

“Oskar: *Who are you?*
 Eli: *I’m like you...*
 Oskar: *What do you mean?*
 Eli: *What are you staring at? Well? Are you looking at me? So scream! Squeal!... Those*
were the first words
I heard you say.
 Oskar: *I don’t kill people...*
 Eli: *No, but you’d like to, if you could, to get revenge, right?*
 Oskar: *Yes...*”

“He opened his eyes and saw only light blue... veils of pink”: notes on *Let the Right One In**

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~~Cold~~ Frozen blood

In the last few years, the vampire story has been experiencing a definite boom in mainstream cinema, marking the rise of an almost ancestral theme that has re-emerged in contemporary audiovisual media, particularly due to the film adaptations of Stephenie Meyer’s saga *Twilight* (2005), a series of neo-Romantic-style novels aimed at adolescent readers.

In the midst of this vampire frenzy, the US television channel HBO didn’t hesitate to jump into the game, and to do so in a style completely different from that of the hegemonic environment which served as its source of inspiration but from which it would take its characteristic and customary distance to create a new series in keeping with its untiring commitment to quality: *True Blood* (Alan Ball, HBO: 2008-). “Forget about that catchy wave of vampire products that are overwhelming us: *True Blood* is yet another example of the creative power of the best television at full power. *True Blood* is more than just another vampire series” (MANRIQUE, 2010).

Essentially disassociated from the typical excesses inherent to the machinery of the cinematic *metropolis*, but, paradoxically, ultimately influencing a Hollywood remake adapted to the same old patterns of commercial

culture, a Swedish film premiered in 2008, a highly restrained work titled *Let the Right One In* (Let the Right One in, Tomas Alfredson), an adaptation of the novel of the same name by fellow Swede John Ajvide Lindqvist. It was a new kind of vampire story, but with very little or nothing to do –especially in formal terms– with the *Twilight* films or with *True Blood*. Disturbing, slow-moving and terribly dark, its points of reference are closer to Murnau's (1922) or Herzog's (1976) *Nosferatu* than to its contemporary relatives. It was in 2010 that the excellent reviews received and the prizes won by this European production caught the attention of US producers who, as they have been known to do with brazen frequency in the past¹, would release *Let Me In* (Matt Reeves, 2010).

Let the Right One In in three voices (original novel, Swedish film adaptation and US remake) are the three dimensions that provide the material for this article and on which its analysis is based. However, it will be borne in mind here that there is something in the text –in the sense of the mood of the images or words– that resists translation. It is the materiality of the signifier that makes something of the discourse that impedes its communicative transparency (that which Habermas worked so hard to defend) and its easy exchange. This suggests that there is something in the text that needs it and claims it as its own, on the level of the absolutely individual.

Those eyes of fire (remembered about these eyes of water)

The inhabitants of a rural community fall unconscious for hours. Some time later, the women of the community discover that they are pregnant with children who, as will become evident later, are cursed. This plot development would annihilate the correspondence assumed until then, as if it were a postulate of nature, between childhood and innocence. The story is from the film *Village of the Damned* (Wolf Rilla, 1960), one of the first films in which children –with white hair and eyes of fire– embody evil, thereby shattering the Enlightenment notion of the parallel progress of civilization and goodness. The film was subsequently remade in John Carpenter's disturbing and faithful adaptation of the same name in 1995. As we will show here, fiction refutes ideals; thus, almost fifty years later *The White Ribbon* (Das Weisse Band, Michael Haneke, 2009) would appear, a film set in 1913 (the same year that Freud wrote the clinical case "Two Lies Told by Children"), which explores the Freudian maxim that "there is something in man that does not seek his wellbeing" through a latent evil that is exposed to reveal that the World Wars did not constitute new events, but were in fact the consequence of a daily violence that had been brewing in the private realm of society.

Although the film *Bicycle Thieves* (Ladri de biciclette, Vittorio de Sica, 1948) toppled once and for all the notion

of childhood innocence as the consequence of a harsh society, it wasn't until the fifties that the angelical face of childhood showed its dark side. Thus, abandoning the position of helpless victim, children took on sinister qualities that were accentuated in the sixties with the French New Wave and were definitively established as demonic in the seventies with the rise of the horror film³ in that decade.

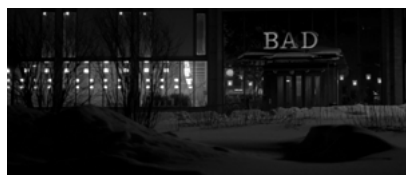
Anyone expecting a horror film of *Let the Right One In* will find instead an icy portrait of innocence and a statement that has nothing to do with either morality or nature. With crude realism Alfredson's film mounts a poetic and categorical challenge against the traditional vampire film, flooding its fields with white light, with no gratuitous blood, a drawn-out pace and the idea that victims aren't always innocent. In short, the film represents a subversion of its genre.

In Lindqvist's original novel, *Let the Right One In* is the story of Oskar, a twelve-year-old boy who lives with his mother in a suburb of Stockholm. Oskar is a solitary boy, addicted to sweets and with a curious hobby: he collects press cuttings about brutal murder cases. His classmates make fun of him and subject him to harassment that he is incapable of avoiding. One day, a new girl moves to the neighbourhood: Eli, an enigmatic girl of his age –at least apparently– who smells strange, never gets cold and has gray hair. Oskar can't help but feel fascinated by her and the two of them become inseparable. Coinciding with Eli's arrival is a wave of horrific murders and bizarre occurrences that have the local police baffled. Everything points to a serial killer... Eli is a 200-year-old vampire⁴. As the tagline for *Let the Right One In* puts it: "Innocence dies. She doesn't".

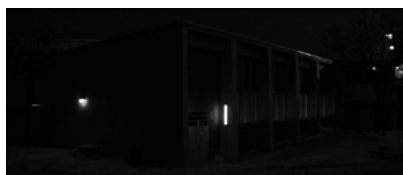
Ode to off camera: a comparative analysis of the final scene at the pool (as a model-sequence of the film)

Both *Let the Right One in* and *Let Me In* open their final scene with an establishing shot⁵. In the Swedish version [image 1.1] –in the remake the words "POOL ENTRANCE" are barely visible [image 2.1]– the spectator sees at the gym's entrance an ornate sign that reads "BAD", which, although Swedish for "BATHROOMS", in English it introduces an evident mistake in its translation: "BAD" in the sense of evil. It is impossible to ignore the unexpected meaning that provides a certain ironic effect, as the deictic effect of a bathroom sign takes on a symbolic quality when we know that the location indicated will be the place of the horror.

Behind the snowy and wintry location, *Let the Right One in* initiates a fascinating tracking shot that declares a clear enunciative commitment. The implicit narrator peeks into the changing room stealthily to find Oskar tying his sneakers [image 1.2]. Then, the coach enters the



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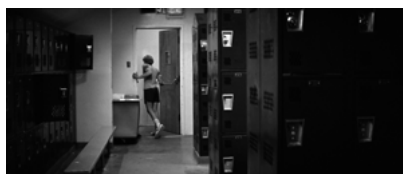
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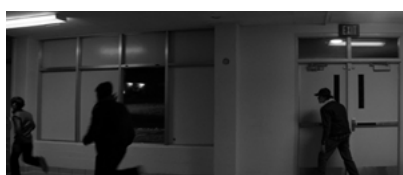
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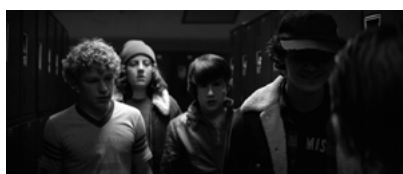
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2.9

JOHN AJVIDE LINDQVIST

beza te clavaré la navaja en un ojo. ¿Vale? ¿Has comprendido las reglas?

Oskar sacó la cabeza. Expulsaba agua por la boca cuando, tirando, dijo: — ¡No puedo ni mover la cabeza! — ¡Eso es imposible!

Jimmy sacudió la cabeza. — ¡Ese es tu problema. ¿Ves el reloj que hay allí? Dentro de veinte segundos empezamos. Cinco minutos. O el ojo. Aprovecha ahora para coger aire. Diez... nueve... ocho... siete...

Oskar intentó escapar cogiendo impulso con los pies, pero tenía que estar de puntillas para hacer pie y la mano de Jimmy lo sujetaba del pelo con fuerza, haciendo imposible cualquier movimiento.

Si consiguiera arrancarme el pelo... cinco minutos... Cuando lo había intentado él mismo, lo más que había conseguido habían sido tres. Casi.

— ¡Seis... cinco... cuatro... tres...! — El maestro. El maestro va a venir antes.

— ¡Dos... uno... cero...! — Oskar sólo tuvo tiempo de respirar a medias antes de que le hundiera la cabeza en el agua. Perdió el apoyo de los pies y la parte inferior de su cuerpo flotó lentamente hacia arriba, hasta que quedó con la cabeza inclinada sobre el pecho unos decímetros por debajo de la superficie del agua, el cuero cabelludo le escocía como el fuego cuando el agua clorada penetró en los resquicios y en las heridas de la raíz del pelo.

No podía haber pasado más de un minuto cuando el pánico empezó a adueñarse de él.

Abrió los ojos y no vio más que azul claro... velos de color rosa que se deslizaban desde su cabeza ante sus ojos mientras intentaba buscar apoyo con el cuerpo pese a que era imposible, ya que no había nada a lo que agarrarse. Sus piernas se movían arriba en la superficie y el color azul claro se desdibujó, se fragmentó ante sus ojos en ondas de luz.

Le salieron burbujas por la boca y estiró los brazos, flotando boca arriba, y los ojos se volvieron hacia lo blanco, hacia los rayos vacilantes del tubo fluorescente del techo. El corazón le palpitaba como una mano contra un cristal, y cuando sin querer tragó agua por los orificios nasales una especie de calma empezó a esparcirse por su cuerpo. Pero el corazón empezó a latir con más fuerza, con más insistencia, quería vivir y volvió a patear desesperado, intentando agarrarse a algo donde no había nada.

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Page for the ending of the novel by John Ajvide Lindqvist *Let me in*, with frames of its Swedish (1) and American (2) film adaptations which are referred to in the analysis of this text

shot, until the boy leaves the space. The camera follows him. Just a few seconds later we see him looking off camera [1.3], but before showing us the object of his attention the coach enters the scene, taking the boy with him. The camera's placement then proves to be strategic, because in the first shot we see a classmate of Oskar's – who will turn out to be one of the boys involved in the forthcoming revenge– looking off camera while sharing the frame with a door opening by itself, which by mythical and cinematographic convention we know indicates Eli's entry [image 1.4]. The off-camera dialectic proves itself perverse here, because while in the first instance the spectator doesn't see what the boy does, the mirror is established as a direct hint to the spectator, revealing Eli's vampiric nature. In short, *the spectator sees less but knows more*.

In the choreography of the tracking shot and in the rest of the shots in the scene Oskar holds the privileged position in the frame. Indeed, in the first shot, the coach only appears on camera if he is located close to Oskar. Otherwise, the camera cuts out his figure; the interest expressed is not in portraying the scene but in accompanying the boy [image 1.2]. In this way, the enunciation enthrones Oskar (an enthronelement also

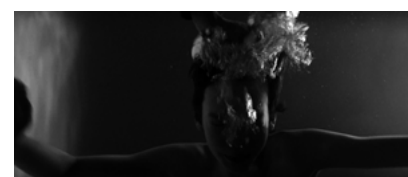
expressed in his towel with crowns [image 1.3]) in an effort to compensate for or give symbolic justice to the humiliation that he has suffered from the beginning of the film.

In both films, inserts of shots outside the pavilion are crosscut into the scene, showing Oskar's classmates working out a strategy to get the coach out of the pool in order to concoct their plan for revenge⁶ [image 1.6 and 2.6]. In both films, the friends seek to empty the scene where the violence will take place, although for this transition each film will choose very different, indeed almost antagonistic, formal strategies that reveal their respective reinterpretations of the terror.

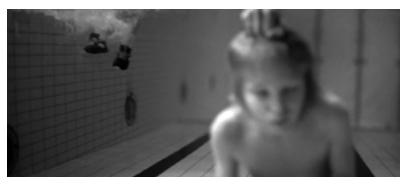
Let the Right One in is constantly immersed in white spaces, bathed in light, which avoid a narrative foreshadowing, thereby enhancing the contrast in order to accentuate the naivety of the characters. *Let Me In*, on the other hand, is flooded with the darkness typical of horror genre. The close-ups are convulsive, edited hurriedly for dramatic effect to create tension and speed up the pace of the horror. An example of this is the water shots that recall the effect established by Steven Spielberg in *Jaws* (1975). On the other hand, the close-ups in the Swedish version are more drawn out, interwoven in a way that aims for subtlety. This is evident in the shot in which all we see is the action of one of the boys standing on tiptoes signalling a warning to the coach of a quarrel outside⁷, which makes him come out immediately [image 1.5]. *Let Me In* foreshadows its conclusion through the use of extra-diegetic music in keeping with the canons of the horror genre, while in *Låt den rätte komma in* the music is diegetic, coming from the radio that the coach uses to do the water exercises⁸ [image 1.7]. Both formal proposals adopt an arrangement typical of films about gang brawls and evening of scores, but with notable differences. In *Let Me In* [images 2.3, 2.8 and 2.9] it is made explicit through a staging reminiscent of *film noir*, while in *Let the Right One in* it is hinted at by the dialogue line "An eye for an ear, ok?", with powerful intertextual references that succeed in revealing the latent violence or sinister underbelly of the supposedly innocent water game. Thus, in *Låt den rätte komma in* [images 1.7 and 1.8] the exercises that the coach indicates to a smiling and carefree Oskar and that are imitated by some girls outside the pool will turn sinister when the friend does them, because the frame of his legs



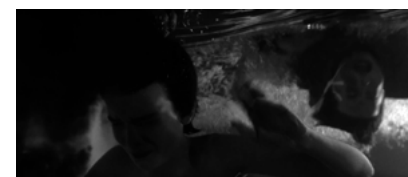
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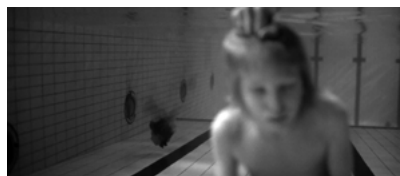
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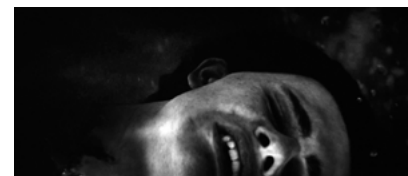
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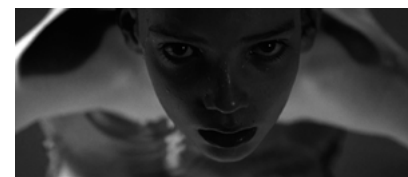
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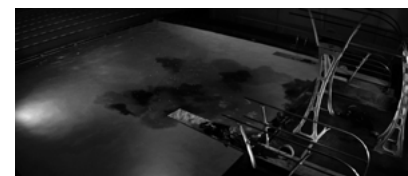
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2.17

recalls a military march and the aesthetics of confrontation between the military and civilians from the Odessa Steps scene in *Battleship Potemkin* (Bronenosets Potyomkin, Sergei M. Eisenstein, 1925). In the American version, the confrontation is resolved with accentuated high and low angle shots, while in the Swedish version the effect is achieved not only with the angling of the camera but with the scaling of the elements of the shot, exhibiting an exemplary compositional architecture [image 1.9]. This shows that Alfredson's interpretation of Lindqvist's text has been guided by a search for "restraint and silence"; at the same time, the tone of Alfredson's version challenges the hyper-codification of the horror genre to which Reeves' version is loyal at all times.

While, as noted above, the enunciation of the Swedish version effectively grants a privileged place for Oskar, the fact that we see the final crimes from inside the pool, with the protagonist, emphasizes decisively that the point of view in the film has been right beside Oskar. Thus, the exemplary use of off camera, far from being taken up merely as an affected strategy or a spectacular formula for the greater visual impact of seeing cut-up bodies tinting the blue water, constitutes an ethical statement as a narrative culmination. This formal strategy, which proves that the American version is an adaption – as acknowledged in the film's credits – of both the novel and the film, ultimately constructs one of the most lucid cinematic achievements of recent years in its strategic way of evoking the poetics of absence [1.10 to 1.14 and 2.10 to 2.14].

Notable among the insuperable influences revealed in this final fragment that we have analysed is the reference to one of the most memorable milestones in the history of the horror film: the pool scene in *Cat People* (Jacques Tourneur, 1942). In this scene there is no actual aggression, but only a disturbing atmosphere created with intense chiaroscuros that seem to be imagined by the beautiful Alice Moore (the character played by Jane Randolph), which, through fleeting shadows and strange noises, seem to foretell the attack of a monster that we never actually get to see. In Tourneur's film we can discern the genetic codes of the horror and suspense film as the resource, coinciding with the scenes analysed in this article, in the symbolic enhancement of a solitary field threatened by the apocryphal universe of the omitted.

In the book the enunciation in this climax moves from Oskar to Micke, one of Oskar's classmates who accompanies him in the act of revenge but is too frightened to participate. Thus, the first, Oskar: prisoner of terror and immediately thereafter finding peace;

He opened his eyes and only saw light blue... veils of pink that swirled from his head past his eyes [...] rippling the pale blue in front of his eyes, refracted in light waves.

Bubbles rose from his mouth and he threw his arms out, floating on his back, and his eyes were pulled to the white,

to the swaying halogen tubes' glow in the ceiling. His heart was throbbing like a hand against a glass pane, and when he happened to draw water in through his nose a kind of calm started to spread in his body. But his heart was beating harder, more persistently, wanted to live, and again he thrashed desperately, tried to get a grip where there was no grip to be had. (LINDQVIST, 2008: 448)

The second, Micke: the only witness, needed in order to tell the story *a posteriori*.

Micke looked back at what was happening in the pool. Oskar's body had stopped moving, but Jimmy was still leaned over the edge, holding his head down. Micke's throat hurt when he swallowed.

Whatever happens. Just make it stop.

A banging on the glass door, harder this time. He looked out into the darkness. When the girl opened her mouth and shouted at him he could see... that her teeth... that there was something hanging from her arms.

"Say that I can come in!"

Whatever happens.

Micke nodded, said almost inaudibly:

"You can come in."

The girl pulled back from the door, disappeared into the darkness. The stuff that was hanging from her arms shimmered for a moment, and then she was gone. Micke turned back to the pool. Jimmy had pulled Oskar's head out of the water and taken the stiletto back from Jonny, moving it down Oskar's face, aiming.

A speck of light was visible in the dark middle window and a split second later it shattered.

The reinforced glass didn't shatter like regular glass. It exploded into thousands of tiny rounded fragments that landed with a rustle at the edge of the pool, after flying out into the hall, over the water, glittering like myriad white stars. (LINDQVIST, 2008: 449-450)

The novel thus suggests the death subtly and with suspense. It introduces the death in the pool with "veils of pink" and then seeks to relate the events through the figure of the last witness. In this scene, as occurs throughout the film, there continues to be a meaningful use of blurring, of the blind image. In both films, Micke doesn't dare to look; the scene is unbearable to look at; the only solution is a fade-to-black as a denial of the horror [images 1.17 and 2.17].

Let the Right One in adds to the novel a (strictly filmic) reverse shot view of Eli's and Oskar's final encounter, closing the film justly [images 1.15 and 1.16]. This view is not present in the novel, in which the encounter must be imagined as no one has been able to narrate it. In *Let Me In*, despite being unquestionably more a remake of the original film than of the literary text on this point, the reverse shot of Eli's view is, as in the book, omitted. Eli has only a metonymic presence: all we see of her are her feet covered in blood [image 2.15]. This discursive mechanism should be viewed as a significant enunciation



When the game turns sinister. The staging makes the innocent exercises of the children in the pool evoke the Odessa Stairs scene in *Battleship Potemkin* (Bronenosets Potyomkin, Sergei M. Eisenstein. 1925)

in the sense that it avoids the presentation of definitive evidence at the price of eliminating romanticism from the encounter produced in the almost mystic dialectic of shot-reverse shot in the Swedish film.

Oskar Eriksson had been rescued by an angel.

The same angel who, according to the witnesses, had ripped Jonny and Jimmy Forsberg's heads off and left them in the bottom of the pool (LINDQVIST: 2008: 451).

In the end, both films dissolve all competition. In the extraordinary formal conclusion of the European adaptation any dialectic is dissolved; there is no contest. The story builds its discursive strategies based on the fundamental premise that either everyone is a victim or everyone is an executioner. The use of off camera generates a rhetoric that cuts the circuits of black-and-white morality to insert us into the duplicity of the human condition: we don't see Eli kill anyone; all that we see of her –in *Let the Right One in*– is her final redemptive gaze. Some of Oskar's classmates are cut up in pieces, and those who have survived are stunned and immobile, while Oskar himself is shown to be relieved after having been freed from years of humiliation. In short, the burden of guilt falls on nobody, nor is any character presented as a model for the spectator. In this sense, the view of evil in *Let the Right One In* bears a kinship with Abel Ferrara's view in another chilling story of vampire love with an underlying philosophical reflection: *The Addiction* (1995). As Gérard Imbert suggests, "there is a terribly fatalistic view of evil in Ferrara, as if the (collective) horror had been too great to leave room for redemption for the (individual) subject, a trans-historical guilt that generates an indelible bad conscience. Should it be concluded that violence is intrinsic to man, that man is pure violence?" (IMBERT, 2010: 477).

Camouflaged perversion

In this article we have offered a detailed comparison of the of the novel *Let the Right One In* with its two film adaptations released onto the market, which were both given the same title in Spanish (*Déjame entrar*, i.e., "Let Me In"), although their originals were *Let the Right One in* ("Let the Right One In") and *Let Me In*. As already commented in a footnote, the fact that the American movie appeared so quickly after the positive public response to the Swedish version raises questions about the prevailing market ethics and about the overbearing approach of the US film industry towards productions that have been successful beyond its borders and that are used to produce remakes instead of promoting the original in the cinematic metropolis. Although this has always been the case, and lately even more frequent (the titles concerned are well known to all), it is surprising to note another strange coincidence: the appearance of a phenomenon among the adolescent masses who surrender to the strange –almost perverse– pleasure of following the adventures of their heroes (?) in the *Twilight* saga, also based on successful novels, which has spawned the release of various titles mentioned earlier in this article. Needless to say, the most recent titles –*New Moon*, *Eclipse* and *Breaking Dawn*– have cinematic connotations that should be kept at a safe distance for sake of the mental and sensory health.

All of this comes to mind out of an additional reflection –after taking on the analysis of the final model-sequence in *Let the Right One In*– about this new *format* of adolescent who self-identifies with a *good-looking monster* and seems to approach this monster through a process that has more to do with fashion than through any kind of reasoning or argument. Of course, the qualitative chasm separating *Let the Right One In* from *Twilight* is patently clear (also for questions of mental health, in this article we will work exclusively from the perspective of these two films, i.e., the Swedish version of *Let the Right One In* and the first film in the *Twilight* saga).

What follows is an outline of some of the reasons for the aforementioned chasm that separates the two films.

To begin with, the vampire universe is clearly defined in our collective imagination by the cultural sum of a series of literary texts, from *The Vampire* by John William Polidori (1816) to *Camilla* by Serdian Le Fanu (1872) and Bram Stoker's excellent *Dracula* (1897), whose precedents can be found in Gothic literature and the unique constructions that are *The Monk* (Matthew Gregory Lewis, 1796) and the no less important *Melmoth*, *the Wanderer* (Charles Robert Maturin, 1820), without forgetting *Frankenstein* (Mary Shelly, 1818) and many other texts that will lead us finally to H. P. Lovecraft and more contemporary writers. However, this universe, culturally distant for most of today's youth, has been recovered and referenced many times in the cinema, which has in turn generated a new imaginary – distorted perhaps, but, on occasions even enhanced– of the image of the vampire, its behaviour and circumstances (we won't quote specific film titles because they are obvious and widely known). This vampire, the legacy of various artistic expressions (painting, theatre, novel, film), has certain concrete characteristics: it is a being



The final sequence in the pool in *Låt den rätte komma* is a tribute to one of the most memorable scenes of the horror genre: *Cat People* (Jacques Tourneur, 1942)

neither dead nor alive, who has no reflection, is afraid of religious symbols, needs to satiate its appetite with blood, and hides from the light of the sun. These characteristics are common knowledge, because the depictions have placed them before our eyes –and senses– time and time again. Nevertheless, the vampire is something more. Le Fanu's *Camilla* can be found in *Dracula*, to whom it passed on its voluptuousness; the appetite for blood is the drive of life, which is set in opposition to the death-wish (the end as final rest). And the most significant point is that the vampire (*Dracula*, vampire par excellence) doesn't exist.

The reader will no doubt be thinking that this is an obvious point. And the reader would be right, but the point bears clarification: the vampire doesn't exist simply because it is no more than the accumulation of unsatisfied desires that converge to form the threatening monster of a society in decay: Victorian society, when *Dracula* was written, or the Puritan society of double standards, which we would like to see eradicated for good but which keeps rearing its ugly head, especially in the accursed Western world in which we live, where we can neither die nor feed on blood, since other vampires do so without being living dead (one need only read of certain bankers, politicians, etc., today's champions of the double standard).

With this in mind, it makes lot of sense that the monsters of the *Twilight* saga aren't the vampires, but some of them –bad-faced, dark and pestilent– who are established as the exception because the unsatisfied desire generated by the

earlier *evil* is no longer considered evil, but rather as the *conquest of the status quo*. In other words, while a hooligan who steals a car should be punished with prison, a banker who steals and brings families to ruin becomes a rich and honoured member of society, how could we help but expect an image of the good monster *versus* the

evil monster? It is a masterful lesson for an unsuspecting audience that penetrates consciousness: millions of young people feeding off an imaginary that *normalises* them and elevates them to the highest heights of mediocrity and cultural nullity. Thus, if we look closely, the vampires in *Twilight* are a pure representation of the society desired by the *law*.

And moreover, taking *Dracula* as a guide, to say that vampires don't exist is not a mere whimsy, because the novel is constructed on what is permanently *off camera*, on the accounts of a series of narrators and documents –maps, diaries, audio tapes, press cuttings, etc.– that can only convey to the reader *its version of events*, and that version, in a frustrated, desire-filled being typical of the society of his or her time, creates monsters, invents a vampire as a catharsis to eradicate its shortcomings, as a repository for its most intimate unsatisfied secrets. It is located in the realm of the sinister, and returns from there when it is called. It is thus not evil itself, but the legacy of a society in decay. It only exists *off camera*, a point that Coppola knew very well in his version of Stoker's work, in showing the vampire as a kind of chameleon that changes in accordance with the direct relationship he has with his victims, even the delirious and insatiable monster that makes love to Lucy, an icon par excellence of frustrated desire-filled woman.

This world *off camera* is taken up directly by *Let the Right One In* and completely dismissed by *Twilight*. The *friendly monsters* in *Twilight*, to the delight of their teenage fans, are displayed *on camera*, in the most obvious territory of presentation and spectacularization, jumping from tree to tree, walking through walls, playing like children, and invading the screen with their ridiculous presence. The sinister being in *Let the Right One In* (sinister in spite of himself) is an asexual adolescent who confuses love and friendship, loyalty, life and death, is constantly banished to the *off camera* world of the society and, in the same way, is shown in his ordinary and not his monstrous nature. Words are unnecessary, because the evidence is clear, as is the yawning gap that separates quality from banality.

We could go on, but space is limited. Suffice it to say, by way of conclusion, that the end of the chain is the death drive. Dracula, in his eternal place *off camera*, doesn't want to go on living. Death would be a blessing for him; he transforms this death drive into sex drive –neither homosexual nor heterosexual, hence the brilliant representation of the vampiric *essence* in *Let the Right One In*.

The *monstrosities* in *Twilight*, on the other hand, organise their lives around the family clan (and the law), and want to live inside a society that doesn't marginalise them, where they can develop their goodness and show off their attributes (their fashionable looks), doing good

things and stopping the *evil monsters* from hurting their human friends. This, to put it mildly, is nothing more than ingenuous and inane nonsense. The trouble is that they're all the rage and these sweet little *life forms* (in death, by nullity) are standing right in front of us. What a fate has befallen us, when *real* vampires walk beside us and we don't know how to recognize them... so badly bitten we've been! ■

Notes

* ITACA-UJI Research Group. This article has been prepared with the assistance of the Research Project: Nuevas tendencias e hibridaciones de los discursos audiovisuales contemporáneos, funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation's National RDI Plan for the period 2008-2011, with code number CSO2008-00606/SOCI, under the direction of Dr. Javier Marzal Felici.

** Editor's note: This essay was originally published in July 2011 under the Spanish title "Abrió los ojos y no vio más que azul claro... velos de color rosa": notas a *Déjame entrar*". The English version has been translated by Lucía Nieto Carbonell, and revised by Martin Boyd in 2013. The pictures that illustrate this essay have been provided voluntarily by the authors; it is their responsibility to locate and ask for the reproduction rights to the owner.

1 There are countless cases that could serve as examples for this protectionist practice, especially when it comes to Asian horror titles, consisting of remaking existing movies successful in their country of origin, but which would not be profitable enough if they were distributed with subtitles, and so it is decided to make an entirely new film. Two examples where Spain was the victim are *Vanilla Sky* (Cameron Crowe, 2001), an obviously inferior remake of *Abre los ojos* (Alejandro Amenábar, 1997), but for which the presence of Tom Cruise and Cameron Diaz ensured a warmer welcome in Hollywood than an unknown Spanish movie; or the more recent *Quarantine* (John Erick Dowdle, 2008), which exploited the rights to *[REC]* (Jaume Balagueró, Paco Plaza, 2007) sold to the US market.

2 The original title of this groundbreaking film of Italian neorealism is *Ladri di biciclette*, which would be in Spanish *Ladrones de bicicletas*, and in English *Bicycle Thieves*. However, although in other Spanish-speaking countries like Argentina the title was translated literally, in Spain it was changed from plural *ladrones* (thieves) into the singular *ladrón* (thief). The change is significant, because while the film describes a very harsh reality that turns many people into bicycle thieves, the Spanish title offers a different reading, turning the story into an isolated case and stripping it of its intention to represent the dire poverty of a whole country. Taking into account that the film was released at the height of Franco's dictatorship, it is highly likely that the error was intentional; in other countries where the title was also changed to the singular, such as France or the United States, there might be room for doubt as to whether the error was due simply to a lack of knowledge of Italian. But the censors altered something even more important than the title: they introduced a voice-over not present in the original, which softens the distress-

ing (and masterly) final shot of the film, in which the man, who has been unable to recover his bicycle, is walking with his young son. The atrocious Spanish voice-over flattens the climax and the meaning of the film by suggesting essentially that the family will surely be alright in the end because Christian kindness always triumphs.

- 3 For further exploration of the question of childhood in the horror film see: 'El teorema de Swift: De niños terrible y demás monstruos filmicos' by Fernando de Felipe in the book *Imágenes del mal. Ensayos de cine, filosofía y literatura sobre la maldad*, edited by Vicente Domínguez (2003).
- 4 According to the novel, Eli is actually Elias, the youngest son of some humble farmers, serfs born 200 years before the time that the story takes place. Elias was turned into a vampire by his feudal master after one of his servants cut off his penis (which explains a fleeting and strange close-up of a scar on Eli's genitals that appears in the Swedish film but is omitted from the American version). It is thus not made very clear in the book that Eli is a girl, a fact that poses no problem to Oskar at all and which has therefore incited interpretations regarding latent homosexuality that neither of the film adaptations take on board.
- 5 Also called a situation shot, this refers to the 'frame that shows us the general space of a scene, the place where the action will take place in order to facilitate our orientation' (BENET, 2004: 301). According to Gómez Tarín, it is a shot that provides the spectator with the necessary location on the basis of which an analytical montage could be developed. By virtue of the recognition of this setting, the space also becomes inhabitable for the audience in the cinema (GÓMEZ TARÍN, 2011).
- 6 The final scene in both films is an act of revenge by Jimmy, the boy whom Oskar, earlier in the story delivers a blow to the ear with a stick in self-defence, after he was encouraged by Eli to stand up against his bullying classmates. Jimmy asks his elder brother, Jonny, to go to the pool to threaten Oskar.
- 7 The manoeuvre to distract Mr. Avila –the name of the coach in the novel– so that Oskar would be left alone in the pool does not involve a deliberately lit fire outside the pavilion in the novel as it does in both films (another piece of evidence that *Let Me In* is more a remake of the Swedish film than a new adaptation of the novel), but through a much more violent act in which they beat him about the head that results in a concussion.
- 8 The song heard on the radio is 'Flash in the Night' by the Swedish group Secret Service, a pop band that enjoyed some success in the eighties, reaching the peak of its popularity in 1982 with this song (the film doesn't make use of setting titles, and so this is a detail that provides implicit information about the time and space where the action takes place). The extra-diegetic musical composition heard in the American remake (which we know from the start takes place in Los Alamos, New Mexico, in 1983), is an instrumental score specifically made for the scene by the composer Michael Giacchino named 'The Weakest Goes to the Pool'.
- 9 According to the director's and scriptwriter's audio-comments in the Blue-ray disc of *Let Me In*, released in Spain by Karma Films. On various occasions Alfredson comments that, after reading

Lindqvist's novel, he decided to make an 'almost silent' film, and that it was the action and not the dialogues that explained the plot to the spectator, as in the film he sought to avoid the negative effect that television had had on cinema in this mode of storytelling.

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