representative of the technological revolution, classes were not united against these

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

developments because the First Industrial Revolution meant very different things depending upon which class you were a member of. The supplementary characters in the play, according to Harse, are successful in reinscribing the divide between good and evil and all remain alive at the end to witness the vampire's demise (2001: 5). In real life, the combination of social ills and economic benefits ascribed to the First Industrial Revolution did not fall so easily into the categories of good and evil, and the working classes in particular did not share the good fortune of continued and healthy lives. However, as we have seen, the vampire continued to exploit his position in popular culture and to be exploited by it, thus any notional class solidarity founded upon his destruction fell foul to consumerism.

1851: *Le Vampire/The Return of Lord Ruthven*

Alexandre Dumas's *Le Vampire* (1851) *or The Return of Lord Ruthven* is a five-act play based on Nodier's original, and it is a notable iteration of this vampire because its story is a significant departure from previous incarnations of Polidori's/Nodier's tale, even including a masque and ballet (Stuart 1994: 3). One aspect that it does share with some of its predecessors is its questionable authorial credits. In yet another variation on disputed authorship, Dumas declared the sole writing credit for this play, but his usual writing partner Auguste Maquet went on to sue him, claiming co-authorship (Stuart 1994: 138). Yet again the Ruthven narrative's divided and contentious origins are demonstrated, and the Ruthven body's duplicative nature exhibited. As either Dumas's Ruthven or a Dumas/Maquet Ruthven, this vampire is a product of doubling at the core of its replication, from Nodier's piece to this 1851 version.

As a friend and sometime protégé of Nodier, Dumas drew from the same rationale of multinational locations and/or characters as previous rewritings, but by the mid-point of the century there is a distinctly different shade to Ruthven's bodily reproduction. By the 1850s,

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

England reached the height of its manufacturing dominion and was exporting goods throughout Europe for decades on a scale unsurpassed by other nations. *The Vampyre* followed this pattern and was exported across mainland Europe in different languages and diverse reinterpretations as yet another English product and representation of Victorian expansion; a British vampirism of sorts.

In her seminal work on nineteenth-century vampire theatre, *Stage Blood* (1994), Roxanna Stuart notes that French interest in vampires was probably ‘enhanced by France’s ingrained and notorious xenophobia: the source of *Le Vampire* was English, but in it the Englishman is portrayed as a demonic serial killer and a walking corpse’ (Stuart 1994: 59). Dumas’s play picks up on this thread, and it is telling that Ruthven is the only English character and the only vampire in the play, as if the two were mutually exclusive — a claim that can be answered by both Ruthven’s real-life renown as an English vampire character and by French feeling towards the English after much Anglo-French conflict. When Ruthven introduces himself, via the pen of Dumas, he pointedly explains that he is English. All subsequent descriptions of the vampire appear as slights towards the English in one way or another. Ruthven is described using dual terms that relate to his vampiric body but that could also apply to stereotypes of the English character. He is said to be cold like a cadaver and humour-less with a ‘heart that does not beat!’ (Dumas 2004: 199). Contemporaneous French caricatures of the English draw its people as violent, morose and disagreeable, with misshapen bodies and outmoded clothing (Ling 2007: 6), all of which could equally apply to this rewriting of the vampire. When Ruthven’s marriage to Helen is announced, it is significant that its social acceptance appears to be based on Helen’s belief that he is Scottish.

At the further reaches of the spectrum, Ruthven is portrayed as a serial killer, a ‘hideous oppressor [. . .] a demon [. . .] a vampire’ (Dumas 2004: 147) who not only defies death, but whose true nature is revealed in an astounding scene where he deploys giant wings

RESTRICTED

and flies away. Not only is this variety of vampire a representation of the monstrous English propagated by French playwrights, but the play itself is also a product of French industry 'originating in France and quickly "cannibalized" by the English and Americans' (Stuart 1994: 3) as they take ownership of French work and consume it as their own in adaptations now in English. Dumas would have borne witness to almost thirty years of the English appropriating Nodier's French play, and it seems almost irrelevant that this vampire story was originally borrowed from the English, who would again 'cannibalize' the vampire by staging multiple variations of Dumas's play in England over the following decades.

Conclusion: Reanimating Lord Ruthven

The rewritings of each Lord Ruthven reemphasised this vampire's compatibility with capitalist production and confirmed his innately alienable nature. Every new version supplemented the mythos surrounding the vampire and his transmutable body, and vampirised the successes of its predecessors for profit. Each addition and subsequent replication deepened the sense of loss of that body from any kind of authentic connection with the physical form, whether through its abstraction from natural reproduction, its commodification of the human body or its remove from the natural world due to its very existence. Every fresh retelling of Ruthven's vampire self-promoted his vampiric aspects over any once-human traits and made the figure of the vampire increasingly famous and in-demand by readers and viewers. Each new envisioning added a layer of mythology to the vampiric Ruthven and took his already detached somatic self and distanced it further from the audience and their understanding of the human body, thus elevating the undead over the living. These machinations aligned that form with something of the contemporary industrial landscape, whereby what was once human, or perceived in relation to human endeavour, had been replaced by engines and heavy industry. The betterment by superior machines is, in a

RESTRICTED

way, what happens in each of these narratives when the more powerful and inexhaustible vampire lays waste to its human fodder. This occurs both on the page and stage in terms of the plot lines, and offstage in terms of its insatiable box office potential. Whilst seemingly unending consumer interest in this vampire does indeed feed upon this character and his retellings by way of the unprecedented literary and theatrical marketplace's insatiable consumption of the Ruthvens, the vampire too has his revenge by relieving readers and audiences of their ticket money or purchase price for books and play scripts and yet still being reincarnated in new guises to monetise his exploits once more.

Notions of multiplicity and mass production are predominant throughout Ruthven's existence. He is at once the product of many authors; he appears human but is also vampire. As Ruthven/Ruthwen/Rutwen, he is also Count/Earl/Baron Marsden, Lord Seymour, Cromal and Spectre, to list just some of his aliases. He is reproduced and translated again and again in the period for mass audience appeal, though he is only truly knowable as written in the original language, and to some extent by the original audiences and their cultural contextualisation in a period of nascent mass production and consumerism.

By the close of the nineteenth century there had existed over twenty separate retellings of Lord Ruthven, each with varying degrees of difference from the original. Thus, a many-branched tree of Ruthven mythology was created from Polidori's seed of an idea, growing and developing for almost a hundred years until this fabled vampire nobleman proliferated on the stage, which became Ruthven's home after his initial literary inception and replication. If each of these vampires was portrayed by a different actor, then, for argument's sake, these twenty Ruthvens each had a different face, and each Ruthven was embodied by a different performer producing a striking physical manifestation of the vampire's ability to reinvent himself and to be reinvented *en masse*. That number of Ruthvens is at least doubled when theatrical understudies are taken into account, or if

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

multiple actors appeared in the lead role during any one theatrical run. Those forty portrayals are further increased within the bounds of the performance; if, for example, twenty versions of Lord Ruthven die and are reborn once during each retelling, then now forty new Ruthvens have been brought into existence. If Ruthven enacts a new identity under a new guise in each of those twenty stagings, then now sixty Ruthven versions have existed. With sixty re-enactments of the vampire body rendered by up to forty different actors, we begin to see the true scale of what became a Lord Ruthven industry fuelled by consumer demand. And those huge figures are added to each night when the curtain raises and Lord Ruthven's cycle of dying, rising, reinvention and consumption begins anew.

Reading Polidori's original vampire character alongside some of its most salient rewritings says much about Lord Ruthven's reincarnations and reinterpretations. These rewritings reveal how 1800s notions of mass production are written upon this vampire's body to produce a uniquely nineteenth-century construct subject to coeval cultural concerns and bodily reimaginings. They both satiated the public's hunger for vampiric entertainment and met the new-found need for consumer abundance resultant of industrialisation and mechanisation for the production of day-to-day goods. These Ruthven multiples are reproduced through the lens of vampiric resurrection but are solely influenced by nineteenth-century technologies of mass reproduction, which take the Ruthven body as their metaphor. The vampiric dying-and-rising cycle as exampled by Lord Ruthven's literary returns and adaptations results in an undying Ruthven mythos that spawned the continued replication of the vampire as we know it today.

Notes

[1] The 'Opening Vision' illustration from Planché's play script depicts Ruthven rising from the grave enshrouded in a cloud of smoke.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

[2] Galvanism and its experiments were well-known to John Polidori and to *Frankenstein* (1818) author Mary Shelley. Both were present at discussions on the subject during the now infamous writing contest that produced the basic ideas for both *Frankenstein* and *The Vampyre* (Brown 2010: np).

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

List of References

Auerbach, Nina, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, London: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Bérard, Cyprien, *The Vampire Lord Ruthwen*, Translated by Brian Stableford, California: Black Coat Press, 2011.

Bond Collins, Margo, 'Introduction', in *Beyond The Count: The Literary Vampire of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Margo Bond Collins (Texas: Bathory Gate Press, 2014), pp. 5-12.

Brown, Alan, S., 'The Science That Made Frankenstein', *Inside Science*, Vol. 27, (October 2010), np.

Bulter, Erik, *The Rise of the Vampire*, London: Reaktion Books, 2013.

Clements, Susannah, *The Vampire Defanged: How The Embodiment of Evil Became a Romantic Hero*, Michigan: Brazos Press, 2011.

Dumas, Alexandre, *The Return of Lord Ruthven*, Translated by Frank J. Morlock, California: Black Coat Press, 2004.

Frayling, Christopher, *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula*, London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1992.

Harse, Katie, 'Melodrama Hath Charms: Planche's Theatrical Domestication of Polidori's "The Vampyre"', *Journal of Dracula Studies*, Vol. 3, (2001), pp. 1-7.

Lai, Andrew, 'The Experiment That Shocked The World', *Helix*, Vol. 2, (August 2017), np.

Ling, Elenor, *Vive la Différence! The French and English stereotype in satirical prints 1720-1815*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2007.

Macdonald, D. L., and Kathleen 'Introduction', in *The Vampyre and Ernestus Berchtold; Or The Modern Oedipus: Collected Fiction of John William Polidori*, ed. D. L. Macdonald and Kathleen Scherf (London: University of Toronto Press, 1994), pp. 1-30.

Morlock, Frank J., 'Introduction', in *Lord Ruthven The Vampire*, Translated by Frank J. Morlock (California: Black Coat Press, 2004), pp. 7-19.

Nodier, Charles, 'The Vampire', in *Lord Ruthven The Vampire*, Translated by Frank J. Morlock (California: Black Coat Press, 2004), pp. 77-162

Planché, J. R., *The Recollections and Reflections*, London: Tinsley Brothers, 1872.

---, 'The Vampire; or The Bride of the Isles', in *Beyond The Count: The Literary Vampire of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Margo Bond Collins (Texas: Bathory Gate Press, 2014), pp. 111-136.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

Polidori, John, 'The Vampyre', in *Beyond The Count: The Literary Vampire of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Margo Bond Collins (Texas: Bathory Gate Press, 2014), pp. 69-102.

Stableford, Brian, 'Introduction', in *The Vampire Lord Ruthwen*, Translated by Brian Stableford (California: Black Coat Press, 2011), pp. 9-20.

Stuart, Roxanna, *Stage Blood: Vampires of the 19th-Century Stage*, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1994.

Summers, Montague. *The Vampire, His Kith and Kin*, London: Forgotten Books, 2008.

RESTRICTED