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# Rewriting the Uncanny: Tony Scott's Cinematic Adaptation of Whitley Strieber's Novel "The Hunger"

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# Contents

## Abstract

The present MA paper examines the adaptation of the 1981 Gothic horror novel *The Hunger*, written by Whitley Strieber, to a 1983 film of the same title, directed by Tony Scott. Seeing that one of the aims is to study how the elements responsible for evocation of fear were transported and adapted in the move to the cinematic text, the analysis is based on Sigmund Freud's interpretation of the uncanny and Linda Hutcheon's and Julie Sander's perceptions of adaptation theory. The analysis is also complemented with Amelia DeFalco's considerations on the position of ageing individuals in contemporary narratives and culture. In employing these theories I consider the intricate ways in which the adaptation of *The Hunger* uses Gothic horror conventions, notably the tropes of a haunted house and the double, to present fears of ageing and death as reflected through the figure of the vampire. The paper also examines what the changes inflicted in the move to another medium imply on a broader socio-cultural level. Even though both the film and the novel share the same storyline, the analysis reveals that each deals with notably different ideological concerns, the adaptation functioning as a reflection of the contemporary society.

# Introduction

> *An adaptation is not vampiric: it does not draw the life-blood from its source and leave it dying or dead, nor is it paler than the adapted work. It may, on the contrary, keep that prior work alive, giving it an afterlife it would never have had otherwise.*
>
> — Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 2006

In her book *Our Vampires, Ourselves* Nina Auerbach (1995: 1) assuredly states that 'what vampires are in any given generation is a part of what I am and what my times have become'. This proves especially useful when pondering over the reason for the continuous proliferation of vampire narratives in our culture. Vampire is a particularly mobile monster whose lore stretches back to the beginnings of recorded history, and which is more in vogue now than it has ever been before (Auerbach 1995: 1; Gelder 2001: ix). Vampire narratives have a tremendous reach into the popular imagination, and there must be a reason for the ongoing renewal of this ancient creature (Gelder 2001: ix). Susannah Clements (2011: 2) believes that vampires 'would not have become as popular as they have if they didn't mean something to us as a culture'. As suggested by William Patrick Day (2002: 104), part of the force of vampire narratives 'lies in their articulation of our fears about who we are and where we are going'. Because of their immortality, vampires can change incessantly; they can take many forms and say many different things (Auerbach 1995: 5). Vampires can be used for any number of purposes and we 'can make a vampire mean what we want it to mean' (Clements 2011: 4-5). The creature is remarkably versatile, adapting and altering itself through time to embody different ideological messages (Cavallaro 2002: 188). It is thus determined by the context in which it appears and by 'the changing requirements of different cultural and ideological scenarios' (Ibid., p. 188). Having a decidedly human shape, vampire functions as 'a picture through which we can explore the human condition' (Clements 2011: 5). Each vampire can tell us something about the context in which it has been created and, as Nina Auerbach (1995: 9) has observed, vampires 'matter because when properly understood, they make us see that our lives are implicated in theirs'.

It goes without saying that vampires are deeply bound with questions of death and human temporality. According to Odell and Le Blanc (2008: 15), death 'is a central theme of the genre: fear of death, longing for death, fear of growing old and immortality make the vampire's

connection with the afterlife complex and manifold'. The theme of ageing and death is of central importance in the object of this study, Tony Scott's 1983 cinematic adaptation of Whitley Strieber's 1981 vampire novel *The Hunger*. The story of *The Hunger* focuses on Miriam Blaylock, a centuries-old vampire, who for centuries had transfused her lovers with her brand of an everlasting life, extending their lives, nevertheless not making them eternal. Apparently, they only last for around two hundred years, and start ageing rapidly, John Blaylock being her current lover. When her lovers age radically, Miriam stores them in coffins in the attic of her house. When John ages, Miriam sets out in search for a new partner, and her attention turns to a gerontologist Dr. Sarah Roberts who is to become her next lover. Even though both the source text and the adaptation follow this basic plotline and share the same title, nevertheless, they differ in many other respects. Therefore, I now feel the need to separately discuss Strieber's and Scott's main thematic concerns and review the studies that have already been done on the primary texts. Little existing scholarship undertakes the analysis of *The Hunger,* as both Strieber and Scott seem to be somewhat neglected creators.

Whitley Strieber (1945), American writer of horror fiction, is probably best known for his novels *The Wolfen* (1980) and *The Hunger* (1981) which established him as a solid author in the tradition of contemporary horror fiction. Both of these novels were adapted to screen (Wolf 1997: 160). As a writer of horror fiction, Strieber has explored the complex dealings between humanity and the archetypes of horror: vampires, witches, werewolves, demons and monsters (Pharr 1996: 99). Michael R. Collings (1987: 50) notes that in his writing Strieber usually begins within traditions associated with one genre and demands that the reader form certain assumptions, nevertheless 'Then the novel shifts, undercutting what has been established, and moves into a new genre. What seemed elements of horror fantasy – werewolves, vampires, demons – becomes an explainable part of the real universe'. The critic suggests that Strieber's best works – notably, *The Wolfen* and *The Hunger* – depend upon this shift from fantasy to near Science fiction (Ibid., p. 50). Strieber's work suggests that the human race is reluctant to admit that they are not alone and that multiple realities exist, but people prevent themselves from experiencing them through the illusion of living in the independent isolation (Heldreth and Pharr 1999: 88). This idea is prominently seen in his first published novel, *The Wolfen* (1978), where Strieber develops a new species 'not wolves but Wolfen', which evolved alongside humans (Pharr 1996: 99). Mary Pharr (1996: 97) suggests that essentially all of Strieber's work is based on this crucial renunciation of the idea of isolation which leads to the recognition of the existence of other sentient beings that may have a profound effect

on human lives and human ability to explore this impact is tested throughout all of Strieber's fiction.

Strieber's *The Hunger* was a bestseller, however it received little critical attention. Like the rest of his fiction, the novel is an intelligent myth of another species living alongside humans (Auerbach 1995: 57). Heldreth and Pharr (1999: 202) suggest that Strieber makes the vampire in *The Hunger* appealing as Miriam might be the last of her kind and her loneliness and search for an equal companion arouse sympathy in the reader. Carol A. Senf (1988: 5) agrees with this view stating that even though Miriam is horrifying because of her blood drinking practices, readers may sympathize with her quest to find someone to share her immortality with and be touched by the appalling loneliness that she experiences. William Patrick Day (2002: 91) suggests that the vampire Strieber created is an entirely modern being and '(...) the image of the post-human narcissist stripped of all empathy'. The critic believes that the novel portrays the triumph of human over the vampire as a triumph of spiritual love over animal needs, and even though Miriam is portrayed as inferior, the readers are left with a sense that they are much closer to what Miriam is (Ibid., p. 91). From the sparing critical attention that the novel has received, it seems reasonable to state that in the novel Strieber attempts to instil fear in his readers by usurping the position of people as the dominant species in the world.

Whitley Strieber's *The Hunger* attracted interest from Hollywood and two years after the publication the novel was cinematically depicted by Tony Scott (1944 – 2012), who was a British-born film director and producer. His feature directorial debut came with the movie *The Hunger* (1983) starring David Bowie, Susan Sarandon and Catherine Deneuve, which is least considered of his feature films (Phillips 2013: 254). Scott has worked with a variety of different genres including gothic horror, war, comedy, crime thrillers and sports films. Scott tends to recast various film genres, as he takes up well-established genres and remakes them within his own evolving postclassical and postmodern aesthetic, while accentuating the aspects of genre through his style (Phillips 2013: 253). His filmic vision tends towards rapid editing, asynchronous sound and disjunctive musical montages that provide a unique rhythm to his films (Ibid., p. 253). Film critic Joseph Bevan (2015) describes Scott as a 'visionary director' as Scott prioritised visual aspects above all else. David Bowie[1], who impersonated John Blaylock in *The Hunger*, has also noticed

[1] (Hermann Vaske's interview with David Bowie 1996, cited in Bevan 2015)

that ‘the visual was nearly all of what he was doing. He did not have great ideas about the through-line of the story. It was about moving one interesting visual against another’. Significantly, as a filmmaker, Tony Scott received a lot of criticism for his concentration on the visual aspects in his films, including *The Hunger* (Bevan 2015).

*The Hunger* received little critical attention as a novel and was mostly dealt in critical texts as a film (Antoni 2008), nevertheless the attention it received was not extensive. Most scholars tend to characterize the film as a clear modification of the vampire genre and to accentuate its contemporaneity. Kendall R. Phillips (2013: 254) describes *The Hunger* as a fairly straightforward and glossy retelling of the vampire mythology, nevertheless positioning it as an important reformulation of the gothic genre. Similarly, Barbara Creed (1993: 68) suggests that *The Hunger* sets out to update the vampire movie as even the word ‘vampire’ is never used, and the conventional imagery associated with the vampire film is absent as there are no fangs, bats, capes or virgins. Nicola Nixon (1997: 115) asserts that ‘From his casting and set design to his musical score, Scott stresses the essential up-to-the-minute contemporaneity of the film, representing vampirism in all its potential glamour, trendiness, eroticism, and appeal to “80s youth-cultism”’. Resting on Ken Gelder’s idea that vampire films might need to assert their difference from earlier ones, Phillips (2013: 255) argues that in *The Hunger* Tony Scott not merely rejects the tropes of the vampire genre, but rather reformulates them and develops a sense of gothic temporality within a framework of postmodernism and that by doing so he lays the foundation for re-establishing gothic horror within the context of the late twentieth century. The critic argues that the film not only seeks to constitute itself as a radical break from the generic temporality, but also recasts our experience of temporality through narrative ruptures (Ibid., p. 256).

A number of scholars have analysed the film in relation to its socio-cultural conditions. Phillips (2013: 264) notes that the movie emerged within a transition period and can be seen as encompassing the politics driven largely by the Reagan revolution. Rob Latham (2002: 80) holds a similar position suggesting that ‘the figure of the yuppie vampire emerges as an exalted representative of so-called economic revival that marked the Reaganite 1980s’. The critic (Ibid., p. 113) reads the film as ‘an allegory of the new bourgeoisie’s ideology of consuming youth’, Miriam being the embodiment of its utopian promises. The critic also suggests that the connection between Miriam and her lovers is not only sexual but also economic (Ibid., p. 113). Latham (2006: 116) emphasizes Sarah’s reaction to Miriam’s house and her possessions and argues that ‘Miriam’s sexual courtship of Sarah is a class seduction, a conflation of libidinal and political economies’.

Similarly, Nina Auerbach (1995: 14) suggests that Scott creates 'a creature of the 1980's, subordinate to seductive objects: jewellery, furniture, lavish houses in glamorous cities, leather clothes'. The critic notices that Miriam not only lives through her things, but even kills using jewellery, as she slits the throats with an ankh that hides a knife (Ibid., p. 14). Auerbach suggests that Miriam preserves her transformed lowers in the same manner as she preservers her belongings, as 'Vampires in *The Hunger* are not their powers, but their assets' (Ibid., p. 14).

Barbara Creed (1993: 67), reading *The Hunger* in a psychoanalytic frame of Kristeva's theory of abjection, argues that the vampire in the film is represented as an exceptionally abject figure, as because of its gender it is associated more closely with woman's blood. The critic argues that Miriam Blaylock is monstrous because she promises an everlasting life, while knowing that the fate of her lovers will be a state of living dead, a state of no end. Creed interprets the house to be a 'womb-like mausoleum' and the process of Miriam placing her lovers into individual coffins in the attic as 'symbolically returning them to the womb' (Ibid., p. 70). The critic argues that Miriam represents a cruel, suffocating mother who resists to let go and whose fertility has dried up (Ibid., p. 68). Merskin (2011: 303) holds the same opinion stating that Miriam embodies the abject, she is a mother to John who denies him his needs. The critic maintains that in texts which deal with female vampires the relationship between vampire as a mother and her lover as a child is more evident, and that Miriam is a vampire/mother who gives birth to her lovers by the promise of eternal life and by teaching them how to feed (Ibid., p. 303). Characteristically, the critics view Miriam as an essentially monstrous creature in the adaptation, nevertheless I would like to maintain my reservations concerning this matter.

The review of the works shows the aspects that have already been discussed by the scholarly criticism of *The Hunger*, as well as demonstrates that even though a certain amount of scholarly work has been done on either the film or the novel, nevertheless there seems to be no extensive study of the two works taken together that would demonstrate how the elements responsible for evocation of fear were reshaped and adapted in the move from novel to film. What is more, even though such critics as Rob Latham (2006) have noted the feature of 'youth consumption' in the film, however, the aspect of age as marker of social difference was ignored. Therefore, I believe that a closer look at the adaptation of *The Hunger* from a psychoanalytic and culturally critical standpoint, along with the understanding of the workings of the Gothic tradition, could reveal some unnoticed aspects of the two texts.

In addition to being a vampire story, *The Hunger* also employs other Gothic conventions, which the previous studies have overlooked. The haunted space of the house and the motif of the double are irrefutable sources of fear, which Tony Scott's adaptation of Whitley Strieber's novel *The Hunger* intertwines into the narrative of the film. According to Barry Curtis (2008: 12), vampires usually inhabit 'dark' or 'bad' places. The house that the vampires of *The Hunger* inhabit seems to have a dark Gothic footing and resembles a haunted house. As noted by Fred Botting (1996: 2), in the early Gothic fiction the haunted castle was the locus of Gothic plots and 'signaled the spatial and temporal separation of the past and its values from those of the present'. Even though the trope of the haunted house is to some extent outdated, nevertheless, according to Botting (1996: 2), 'Gothic narratives never escaped the concerns of their own times, despite the heavy historical trappings'. The haunted castle was gradually substituted by the old house which 'became the site where fears and anxieties returned in the present' (Ibid., p. 2). Even though Gothic narratives have undergone certain significant transformations, nevertheless, haunted houses and the dark places where 'ghosts' dwell still remain to be powerful metaphors for 'themes of loss, memory, retribution and confrontation with unacknowledged and unresolved histories' (Curtis 2008: 10).

Another Gothic convention that the adaptation of *The Hunger* employs is the motif of the double. Double, or the doppelgänger, is a recurrent theme in Gothic and horror narratives and has both symbolic and psychoanalytical connotations (Hughes 2013: 86). The motif is mostly apparent in the nineteenth century literature, and ultimately comes from the 'anthropological belief in an innate duality in man' *(*González 1998: 264). According to Mary Ellen Snodgrass (2005: 83), duality of a character may refer to 'the twin, shadow double, demon double, and split personality', all of which are common characteristics in folklore. The double was traditionally believed to be a harbinger of death, but in the narratives of nineteenth and twentieth century the doppelgänger is usually recognized as performing a more intricate psychological function (Spooner 2004: 129). Catherine Spooner (2004: 129) maintains that 'the rise of the double is clearly initially due to the emergent notion of the individual in modernity'. The scholar suggests that fear can be generated through duplication or disintegration of subjecthood only when value is invested in a unique and coherent self (Ibid., p. 129). Therefore, being a typical example of otherness and narcissistic specularity, the presence of the second self or *alter ego* is firmly linked to the individual *(*González 1998: 264).

The haunted house and the double are canonical themes of the Gothic horror genre and can be easily linked to psychoanalysis, especially to Freud's considerations of the notion of the uncanny. Therefore, in order to interpret what meaning the motif of the double and the haunted space of the house acquire in the adaptation and how they work as instruments of social critique, I have chosen Freud's essay *The Uncanny* (1919) and Julie Sanders and Linda Hutcheon's perceptions of adaptation theory to serve as my theoretical framework. I will also make use of Amelia DeFalco's considerations on narratives of ageing, as the paper also aims to comment on cultural scripting of ageing as a deficiency. Given that in order to get to the core of vampire narratives one has to look at how the texts are interwoven with the contexts in which they have been created, my thesis refuses the 'fidelity' approach, which has a long history in adaptation studies, and instead looks at what the changes in the adaptation mean on a broader socio-cultural context. The present study aims to analyse how the story of *The Hunger* was adapted from novel to film, paying particular attention to the readjustment of fears in order to illuminate how the adaptation changed the monstrosity of the novel to incarnate different ideological messages and to embody the main contemporary concerns related to deep rooted fears of ageing and death. Specifically, I want to consider how these fears resonate with the workings and contexts of the narratives in which they appear and how the transformed figure of the vampire in the adaptation helps us better understand the contemporary society.

The reason why I have chosen to analyse how Whitley Strieber's *The Hunger* was adapted into a cinematic text is that I am particularly interested in Gothic fiction and film, as well as the intertextual relations among texts and how stories can be given new life and new meanings in different mediums and contexts. Notably, the thing that I am interested in is how a particular story can be translated into a realm of new concerns and perspectives even within a short period of time. It is worthwhile looking in more depth to the adaptation of the novel as no previous research attempt of such kind exists. Even though according to the opinion of some critics Scott's adaptation "(…) looked more like an ad from *Cosmopolitan* than a horror film" (McNally and Florescu 1994: 164), I believe that the critical reading of the adaptation might show that the film works as a mediator of the fears of the society of the time. Particularly, even though the novel was adapted quickly, I aim to illustrate how the essence of fear can change radically in such a short period of time and analyse what these changes signify on a socio-cultural level. Even though Scott has been continuously criticized for concentration on visual aspects, this paper aims to show what hides behind the workings of his vision.

The present MA paper is comprised of three main chapters. The first chapter provides a theoretical framework with the main insights on adaptation theory (Hutcheon's and Sanders's studies), the aesthetic notion of the uncanny (Freud's essay) and narratives of ageing (DeFalco's study). The other two chapters are dedicated to the practical analysis of the adaptation from novel to film. They are divided in terms of the Gothic trope employed to explain the contemporary social and cultural fears and anxieties. The second chapter 'Uncanny Duality: Self as Other, Other as Self' provides an interpretation of how a conventional Gothic trope, the motif of the double, is used to introduce unsettling horror into the narrative of the film and to emphasize old age as a sign of difference. The last chapter 'The Ghosts of Ageing' will investigate how the trope of haunting is used as a mediator of repressed fears of ageing and death and how the adaptation can be read as offering social critique. Both of these chapters discuss how, because of certain shifts that were inflicted in the move to another medium, the ideology and the thematic concerns of the adaptation change. The end of each chapter offers concluding remarks, where a summary of the problems discussed is presented. The paper ends by offering Conclusions and a Summary in Lithuanian.

# 1. Adapting Fear: A Theoretical framework

*No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone.*

— T.S. Eliot *Tradition and Individual Talent,* 1921

The aim of the present MA paper being an attempt to analyse how the story of *The Hunger* was adapted to cinematic text, I will base my analysis on Julie Sanders's *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006) and Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006) as these theorists explore methodologies which help to relate adaptations not only to their literary sources and medium specificities, but also to the broader cultural and ideological contexts in which they have been created. Seeing that the specific focus of this paper is the adaptation of agencies responsible for evoking fear, I will also base my analysis on Sigmund Freud's essay *The Uncanny* (1919). As the specific fears the present paper addresses are related to ageing and death, I will also compliment my analysis with Amelia DeFalco's study *Uncanny Subjects: Aging in Contemporary Narratives* (2010). First of all, I will provide an overview of Freud's essay, considering the most important aspects of it in relation to evocation of fear and relate them to a broader context of the gothic horror genre. Secondly, I will consider the never-ending debate about the link between the source text and the adapted text and the issue of fidelity, then proceed by discussing Sanders's and Hutcheon's studies. Finally, I will briefly consider DeFalco's study. The chapter will end by offering concluding remarks.

## 1.1. The Uncanny

Literature and film can be intimate with and related to the fears rooted deep within us therefore they can be easily linked to psychoanalysis, especially in the analyses of gothic horror genre. According to psychoanalysis, there are psychic and mental contents that are repressed and which inevitably return at some point in time. The link between the production of horror and fear and the return of the repressed was discussed in Freud's essay *The Uncanny* (1919) which has become an important tool in the analyses of horror (Gelder 2002: 49). At the beginning of his essay Freud points out that the uncanny belongs 'to all that is terrible — to all that arouses dread and creeping horror' (1919: 1). Freud elaborates that the uncanny has an intrinsic quality which justifies its special name as it 'is that class of terrifying which leads back to something long known to us, once so familiar' (1919: 1). Freud accentuates that because the meaning of a German word *unheimlich*

is the opposite of *heimlich,* which means 'familiar' or 'belonging to the home', we are tempted to conclude that 'what is "uncanny" is frightening precisely because it is not known or familiar' (Ibid., p. 2). Nevertheless, according to Freud, not all new and unfamiliar things are frightening, therefore something more has to be added to what is novel and unfamiliar to produce an effect of uncanniness (Ibid., p. 2). In an attempt to make the uncanny more specific, Freud (1919: 2-4) draws a distinction between two German terms *heimlich*, meaning something that is familiar, belonging to the house, homely or hidden, and *unheimlich* which is something that comes to light even though it should have remained hidden, relating them to the negative experiences, particularly sexual ones. Freud maintains that the meaning of a word *heimlich* 'develops towards an ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich. Unheimlich* is in some way or other a sub-species of *heimlich*' (1919: 4). Therefore *unheimlich* is not exactly the opposite of *heimlich* but it rather describes a feeling of estrangement within that which seemed *heimlich* or homely.

After analysing a number of events and taking Hoffman's tale 'The Sandman' as an example of the uncanny, Freud enlists the main features that are responsible for the creation of the uncanny effect. Apart from castration and involuntary repetition, Freud (1919: 9), in reference to Hoffman, maintains that the uncanniness also arises in relation to the mental processes such as telepathy 'so that the one possesses knowledge, feeling and experience in common with the other, identifies himself with another person, so that his self becomes confounded, or the foreign self is substituted for his own—in other words, by doubling, dividing and interchanging the self'. According to Freud (1919: 9) the idea of a 'double' which can appear in different sizes, shapes and forms is one of the most prominent in creating an uncanny effect. Freud maintains, that in relation to the double, the uncanny effect can only come from the situation of 'the "double" being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since left behind, and one, no doubt, in which it wore a more friendly aspect' (1919: 10). Therefore, the theme of the double is closely related to a person's subjectivity. In his discussion of this theme Freud makes a reference to Otto Rank, who has thoroughly treated the theme of the "double". According to Rank, the "double" has connections 'with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and the fear of death; (…) the "double" was originally an insurance against destruction to the ego, an "energetic denial of the power of death"' (Ibid., p. 9). What is more, Freud suggests that most people experience the highest degree of uncanniness in relation to death or dead bodies, the return of the

dead or spirits and ghosts (Ibid., p. 13). Significantly, many languages render the Germen expression "an unheimliches house" as "a haunted house" (Ibid., p. 13) which makes the uncanny even easier to relate to the return of the dead and the Gothic horror genre.

For Freud the uncanny 'is nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old — established in the mind that has been estranged by the process of repression' (1919: 13). Freud explains that something becomes unfamiliar because of the process of repression and the reappearance of it creates anxiety. Finally, he comes to a conclusion that 'An uncanny experience occurs either when repressed infantile complexes have been revived by some impression or when the primitive beliefs we have surmounted seem once more to be confirmed' (Ibid., p. 17). Thus, the uncanny is concerned with such horror that is much more disturbing as it is something that is imminent and hard to escape from.

### 1.2. Theory of Adaptation

Seeing that my focus is how uncanny fears are readjusted and transformed in the move from novel to cinematic text, I find it important to discuss the specificities concerning the adaptation process. The history of film adaptations is as long as cinema itself, as ever since cinema recognized itself as a form of narrative entertainment, the thought of ransacking the novel for source material got into motion, and this process has continued persistently to this day (McFarlane 1996: 6). However, from newspaper reviews to lengthier essays in critical journals or anthologies, the fidelity to the source novel as the main criterion for judging an adaptation is prevalent (Ibid., p. 8). Contemporary popular adaptations are generally put down as secondary or derivative in academic criticism and journalistic reviewing alike, because they are perceived to be "lowering" the story, therefore the response they usually evoke is negative (Hutcheon 2006: 3). In addition to the desire for the adapted work to be loyal to the source text, the besmirching of adapters and adaptations stems from the (post-) Romantic valuing of the originating creative genius and the original creation (Ibid. p. 4). Nevertheless, with the increase of critical interest in adaptation theory, unfavourable views towards adaptations based on fidelity discourse have been increasingly challenged (Ibid., p. 8-9).

In her book *Adaptation and Appropriation* published in 2006 Julie Sanders acutely remarks that 'it is usually at the very point of infidelity that the most creative acts of adaptation and appropriation take place' (Sanders 2006: 20). According to the scholar, adaptation is 'far from

neutral, indeed highly active, mode of being, far removed from unimaginative act of imitation, copying, or repetition' (Ibid., p. 254). This idea proves especially useful when adaptations find their way into debates regarding their faithfulness to the source text. The scholar maintains that the creative process is always self-perpetuating, as texts feed off on texts and this way create new texts (Ibid., p. 14). Respectively, according to the scholar, adaptation studies should focus on analysing process, ideology and methodology, rather than on making contradictory value judgments (Ibid., p. 20).

In *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Sanders differentiates between adaptations and appropriations in terms of how explicitly they announce their intertextual purpose. Nevertheless, the distinction between the two is rather fluid as some works can be adaptations and appropriations at the same time (Ibid., p. 29). The scholar maintains that adaptations clearly signal their relationship to the source text, whereas appropriation, on the other hand, frequently 'affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain' (Ibid., p. 26). That is, appropriations are adaptations which transpose the culture of a source text to a different culture, generally shifting language and setting. This also suggests that most formal adaptations signal their relationship to the source text by carrying the same title as their source texts, whereas for appropriations this is not essential. Appropriations are more subtle, as the intertextual link may be more embedded, however, this way appropriations may take a position of critique in the re-interpreting process (Ibid., p. 2). Notably, in her study Sanders is incited by the 'ability of adaptation to respond or write back to an informing original from a new or revised political and cultural position, and by the capacity of appropriations to highlight troubling gaps, absences, and silences within the canonical texts to which they refer' (Ibid., p. 98). This seems to suggest that adaptation is not always a straightforward process, often involving concealed meanings, therefore the reading of adaptations should not be facilitated to the discussion of their fidelity to the source texts, but requires a broader theorizing of what the deviations from the adapted texts might signify.

Adaptation, in the view of Sanders, is 'frequently a specific process involving the transition from one genre to another: novels into film; drama into musical; the dramatization of prose narrative and prose fiction; or the inverse movement of making drama into prose narrative' (Ibid., p. 19). When it comes to adaptation of novels, the scholar suggests that:

> *On the surface, all screen versions of novels are transpositions in the sense that they take a text from one genre and deliver it to new audiences by means of the aesthetic conventions of an entirely different generic process (…). But many adaptations, of*

> *novels and other generic forms, contain further layers of transposition, relocating their source texts not just generically, but in cultural, geographical and temporal terms (Ibid., p. 20).*

Adaptations, therefore, often involve a cultural change or a move into a different generic mode or context, and, as suggested by the scholar, in some cases '(…) the process of adaptation starts to move away from simple proximation to something more culturally loaded' (ibid., p. 21). These ideas of Sanders suggest that adaptation studies require an outlook towards broader cultural and social contexts and demand corresponding interpretations.

Although Sanders provides interesting insights which have been instrumental in presenting the different layers that the adaptation process might entail, and examines a broader landscape concerning the interconnectedness between different texts, introducing us to significant arguments towards the study of adaptations in relation to their broader socio-cultural contexts, I will mostly base my reading of *The Hunger* on Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* (2006). Seeing that my paper involves an analysis of adaptation, rather than appropriation, I find Hutcheon's study of greater relevance for my aims as she provides a more substantial theorizing of adaptation and draws a clearer distinction between medium and genre, thus making her ideas more practically applicable. In her extensive study Hutcheon explores the ubiquity of adaptations in all their various forms and challenges their critical denigration. Adaptations, Hutcheon (2006: 2) argues, appear in variety of forms and are omnipresent in contemporary culture: they are present not only on the television and movie screen or the musical and dramatic stage, but also on the Internet, in novels and comic books, theme parks and arcade games, therefore they deserve serious attention.

Adaptations are aesthetic objects per se; nevertheless adaptation studies are often comparative studies as adaptations openly reveal their relationship to other work or works and they can be theorized as adaptations only as inherently double-natured works (Ibid., p. 6). Nevertheless, in accordance with Sanders's ideas, Hutcheon asserts that this double nature of adaptations does not imply that that proximity or fidelity to the source text should be the focus of analysis or criterion of judgement (Ibid., p. 6). The scholar astutely illustrates her position by pointing out that dictionary definition of 'to adapt' is 'to adjust, to alter, to make suitable' (Ibid., p. 7). Hutcheon explains what the act of adaptation entails by describing adaptation as: '*An acknowledged transposition of recognizable other work or works*; *A creative and interpretive act of*

*appropriation/salvaging*; *An extended intertextual engagement with the adapted work'* (Ibid., p. 8). In other words, according to Hutcheon, adaptations are derivations that are not derivative, they are based on pre-existing works which they transform (Ibid., p. 9). The scholar also notes that the term 'adaptation' is used to define both the product and the process (Ibid., p. 15). As a product, adaptation is often compared to translation or paraphrase, because literal adaptation is just as unachievable as literal translation chiefly because transposition to another medium, and even moving in the same one, certainly means change (Ibid., pp. 16-17). Adaptation as a process is viewed as an interpretation of a source text which is also influenced by the adapter's choice of medium (Ibid., p. 18). Hence, by simply discussing the meaning of the term 'adaptation' Hutcheon artfully challenges the assumption that adaptations are aimed at replication of source material and highlights how the term itself rejects fidelity to the adapted text.

Hutcheon makes clear that the process of adaptation involves transposition of certain elements from adapted text to adaptation. The story is essentially what is transposed across different media and genres, each of them dealing with that story in formally different ways and by way of different modes of engagement (narrating, performing, interacting) (Ibid., p. 10). Characters are undoubtedly transported from one text to the other, along with themes, which are seen as probably the easiest story elements adaptable across media, genres and framing contexts (Ibid., p. 10-11). The separate units of the story can also be transported, nevertheless they may undergo radical change in the ordering of the plot, in the transformation of pacing, time compression and expansion (Ibid., p. 11). What is particularly useful in Hutcheon's discussion of transposition of elements, is the indication that the changes that appear in the process can create considerable differences within the story being adapted (Ibid., p. 11). According to Hutcheon, radical reinterpretations of texts involving the rearrangement of plot events, cutting out of characters function as extended critical and creative engagements with prior texts capable of offering commentary on the politics of the source text (Ibid., p. 39).

Hutcheon argues that because adaptation is not only a product, but also a process it allows us to expand the focus of adaptation studies and take into consideration relations amongst different modes of engagement (telling, showing, and interacting) (Ibid., p. 22). Each mode has its own specificity and different means of expression; therefore it can achieve specific things better than other modes (Ibid., p. 24). With every mode of engagement the context is due to change,

nevertheless the consideration of medium alone would not allow the determination of success (or failure) of an adaptation. It should be noted that the process of engagement involves both space and time within a particular society and culture, therefore significant changes in a story's context can radically change how the story being transposed will be interpreted both on ideological and literal levels, thus revealing a lot about the broader contexts of reception and production (Ibid., p. 28). Hence, the medium to which an adaptation is transcoded and the social and communication dimensions of it are of crucial importance (Ibid., p. 34). It must therefore be recognized that stories are retold in different ways and in different mediums and cultural environments, and they adapt in relation to those environments (Ibid., p. 32).

Since in adaptations transcoding to another medium is often involved, Hutcheon conveniently discusses the specificities of different mediums, the understanding of them being of crucial importance in the analyses of adaptations. Adaptations are re-mediatons or transcodings because they move from one medium to the other, from one sign system to the other (Ibid., p. 16, 22). The move from telling to showing mode is usually perceived as the most charged transposition, as it involves differences in material scale which make the adaptation from novel to performance arts difficult. With their composite language and diverse means of expression, films are usually seen as the most inclusive of all performance arts, having at their disposal both visual and aural expressive means (Ibid., p. 35). As noted by Hutcheon, the move from telling to showing mode involves dramatization, because description, narration and the representation of thoughts must be transcoded into visual images, sounds, speech and actions. Ideological differences and conflicts between characters must be portrayed and made audible (ibid., p. 40). In performance media adaptations, the aural aspects are just as important as the visual, as there are words spoken, voice-overs, music, noise and soundtracks in films that help to enhance and direct the response of audience towards characters and action (Ibid., pp. 40-41). As seen from this perspective, then it can be inferred that the interpretation of a move from printed page to cinematic text requires an understanding of the workings of different mediums.

In addition to discussing the differences between mediums, Linda Hutcheon surpasses the discussion of the mechanics of adaptation and considers the importance of context in which an adaptation appears (a time and a place, a society and a culture). The scholar recognizes that the context can change in a short period of time even without any alterations to national or cultural

setting or any temporal updating of the story being adapted, as fashions or value systems are context-dependent (Ibid., p. 142). As Hutcheon points out, 'time, often very short stretches of it, can change the context even within the same place and culture' (Ibid., p. 144). Therefore, the changes that appear in an adaptation are caused not only by the demands of form, the adapter, the particular audience, but also by the contexts of reception and creation which are broad and varied (Ibid., p. 142). In other words, the adaptation process involves making choices that are based on many factors;

> *(…) including genre or medium conventions, political engagement, and personal as well as public history. These decisions are made in a creative as well as an interpretive context that is ideological, social, historical, cultural, personal, and aesthetic* (Ibid. p. 108).

Hence, I would speculate, that the context that Hutcheon talks about is of particular importance in discussing groups that are underrepresented or marginalized, as the analysis of it can reveal the prevailing values of the society in which a certain adaptation is produced.

It is important to note that different adapters might be attracted by different aspects of the same story and there is a number of different reasons why they might choose to transcode a particular story to a different medium or genre (Ibid., p. 19). The aim of adapters might be to both financially or aesthetically supplant the prior works or to challenge the aesthetic or political values of the source text or even to pay homage (Ibid., p. 20). Adaptation process can also be motivated by the urge to gain respectability by adapting a prestigious work or the adapter might be driven by personal or political motives as adapters 'not only interpret that work but in so doing they also take a position on it' (Ibid., p. 92). An adaptation can therefore function as a tool to engage in a larger social or cultural critique or can even be used to avoid it (Ibid., p. 94). Linda Hutcheon rightly argues that culturally and historically conditioned reasons to adapt a certain text and the particular way chosen to do so should be taken seriously by adaptation theory 'even if it means rethinking the role of intentionality in our critical thinking about art in general' (Ibid., p. 95). Adaptive process is a sum of the encounters among signifying systems, personal motivations and institutional cultures, therefore the political, aesthetic, and autobiographical motivations of the various adapters are relevant to the interpretation of the adaptation (Ibid., pp. 106-107).

### 1.3. Narratives of Ageing

Seeing as the aim of the present paper is to identify and relate to a broader context fears related to ageing and death, I find Amelia DeFalco's study *Uncanny Subjects: Aging in Contemporary Narrative* (2010) of great use. As suggested by the title of the study, the scholar draws heavily on Freud's essay *The Uncanny* to think about the place of the ageing subject in contemporary narratives. Even though I will mostly base my reading of *The Hunger* on Freud's essay, DeFalco's study is instrumental in laying out the issues concerning cultural effects towards an ageing individual. DeFalco recognizes that 'age functions very much like other categories of difference, such as gender, race, and sexuality: older subjects are largely straitjacketed by their supposed otherness, offered simplistic, restrictive identities overly determined by their bodies' (DeFalco 2010: 17). The scholar suggests that cultural obsession with fighting against the signs of ageing is as strong as ever, and consequently shadows a growing ageing population, which only furthers 'the contradictory position of the aging subject as culturally masked and erased, sequestered into institutions for the aged, and, at the same time, visibly present and pathologized' (Ibid., p. 1). The scholar recognizes that the conception of ageing as a process of decline and motion towards death is constructed within both popular and scientific discourses (Ibid., p. 1). In her study the scholar notes that age is 'undertheorized sign of difference in the humanities' (Ibid., p. 1), and offers readings of contemporary fiction and film where fictional characters are forced to face their status as 'old' in order to illuminate this difference.

DeFalco (2010: 138) maintains that there is a connection between narrativity and ageing. The scholar suggests that narratives have links to identity and have explanatory power 'Narrative fiction and film remind us of our own narrativity, our uncanny condition as perpetually "in progress"'. Therefore ageing should be reflected on in relation to identity through narrative. The scholar suggests that in essence age is an unstable category since 'our age identity is always in process' (Ibid., 4). Nevertheless, the idea 'of older persons as inevitably split subjects appears often in writing on aging, both scholarly and fictional' (Ibid., p. 6). The scholar suggests that because there is an insistence and a belief in singular 'youth-based' or 'core' identities it 'provokes aging subjects to reject an altered self rather than admit to transformative identity' (DeFalco 2010: 6). As a consequence, 'Old age renders its subjects both invisible and unmistakable; personhood is often cast into doubt, even imagined as entirely erased, while the body marked by age draws the eye and comment' (Ibid., p. 4).

### 1.4. Concluding Remarks

The brief review of Freud's essay allows us to see that the concept of the uncanny as something strange, yet familiar is closely related with the unsettling repressed fears that we have in relation to such themes as death. The concept can be used as a valuable tool in the analyses of the horror genre both in fiction and film. The works of Sanders and Hutcheon on the adaptation process are particularly helpful, as these theorists let us understand what implications the transformations in adaptations have both on ideological and socio-cultural levels. While Amelia DeFalco's study is valuable in helping us to understanding the position of an aged individual within the narratives of contemporary culture. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to approach the adaptation of *The Hunger* by striving to see what the readjustments and transformations within the text imply on ideological and socio-cultural level. Significantly, the process of looking at how the elements responsible for evoking uncanny horror are transformed in the move from novel to film should reveal what the adaptation implies on ideological and socio-cultural level in relation to such questions as ageing and death.

## 2. Uncanny Duality: Self as Other, Other as Self

> *With every day, and from both sides of my intelligence, the moral and the intellectual, I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth, by whose partial discovery I have been doomed to such a dreadful shipwreck: that man is not truly one, but truly two.*
>
> **—** Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, 1886

> *I at once realized to my dismay that the intruder was nothing but my own reflection.*
>
> — *Freud, The Uncanny,*1919

In this part of my analysis I shall look at how the novel and the approach to the novel serve the film's ideology and how the ideology of the adaptation of *the Hunger* is different from the adapted text, because of certain differences between the two. First of all, by relying on Hutcheon's and Sanders's observations, I will discuss how the central vampire figure changed in the move from novel to film and what the changes mean on an ideological level. Also, by relying on Freud's essay *The Uncanny,* I will discuss how John Blaylock's character was invested with a more significant and ideologically driven role through the use of the Gothic trope of the double. What is more, I will relate these uncanny replicas of self to the broader social and cultural context.

Following Hutcheon's and Sanders's ideas that adaptations should be analysed in relation to the context in which they appear and in terms of 'process, ideology and methodology' (Sanders 2006: 20), I would like to suggest that the adaptation of *The Hunger* is in touch with certain concerns and anxieties of the time the film was produced, and that the alterations and realignments within the story can be explained by looking at the broader social and cultural context. As suggested by Hutcheon (2006: 36), the story's meaning alters as it moves from one medium to another because of medium specificity and because the story has to be rewritten. The story of *The Hunger* was altered and realigned not only because of the shift from one medium to another, but also to embody different ideological messages. *The Hunger* meant one thing as a novel and was made to mean another thing as a film, and the shifts in the presentation of the vampire were fashioned to mirror certain aspects of society.

If we compare the elements most different of Whitley Strieber's *The Hunger*, an adaptation into film might shed light on the film's broader context. As films are aimed at a large audience they have to resonate with prevailing themes and concerns of the time, and being highly topical they

can also provide a sketch of contemporary social life (Kellner 2003: 1). Films have the power to shape the prevailing view of the world around us, defining what is considered moral or evil, good or bad, positive or negative, thus shaping the inmost values of society (Ibid., p. 1). Scott's film departed significantly from the adapted text, nevertheless, it should not be seen as lowering the story, rather, the point in question "is not whether the adapted film is faithful to its source, but rather how the choice of a specific source and how the approach to that source serve the film's ideology" (Christopher Orr 1984, cited in McFarlane, 1996, p. 10). According to Graeme Turner (1999: 171), both production and reception of films is framed by ideological interests and 'ideology is read from film texts, consciously or unconsciously, and the relationship between each text and its culture is traceable to ideological roots'. Therefore, I believe that Scott's film besides of offering a fantasy entertainment also stands as a clever ideological story and the ideological pressures of the time can be traced through a closer analysis of the film which illuminates ageist stereotyping.

There is an understanding among many people that prejudice such as sexism and racism are social constructs, nevertheless, when it comes to ageism there still prevails a certain failure to recognize the constructed nature of this type of marginalization. The world that the majority of people inhabit is dominated by capitalism, positivism and 'anti-ageing' discourses which make it hard for us to realize that essentially we are all aged *by our culture* (Gullette 2015: 26). The vampire myth has always had a tremendous reach into the popular imagination, but nowadays, more than ever before vampire films and novels are being produced (Gelder 2001: IX). Many people view sceptically the study of vampire films and fiction, nevertheless I believe that the analysis of the film is important and deserves serious attention as the film has achieved a level of cultural immortality. The relationship between the gothic horror genre and culture is evident, as observed by Cavallaro '(...) the tropes of mental, bodily and ethical disintegration fostered by the Gothic are inextricably linked to specific ideological, historical and political circumstances' (2002: VII). It is also important not to overlook that the figure of the vampire, which is an inherent part of the gothic tradition, correlates with certain ideological messages, based on desires and concerns of different generations and, as noted by Nina Auerbach (1995: 1), each vampire 'feeds on his age distinctively because he embodies that age'. It suggests that the vampire changes according to the specific fears and beliefs of specific age and society that it inhabits which allows analysing it both through cultural and historical perspectives combined. As suggested by Ken Gelder (2001: 103), in the 1980s and early 1990s, most American vampire films directly addressed 'youth culture', therefore

I believe that the cinematic representation in the adaptation transcodes pro-youthfulness discourses in the era of yuppie culture and negative stigmatizing of ageing. I suggest, that *The Hunger* is a field of conflicting ideologies and is charged with oppressive messages towards the elderly even though they are camouflaged by cinematic language. The study of the film will help me illustrate how certain ideological messages are instilled to the adaptation and how the film can be read as representing inequities between different age groups which have been constructed as inevitable within the given society.

As already noted, even though the figure of the vampire has endured for a very long time it is not timeless as the myth is extraordinarily versatile and mobile, adapting itself to the particular fears and beliefs of each particular age and society in which it manifests itself (Cavallaro 2002: 179; Gelder 2001: X). In her work *A Theory of Adaptation*, Linda Hutcheon notes that vampire narratives 'revolve around a single protean figure, culturally stereotyped yet retrofitted in ideological terms for adaptation to different times and places' (2006: 153). Therefore, we can say that vampire changes over time, but it can also change over medium to embody different ideological messages, since 'vampires are creatures of adaptation' (Hawkes 2013: 107). Context means everything, and 'even direct transposition from one medium to another might have an entirely different meaning given the possibilities and constrains of film' (Wells-Lassagne and Hudelet 2003: 5). Following this reasoning, it is fair to suggest that the vampire image of *The Hunger* is translated, transformed and modified in the transposition of the narrative into the cinematic text. Scott's vampire departed from Strieber's in a number of ways and as a consequence Miriam in the film is notably different from Miriam in the book.

### 2.1. The Nature of the Vampire

Regarding the question of the nature of the vampire, the most important revision here concerns its appearance. Miriam, the vampire, is presented in great detail within the book and the foreignness of her kind, the effect she has on people is continually emphasized: "'She's—I don't quite know how to express it. Perhaps the old definition of a monster, the Latin one'" (Strieber 1981: 146). When Miriam exposes herself to Sarah, we find out that, 'Miriam did not look a thing like a human being' (Ibid., p. 265). Her appearance is considerably different from other characters:

> *The eyes were not pale grey at all, but shining, golden, piercingly bright. The skin was as white and smooth as marble. There were no eyebrows (...). The hair, which*

> *had been concealed by a wig, as gold as the eyes, was soft, almost like smoke, finer than the hair of a baby. Angel's hair* (Ibid., p. 265).

What is more, Miriam's scent is different from the scent of human beings, which is made clear by John's observation that 'She did not have that wonderful, rich smell that John had come to identify with food' (Ibid., p. 82). Taking all these points into consideration, it is fair to suggest that Miriam possesses distinguishable alien characteristics that differentiate her from other characters in the story. Even though Strieber's book was closely followed by Scott's adaptation, in the film, on the other hand, the vampire does not possess any exterior alien qualities, and Miriam, with her similitude to humans, could be said to embody everything which a proper American would be expected to be in the 1980s.

Certain other vampire characteristics have changed from novel to film. Scott's vision of Miriam is less sinister and much more vulnerable than Strieber's. In the novel Miriam does not feel empathy for the people that she transforms, 'She was lonely and human beings gave her the love that pets give' (Ibid., p. 81). Rather, she is tormented by night terrors that she experiences and by the possibly of being the last of her kind. Scott's vision, otherwise, presents Miriam feeling compassion and attempting to save John's youth. Equally important is the difference in John's attitude towards Miriam after his ageing process begins. In the book John's warm feelings quickly shift when he realizes how monstrous her nature is, and he becomes a threat to Miriam. He perceives her as the one to blame for his suffering, thus he regularly tries to kill her, whereas the film presents him not imputing any blame or her, just searching for solace and support, which suggests that she lacks distinctively monstrous characteristics. Therefore, in addition to the appearance, her emotions integrate her more into the society and connect her more with humanity. Miriam is granted more human traits in the adaptation, therefore, even though her nature is ambivalent we can interpret her as a monstrosity that is established inside of the community, which allows us reading her as a reflection of the fears that emerge from within the contemporary society. Even though Miriam is a vampire, looking decidedly human she does not produce the shocking experience with her looks and actions like she does in the adapted text. Therefore, I suggest that Miriam can be interpreted as a fixed monstrosity constructed within the society she is a resident of, and not the alien threat that she is in the novel. Thus, the process of reading Miriam as a discourse of monstrosity implies that the values she embodies are portrayed as local, reflecting the society that she inhabits and the fears of it. In the novel, Miriam's actions can be explained by her

biological conditioning, her being alien species, in the film, on the other hand, her actions are a reaction and a direct product of the social and cultural conditions of the society that she inhabits.

In focusing my attention to the content of the film, I would like to restrict my observations to the shifts from the adapted text that seem to me most important in terms of film's ideology. The novel, through the means of multifocal narration, gives agency to individuals and presents them in the reality of unstable relationships. The film on the other hand, focuses on the life of individuals threatened by the social and cultural forces which they struggle against, bringing to the fore the issue of ageing and death. As noted by Hutcheon (2006: 40), the shift from telling to showing mode requires dramatization which inevitably involves certain refocusing of themes, characters and plot. The shift of medium in *The Hunger* is of particular importance because it involves an obliteration and replaces the patterned movement of focalization through four central characters in the novel, this way transforming the story's meaning. Looking in terms of the film's ideological project, this move suggests that the ideology of the film demands refocusing of certain themes. Even though the process of focalization on all four characters could be filmed, the adaptation diminishes Tom Haver's character, who is a lover of Dr. Sarah Roberts, this way purposefully making the theme of ageing of central importance. In *Adaptation and Appropriation,* Julie Sanders (2006: 50) suggests that characters may undergo revaluation and be invested with more significant roles. In the adaptation, Scott is trading on Bowie's[2] already fictionalized reputation and invests John's character with a more significant and ideologically driven role. The film foregrounds John Blaylock more than the book does, focusing on him half of the film, thus establishing him as a character of central importance.

What is more, even though Strieber presents us with Miriam's life that stretches back to before the Roman Empire and provides background with terrific historical passages - ancient Rome, the Dark Ages of Middle Europe, 18th century London, thus presenting us with vampire legend and Miriam's past lovers, the film, on the other hand, foregrounds different aspects of the story and eliminates all this background. According to Linda Hutcheon (2006: 36) adaptations usually involve subtraction or contraction of long source texts, nevertheless the contraction of plots may make them a lot more powerful. Accordingly, the subtraction of the adaptation of *The Hunger* accentuates Miriam's contemporaneousness and presents the fear of ageing as of particular importance precisely to the contemporary society.

[2] Bowie is famous for his stage transformations and embodiment of such otherworldly characters as Ziggy Stardust.

Both in the novel and the film, all of the characters infused with Miriam's blood embody a utopian illusion of transcendence, of evolution to more advanced forms of living. Nevertheless, this illusion is quickly shattered as at a certain point in time they begin ageing at an accelerated pace, the characters working as an illustration of the risk involved in transformation to a higher form. As far as the production of horror is concerned, it is fair to suggest that the unexpected realization of the fragility of life produces an uncanny effect both in the novel and the film, nevertheless Scott's presentation of the transformation that the lovers undergo is different from Strieber's, as in contrast to the novel, when John's ageing process begins, the adaptation presents him feeling alarmed more by the way he looks, rather than the appetitive hunger that he feels or by the realization of Miriam's lie. In the adaptation, appetitive hunger is reduced significantly and the only victim that John eventually kills after his ageing process has already begun, is a thirteen year old Alice, a polar opposite to his age. The film never portrays him actually drinking her blood as it is not the blood that is desired by John, but her youth[3]. The concentration on different aspects of the story has different ideological significance and requires a closer analysis.

### 2.2. Rewriting Horror

First of all, it is important to analyse how horror is produced in the source text. In his essay *The Uncanny* (1919) Freud asserts that the uncanny feeling is experienced in the highest degree 'in relation to death and dead bodies, to the return of the dead, and to spirits and ghosts' (Freud 1919: 13). Freud maintains, that the fear of death is very strong within us and is 'ready to come to the surface at any opportunity' (Ibid., p. 14). In the novel, the ageing process makes John 'agonizingly hungry' (Strieber 1981: 82), so he consumes one victim after another in order to sustain his energy levels. Nevertheless, this feasting has dire consequences as John begins to be haunted without remorse by the victims he consumes, 'John could feel her in him. Her past seemed to whisper in his veins, her voice to jabber in his ears. In a sense, she haunted him; they all did. (…) John had often wondered if they knew, if they felt themselves in him. From the way he could hear them in his mind, he suspected that they did' (Strieber 1981: 74-75). This never happens in the adaptation, because, as already mentioned, appetitive hunger is not accentuated in the film. According to Freud (1919: 14), the primitive fear of the dead contains 'the old belief that the deceased becomes the enemy of his survivor and wants to carry him off to share his new life with him'. Therefore the

[3] Rob Latham (2002: 113) has noted that when John's ageing process begins, he is drawn directly to youth-culture figures.

ghostly images that haunt John can be related to the long forgotten and abandoned fear of death that unexpected ageing process pulled up to the surface. It is made clear that the return of the dead create an uncanny effect 'With a sound like a tearing curtain dozens and dozens of different faces appeared in her face, like a crowd at the window of a burning house. All were known to him – his victims. (…) He had run from that horrible place, literally staggering with fear' (Ibid., p. 77). This implies that the ageing process in the novel works as an instrument which reminds John of the long repressed feelings of guilt and fear of death, nevertheless there is no indication in the novel that John would be preoccupied with his external appearance or his role in the society in relation to it.

As can be expected, both in the adaptation and in the adapted text John is horrified by the fact of his ageing, nevertheless, the ageing process is made to signify different things and receives significantly more attention in the film. As Hutcheon (2006: 37) points out, adaptations of novels might involve not only the cutting out of the content, but also inclusion of new elements, which provide additional motivation for the film. Scott therefore draws attention to the ageing process not only by removing the appetitive hunger and the ghosts of John's victims, but also by including the motif of a double within the narrative of the film. Doubleness is a classic genre marker of the Gothic, and the doubles typically created by the Gothic invest the genre with its 'ability to hold its darkly shadowed mirror up to its own age' (Hopkins 2005: XII). From the cursory consideration it may not be evident that there is a motif of a double in the film as no clearly discernible duplicate appears, nevertheless the adaptation ideates these agencies as shadows, pictures, statues and reflections in the mirrors or other surfaces. The source text, on the other hand, does not focus on this motif, as after John's initial encounter with his reflection in the mirror at the beginning of his ageing, the motif does not repeat. In the adaptation, on the other hand, Scott pulls out the theme of ageing from a complex structure of the novel and interconnects it with the notion of a double, thus foregrounding it to serve the film's ideology. Therefore, we can suggest that in the film Scott rewrites the uncanny motifs responsible for creating horror by focusing the attention on different kinds of agencies.

The film transforms the story and creates a different meaning by portraying the doppelgängers of John personified as mirror or picture doubles and shadows on the walls. As suggested by Amelia DeFalco (2010: 96), the notion of a double frequently appears in narratives of ageing as it is 'integrally associated with the difficulties of temporal identity'. In Freud's account, doubles are created in the stage of an unbounded self-love and primary narcissism, and when this stage is

overcome, the double becomes an uncanny harbinger of death (Freud 1919: 9). Doubles may appear in many different forms and are originally created as an insurance against the destruction of the ego and are a form of denial of death (Ibid., p. 9). With regard to the theme of ageing and the notion of the double in the adaptation, it is important to identify the shift that John experiences from the stage of self-love to the return of the repressed. This shift is made particularly clear at the beginning of the movie. In the twentieth century narrative we see John and Miriam in the shower when John utters the words 'Forever and ever' disclosing his belief in their immortality. In Freudian terms we can interpret it as an infantile wish or belief. Nevertheless, a few moments later, just at the beginning of his accelerated ageing, the film portrays him lying in bed not being able to fall asleep, the twentieth century narrative beginning to be haunted by flashbacks from the past with John's memories of an untroubled life with a promise of an everlasting life. It is important to note that in film flashbacks are a representation of as clearly subjective truth and are closely aligned with the workings of the psyche, 'Flashbacks show how memories are stored and repressed' (Hayward 2000: 133-136). A few moments later we see John standing and remembering Miriam uttering the same words 'Forever and ever' back in the past. John shifts his position so that to stand by the mirror, the double image of himself, and in the reflection we can see that his face with the hand sliding through it displays sadness and emasculation, which is clearly produced by the memories from the past and his realization that he is not going to live 'forever and ever' even though it was what Miriam had promised. His reflection, the double in the mirror, is no longer an insurance against the destruction of the self, rather, the double has become a harbinger of death.

In the adaptation Stott adds a scene of Alice, who does music with the Blaylocks, taking pictures of both Miriam and John. This scene can be used to further illustrate the shift from the stage of self-love to the return of the repressed that John undergoes, especially by focusing attention to the reaction of characters to their portraits. When Alice takes a photograph of Miriam and gives it to her we can see a smile, an expression of contempt on Miriam's face, suggesting that the photograph provokes positive emotions and this effect is even more enhanced by calm classical music playing in the background. Whereas, when John looks at his picture, his face displays dissatisfaction, the photograph creates an abhorrent response. According to Amelia DeFalco (2010: 96) 'A common manifestation of the unsettling double is the startling, yet familiar, image of the aged self found in mirrors and photographs'. The picture that John sees is definitely unsettling as after looking at his double in the photograph he goes to look into the mirror, another double of himself, camera then

focuses on the area around his eyes, an extreme close up-shot displays John's concentration on the wrinkles around his eyes with eerie instrumental music complementing the uncanny effect that the sight of his double has created. We get access to John's mind, because, as noted by Susan Hayward (2000: 328), extreme close-up shots have the capacity to offer access to the mind or thought processes of the characters, including the subconscious ones, and film sound, according to Hutcheon (2006: 41), can be used as a means to connect inner and outer states. Therefore, as Freud's conception of the double deals with narcissism, we can argue that Miriam is still in the stage of self-love, in the narcissistic stage. The image of her, the double, stands as a symbol of immortality. While from John's facial expressions and actions we can deduce than he has already shifted from the narcissistic stage and the double invokes a sensation of the uncanny return of the repressed and reflects his psychological state. The uncanny motifs of the double run throughout the film and, following Freud's reasoning, it is fair to suggest that the doubles that John creates function as a reminder of his mortality.

The repressed inevitableness of ageing erupts and challenges the character, creating a displaced and doubled form of John, which begins to haunt him, displacing the boundaries between self and other. The doubles of John have a ghostly function as they continue to haunt him without remorse, with shadows and reflections of him emphasized throughout the film. The character's divided nature becomes particularly evident in the scene where Alice Cavender comes over to the house to tell that she will not be able to come the next day. When she enters the house, eerie non-diegetic music emphasizes the effect that the sight of John arouses in her as John is already radically aged and even though the girl does not recognize neither his voice nor appearance still he seems familiar to her as she asks 'You're not John's father, are you?' and notices 'You look like John'. Freud (1919: 2) notes that uncanny effect is created when something that was long known to us, once familiar, becomes threatening and unfamiliar. The movie perfectly illustrates this idea as not only the appearance of John has changed, but also his actions towards the girl. In this particular scene, the camera focuses on the shadow of John, his doppelgänger, reminding him of his mortality, therefore he asks Alice to stay a bit longer and play something for him, so that he could take her life. Just before John kills Alice we can see that John appears threatening to her, camera's extreme close up shot focusing on her eyes which reveal distress and suspiciousness. John's metamorphosis is not only physical, but also mental, this is made evident through his actions towards Alice as the film graphically portrays the murder.

The secret that the uncanny has brought to life reveals the true nature of John arousing dread and horror in him. John comes into contact with the uncanny in several ways – most specifically by encountering his doubles. He is also divided between who he was before and who he is now and this division of self begins when he starts ageing and his body becomes unfamiliar to him and other characters. The body, which once seemed familiar and stable for over than two hundred years starts transforming and the uncanny replicas of self, haunting him throughout the film and ideating themselves in various forms continually remind him of that. The uncanniness intensifies with each new double that he meets, foreshadowing the end of his being. The duplicated nature of John is particularly visible in the scene where he is staring into a mirror with a concentrated look, evidently failing to identify himself with the reflection in the mirror. Amelia DeFalco (2010: 96) suggests that films 'involving older characters often include scenes of unsettling recognition during which older characters perceive an unexpected, yet strangely familiar, visage, an eerie double that is in fact an aged self'. The doppelgänger that John sees is an aspect of himself which he is incapable of identifying with, it is a threat to his existence. John attempts to evade his double, but it is impossible for an individual to escape from oneself, the conscious self cannot escape the subconscious self. The double and the repressed content of the psyche that it represents is unavoidable. John made a mistake by repressing the idea of possibility of ageing thus not securing his identity. Once the rapid ageing process began, the secret emerged and destroyed the self that refused to acknowledge what had been repressed, hence John experienced a crisis of identity. As a consequence, the interior struggle of the character becomes the centre of the film as it views ageing as a personal deficiency, which is viewed with horror and is perceived as the Other.

Throughout the film, the doubles continue to insert themselves into John's life, haunting him everywhere he goes, his shadows and reflections emphasized by cinematic language. As already noted, the doppelgängers of John show that his identity is in crisis. As noted by Gry Faurholt[4] in his article *Self as Other: The Doppelgänger* (2009), doppelgängers belong to 'the Oedipal stage which states the necessity of demonizing the socially unacceptable sides of the self; I must other as "not-I" that which is myself' (Faurholt 2009). The dissociated part of John, the double, constantly reminds him that he is unacceptable in the society that he is a part of. Therefore, the

[4] Faurholt, G., 2009. Self as Other: The Doppelganger. *Double Dialogues*, [e-journal] Issue 10 (Summer 2009), Available at: http://www.doubledialogues.com/article/self-as-other-the-doppelganger/ [Accessed 21 April 2016].

theme of the double might be read as representing fear of losing one's sense of individuality in a contemporary society in relation to growing older, as age is important to a person's understanding of who he/she is. What is more, as noted by Gry Faurholt (2009) '(…) although the doppelgänger motif apparently subverts our notion of identity, it in effect operates in a conservative manner reinforcing the necessity of socialization'. Therefore it seems fair to suggest, that John's doubles function as a reminder that being in the position that he is now he does not actually fit the societal identity model. The socially unacceptable side of him that he is constantly haunted by reminds him of that and pushes him to take desperate actions in order to save his youth.

With regard to the ideology of the film, there are more shifts within the adaptation that are important to consider. The film, in transporting John's character from one medium to another, not only focuses more attention on his transformation, but also reprises John's character in a new situation which provides significance on an ideological level. To signal John's desperation to save his youth, which stems from a desire to befit the society's prescribed identity model, Scott adds a scene of John going to the research centre in the hope to receive help to stop his ageing. This episode portrays one of the most charged scenes of John confronting his double. We see John sitting in the patients' lounge staring at a picture of himself while visibly ageing within a short period of time. When he strokes his hair, a lock of hair stays in his hands as he is already considerably aged. The photograph which has been taken at the beginning of his ageing already contrasts with his present state. By way of looking at the photographed self, John confronts his alterity, and it dismantles his subjectivity. The photograph that John is looking at divides John, reminding him of his temporality. This initiates a battle against change, a denial of the difference of self. Nevertheless, John's efforts to evade and banish the uncanny double, and to restore his youthful appearance through the way of seeking help at a research centre prove ineffective. After being described by Sarah as 'another nut' and after waiting in a patients' lounge for over two hours John makes the prejudicial attitudes expressed in the adaptation towards the elderly and the ageing process visible by telling Sarah '[you] just thought I was some ridiculous old crank'. Likewise, while crossing a street after leaving the research centre John receives a remark from an infuriated taxi driver, 'You stupid old fuck' which further supports this idea. This scene gains even more prominence' in comparison to the scene of Sarah crossing a street when she was almost hit by a truck. Even though while doing that she was trying to light a cigarette and was walking really slow, the only reaction that she received was a honk from a driver. We may suggest, therefore, that the

addition of a new situation allows Scott to instil certain ideological messages within the film which were not present in the novel and represent inequities between different age groups.

An essential element in every Gothic narrative is the presence of the Other. John, being radically aged, is the marginalized other in the story, his state literally alienates him from everyone, even from Miriam, who once was the closest being to him. The scene where we see John asking Miriam to kiss him 'Kiss me. Think of me as I was. Kiss me like that' perfectly illustrates the miserable position that he is in. Even though Miriam kisses John, nevertheless soon after she detaches from him exclaiming 'I can't. I can't', suggesting that John is no longer acceptable to her, just as he is unacceptable to the rest of the society. This scene produces an even greater effect as it is juxtaposed with shots of her kissing him willingly back in the past before his ageing had begun. From this scene it becomes clear that even Miriam views John, albeit subjectively, as the other, but her view is influenced by the society that she is a part of. The ageing process and the doppelgängers imperil and destabilize John's identity in the society and pose a threat not only to his material existence, but also threatens to annul his identity in love and social life. John's place as a lover is soon enough occupied by a younger character, namely Dr. Sarah Roberts, her youthful appearance and naked body being repeatedly fetishized by cinematic language. The character of John in the adaptation therefore becomes an object of pity and as a consequence the ending of the film suggests that he believes that he has no place in the society as he begs Miriam for death. Even though the film shows an awareness of the marginalization of older people, nevertheless it exploits itself as a part of this marginalization by depicting John as a pitiable victim. John is determined only by his age, and there is an implication that his body needs to be adjusted to befit the socially attractive model.

As already noted, on an ideological level the persistence of John's doubles can be read as showing that in the film his identity is threatened by the forces that operate within the contemporary culture and society. These forces turn out to be representations of ideological pressures that push the character to conform to hegemonic socio-cultural standards and prescribed identities, which he struggles against to match his present situation. As noted by Douglas Kellner (2003:132), horror films mobilize fear of the other and mark the lines between what is normal and what is abnormal, good or evil. In the case of *The Hunger*, aged people are made into the Other. Throughout the film, old age is equated with various negative characteristics, such as degeneration, weakness, powerlessness, ugliness, stupidity and even disease, whereas young age is equated with positive

characteristics, such as vitality, energy, beauty and enthusiasm. For the most part, the film portrays media culture as responsible for perpetuating pro-youthfulness messages and it can be seen as offering models of identity for the characters to emulate. Vampires as the representations of contemporary society are portrayed as intricately attracted to the messages and ideologies of mass media. In addition, the ideology of the film not only lies in the narrative structure with its uncanny doubles and in the discourses employed, but it even takes the form of direct statements. The messages that John receives to conform to societal norms in the film are clearly audible from the words of a TV presenter '(…) longevity is something that has to be on everybody's mind'. Likewise, when John's ageing process begins, he is constantly portrayed sitting depressed in front of a television watching cartoons which can be read as a metaphorical representation of the pressures from society to conform to those social standards.

We also see Miriam watching Dr. Sarah Roberts being interviewed on the television where the scientist is talking about her new book 'Sleep and Longevity'. In the interview, an analogy is drawn between ageing and a terminal disease called 'progeria' which Sarah Roberts defines as a 'premature degeneration comparable to that of aging'. The cinematic language also draws a parallel between the disease and ageing by inserting a picture of a child with Progeria wearing a dark hat and by later showing a close up shot of aged John wearing an analogous hat. The age/disease analogy is perpetuated throughout the filmic discourse as the same idea is repeated by doctor Humphries '(…) certain blood disorders and tissue deficiencies result in a rapid degeneration similar to the symptoms of accelerated aging'. What is more, there is an implication that the ageing process leads to disintegration. There is a metaphoric comparison drawn between ageing John and a deteriorating rhesus monkey kept in the research centre. According to Susan Hayward (2000: 229) 'In film, metaphor applies when there are two consecutive shots and the second one functions in a comparative way with the first'. The linking of the shots of scientists watching a tape of a rhesus monkey disintegrating into dust and by consequently portraying John ageing rapidly communicates the meaning of ageing as deterioration. This implication is even more enhanced by the comments of the scientists, were words such as 'degenerative changes' and 'decay' are audible. Therefore ageing is equalled to degeneration and decay. These moves in the film are not only narratively, but also ideologically motivated. These images openly connect a terminal disease, disintegration and the process of ageing, implicitly reinforcing the notion of the shortcomings of the elderly and reducing them to a community that needs to be rescued, preferably

by encouraging them to buy consumer goods, such as Sarah's book, in order to sustain their youthful appearance. The scene where we see Sarah signing the copies of her book while surrounded by a huddle of mostly aged people illustrates how studies of ageing are in fact a part of a consumer industry. We also see Miriam going to the bookstore and buying the book in the hope that it will help John. Thus, the image of the vampire serves as an illustration of a passive consumer. The monster is thus used to signify not only the return of the repressed, but also the ills of the contemporary world. In addition, certain characters in the film are characterized by deeply succumbing to these messages as we find out from Alice's words about her stepmother, 'She's got every pill ever invented (…) she's scared of getting old'. In other words, media culture is presented as trading on such messages to extend the consumer industry and to create a need in a consumer's mind.

Nevertheless, the film also involves counter-moves which are not only narratively based. Media culture texts try to appeal to large audiences and therefore they often merge an array of discourses, ideological positions, narrative strategies and effects which seldom fuse into a consistent and coherent ideological position (Kellner 2003: 93). When John, while holding a copy of Sarah's book 'Sleep and Longevity' says, 'My hair comes out in my hand. Look. I've been reading this book. Why are these books always so badly written, I wonder?' he expresses his attitude towards the dominant ideology, illustrating the ineffectiveness of the item that was promoted by the media. The story allows John to articulate his thoughts and cut across the ideologies which perpetuate the filmic discourse with ageist and consumerist messages. Thus, *The Hunger* can be read as embodying contemporary tensions and conflicts, nevertheless not privileging one discourse over the other, this way exploring a network of oppositions.

### 2.3. Concluding Remarks

Even though both the novel and the film were produced within a short period of time, nevertheless, as the present analysis shows, they deal with different concerns. Scott is not interested in using the film as a medium to replicate the novel as an artefact, but rather the film has its own identity. Both in the novel and the film there is a monstrosity, however because of certain changes that were inflicted in the move from novel to film, it expresses different fears and ideological messages. The film transforms the uncanny fears presented in the novel to serve its ideological purpose. The

expanded concentration on John Blaylock's character, and the inclusion of the doppelgänger motive, allow the film to express the main concerns and anxieties of the time. The adaptation faithfully encapsulates Freud's idea that doubles become the harbingers of death, but in the case of *The Hunger*, it encapsulates not only death in a literal sense, but also death in the social and cultural life. A great number of scholars have noted that horror movies function as a particularly effective means which can be used to explore and engage with dominant contemporary concerns, anxieties, and traumas and that they can be read as representing both the dominant and repressed concerts of the cultures and societies in which they are produced (Wee 2014: 7). The present analysis shows, that the adaptation provides a critical vision of contemporary society by presenting John suffering from a crisis of identity arising from the persistence of his doubles which only work as a metaphor for the society's suppression of aged people. The film presents John's existence as an exhausting navigation between who he is ('I'm a young man'), and the impossible being the society expects him to be. In the film, media culture is presented as responsible for perpetuating pro-youthfulness messages and the continual perpetuation of inherent positive qualities of young people constructs them as a naturalization of a dominant ageist ideology. *The Hunger* proves to be a site of conflicting ideological positions and highlights inequities between different age groups. Notably, the film can be read as reflecting the contemporary society and the situation of aged individuals at the time the film was produced.

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## 3. Projecting fears: A Haunted House

> *A good horror story is one that functions on a symbolic level, using fictional (and sometimes supernatural) events to help us understand our own deepest real fears*
>
> — Stephen King, Danse Macabre, 2010

Working on the premise that Scott's adaptation of *The Hunger* employs Gothic horror conventions to present contemporary social and cultural concerns and anxieties, this part of my analysis continues the examination commenced in the first part of this paper and aims to see how Scott's approach to the source novel serves the film's ideological purpose. In this chapter I suggest, that Scott aptly applies one of the most familiar Gothic themes – specifically that of a haunted house – to exhibit anxieties specific to the contemporary society and to confront us with our primal fears. First of all, I will discuss *The Hunger* in terms of the Gothic trope of haunting. I propose that *The Hunger* is a Gothic narrative of uncanny returns, in which the ghosts of the past return to the present by the haunting of the house. I will explore the significance of the haunting agencies by employing the theory of the uncanny return of the repressed, suggesting that both the adapted text and the adaptation could be read as following the conventions of a haunted house, nevertheless arguing that certain significant shifts were inflicted in the move to another medium to serve the film's ideological project. I will also explore what significance the haunting agencies have on a broader socio-cultural level. Secondly, by relying on Hutcheon's and Sanders's ideas I will discuss how the adaptation can be read as engaging in a larger social and cultural critique and how it confronts us with our own deepest fears. This chapter aims to present how the central vampire image, a narcissistic individual in denial of the possibility of ageing and death, who also stands for an image of a passive consumer, confronts the repressed fears of ageing and death which prove to be intricately woven with a broader social landscape and are deeply related with contemporary fears.

### 3. 1. A Haunted House

According to Jerrold E. Hogle (2002: 2), the characteristics of the Gothic include an antiquated space, a past secret which is hidden, hauntings that might appear in many different forms and an oscillation between the earthly reality and the possibility of the supernatural. Both in the novel and the film the house in *The Hunger* can be read as a Gothic space because of the secrets it conceals and the role that it plays as a familiar place of safety for the characters. The events disrupting the

peace of the house are silhouetted through the main characters, especially through the central character in the story, Miriam Blaylock. As already mentioned, one of the characteristics of the Gothic is a hidden secret from the past. In *The Hunger* this secret appears in the form of Miriam's past lovers being hidden in the attic, who are not effectively laid to rest and instead persist as ghosts from the past in their coffins, waiting for their resurrection and revenge.

The hauntings in the Gothic tradition may appear in many forms, but most frequently they take the form of ghosts, spectres or monsters (Hogle 2002: 2). The radically aged lovers risen from the coffins in the attic can be read as the haunting agencies both within the novel and the film, nevertheless they have different ideological significance because of an instrumental shift which appears in the move from novel to film. Even though Scott reconstructs the imagery of Miriam's past lovers being hidden in the attic, the character who eventually confronts them changes in the move from novel to film. In the novel John, who is seeking revenge on Miriam, releases all the past lovers from the coffins, nevertheless, it is made clear that Miriam is not the one who eventually confronts them 'John, hiding in the attic, was about to make the move against her that Miriam had anticipated. And Tom Haver was about to take the full force of it in her place' (Strieber 1981: 267). Tom, who comes to the house in order to find Sarah is confronted with these uncanny monsters 'Every fiber of his body screamed at him to jump out a window, to escape, to get away from whatever monstrous evil had infected this house' (Ibid., p. 271). Even though Tom manages to escape from Miriam's house, nevertheless the entities that he encountered continue to haunt him even outside of the confines of the house 'It came at him shrieking, tearing with its long knives of fingernails, its jaws snapping – and was gone' (Ibid., p. 275). Another significant shift is that after Tom runs away from the house Miriam cynically forces her lovers back into their coffins 'She returned them all to their resting places, forcing their remains into the chests' (Ibid., p. 273-274), and this never happens in the film. Scott adjusts the haunting agencies to serve his ideological project, therefore in the adaptation Miriam becomes the one who has to confront the beings that she entombs, and the confrontation turns out to be fatal.

With regard to the haunting in the adaptation, it is important to begin the analysis by identifying a shift when the familiar place of the house becomes uncannily unfamiliar. Most of the action in the adaptation of *The Hunger* takes place in the house which is a blend of the past, with all the ancient statues and paintings, and modern times, with modern technologies such as an elevator and cameras that guard the entrance. The interplay between past and present plays a crucial role in the movie as hauntings are inseparable from the past. In the beginning of the film the house can be

seen as homely and familiar, but it becomes disturbingly threatening and unfamiliar because of the actions that appear in it. The film locates the hauntings in the context of urban realism, with the twentieth century narrative being haunted by flashbacks from the past with John's and Miriam's subjective memories of an ordered life with a promise of an everlasting life. Barry Curtis (2008: 111) suggests that the uncanny 'relates closely to the sense of estrangement from familiar spaces and anxieties about access and boundaries'. At the beginning of the film the house is presented as a heavenly place, with light colours accentuated, nevertheless it quickly shifts into a dark and sinister space, reminiscent of a haunted house, with memories returning, with its dark corners and shadows following the characters, which give the location a Gothic feel.

Even though the house at the beginning is a familiar and comfortable location, a symbol of stability, the forthcoming events transform it into something uncanny. The house shifts to a structure of power in its sinister aspect, threatening and oppressive. In his essay *The Uncanny* Freud (1919: 2) links the imagery of a haunted house with the term *heimlich* accentuating that the first meaning of this word has to do with that which belongs to the house and which is homely and familiar. Nevertheless, the homely and familiar space often conceals its second meaning which has sinister underpinnings. The homely also refers to that which is 'concealed, kept from sight (…) withheld from others' (Freud 1919: 3). Freud's treatment of the uncanny is enlightening when contemplating the psychological ramifications of the notion, and it can also be intimately related to the physical realm of the house. Therefore, Miriam's psychological state can be interpreted in terms of the imagery of a haunted house as Scott's film binds both the physical and psychological elements of the uncanny which manifest in the physical realm of the house. What is more, as suggested by Barry Curtis (2008: 24), haunting 'has become an easy metaphor for anything that is forgotten, unacknowledged and repressed'. Therefore it seems fair to suggest, that in the adaptation the imagery of a haunted house can be read as a metaphor for Miriam's psyche, the lovers hidden in the attic representing the content that Miriam chooses to repress.

In the Gothic tradition, hauntings appear when something unresolved in the past requires an intervention in the present (Curtis 2008: 34). This is the case in *The Hunger* as Miriam literally hides the things that she is afraid to face. The aforementioned shift from novel to film is instrumental in the meaning that the haunting agencies acquire in the adaptation. Considering that the theme of ageing is torn out from the complex structure of the novel and is given central importance in the adaptation, the aged lovers in the attic can be read as Miriam's repressed and othered idea of the inevitability of ageing. Miriam uses a defensive strategy in response to the

trauma of ageing, she absolutely refuses mortality which reflects in John's aged body. The defensive strategy is enacted by bringing her lovers to the attic, the subconscious part of her mind. The idea of substitutions of her aged lovers with the young ones, can be read as a repression and a protection against a painful realization of inevitability of ageing and death. The ageing of her lovers can be read as traumatic transformations that could only be borne with by the process of repression. She could not accept the timelessness and ageing of her loved ones, as accepting their timelessness would mean accepting one's own. The entombment offers an illusion of resilience, of an immunity to time. It is as if Miriam wants to split the oneness of her identity into separate parts by hiding her past lovers in the attic which represent the content of her mind that she represses. This reveals the fragmented state of her self. Nevertheless, the consequence of the repression is that it inevitably erupts, revealing her own uncanny temporality. Miriam encounters her ghosts from the past first by experiencing unpleasant memories of them. Nevertheless, the manifestation of her lovers cannot be controlled and can only be stopped by a direct confrontation which leads to an eventual realization. There is no escaping the confrontation with the repressed deepest fears, which occur within the confines of the house.

It can be said that in the movie the repression and return appears on a very literal level. The locus of the haunting is the attic, which is a representation of a place subject to anxiety and uncanny returns. In the final moments of the film, when Miriam brings Sarah to the attic after her suicide attempt, the inhabitants of it rise in the form of the undead and a physical reappearance of them in their ratty clothes, stumbling towards Miriam with their arms outstretched, reaching for her, their raspy voices repeatedly calling her name stand for the return of the repressed. The disturbing and unexpected appearance of the past lovers, their bodies being extremely decomposed, make them all the more *Unheimlich*. Cavallaro (2002: 66) argues that imprecisely shaped ghosts are even more disturbing as they refuse to be cast into a definitive shape. This is typified by the undead from the attic as their rotten eyeless faces are vaguely shaped, their dusky skin almost not covering their bones. The lovers lack clear definition which serves to intensify the horrific and disgusting attributes of their deformed and repulsive corporeality promoting an even stronger reaction in Miriam when they are confronted. It is especially clear when the past lovers try to kiss her and this repulsive intimacy makes Miriam flee. The uncanny effect is even more enhanced by the fact that the repressed content takes the form of once closest beings to Miriam, making their disfigurement even more horrifying. The change in the appearance and their actions arouse shock and abhorrent response in Miriam, their disturbing reappearance show that they have already become unfamiliar,

thus uncanny. This extreme familiarity and threat manifesting through those once familiar beings makes them an ideal manifestation of Freud's idea of the uncanny. Freud (1919: 13) makes clear that the 'uncanny is in reality nothing new or foreign, but something familiar and old — established in the mind that has been estranged only by the process of repression'. It suggests that the uncanny is essentially a product of the mind, which alienates that which eventually comes back to light and seems unfamiliar. The monsters in *The Hunger* thus reveal repressed fears, and these figures can be interpreted as Miriam's fear and repressed knowledge that she is going to age.

The displacement of objects and slight alterations in sound levels is a confirmation that the house is haunted (Curtis 2008: 35). The movement of the attic, with the coffins sliding backwards and forwards as the floor trembles is reminiscent of a haunted house. The uncanny sensation of disturbing architectural space and a disembodied point of view enhanced by eerie music and shifting lightning makes us recognize that Miriam is disoriented when trying to run away from the ghosts in the darkened halls of the house and this disorientation combined with the emotional state that the return of the repressed has created makes her fall down the stairs. Emotional disorientation, visual incoherence and the heightened sensitivity are all signs of a haunted house (Ibid., p. 35) As Miriam is trying to escape, we can see her corpse-like lovers trying to kiss her, which can be read as a metaphorical portrayal of the kiss of death. Miriam is resisting, she covers her ears while screaming in denial, still trying to repress the knowledge of inevitability of ageing and death. Thus, the undead become not only the harbingers of death, but are iconic representatives of death itself as we can see the body of Miriam start decaying in an accelerated pace at the landing of the stairs. The haunting cannot be stopped until she readmits the uncanny ghosts into her emotional life. In the end of the movie Miriam re-discovers the parts of herself that she has repressed. The aged lovers confronting her, the repressed content of her psyche make her realize her own ageing, which provokes a crisis, as this means accepting frailty and an aberrant corporeality, which is illustrated by her ageing at the landing of the stairs. The result of realizing the long repressed content is not revelation, but instead annihilation. Notably, Miriam is forced to submit to cultural construction of ageing as disintegration by confronting the haunting agencies. When Miriam's body ages, we can see her lovers disintegrating into dust implying that the previously repressed content of Miriam's psyche does not need further repression. In a way we can interpret it as the ghosts from the past being exorcised or confronted. Curtis (2008: 35) suggests that in order for the haunted house to become livable again, the ghosts of it must be discovered and understood. The final scenes in the house show that everything is back in order, bright sunlight accentuated in the rooms and

the diegetic sound of chirping birds portraying the calmness of the setting, the house is already prepared for selling with potential buyers in it which offers us a possibility to make a conclusion that the ghosts in it have been exorcised.

Miriam's picture, which at the beginning of the film worked as an insurance against death, at the end of the film functions metonymically to portray all the unachieved hopes and promises of eternal youth. According to Susan Hayward (2000: 230) there is a story to which a metonym refers to, 'In film, which works in ways similar to our psyche, metonyms often get the combination of meanings to which they refer played out'. Meaning is communicated through the use of metonymy in film as 'metonymy can be applied to an object that is visibly present but which represents another object or subject to which it is related but which is absent' (Hayward 2000: 228). At the end of the film, Lt. Allegrezza, who is investigating the disappearance of Alice Cavender, takes the picture out from a pile of trash in the house. The photograph thus stands for all the unfulfilled promises of eternal youth, to which Miriam, as a passive consumer submitted, and the place where the photograph was found clearly indicates that those promises were left unfulfilled.

The haunted Gothic space in the film is used not only for the purposes of expressing repressed fears and anxieties of ageing and death, but also to represent the position of an ageing individual within the contemporary society. As suggested by Barry Curtis 'ghostliness' is 'the lingering presence of some repressed social group' (2008: 10) and the haunting 'suggests places that are infrequently visited, or visitors who have a fragile, marginal or oppressed status' (Curtis 2008: 24). Therefore, it can be said that the trope of haunting in the adaptation is also used to represent the repressed position of aged individuals in the contemporary society. The aged characters inhabit a very uncanny position in the film. They are left helpless in the state of the undead, locked up in coffins in secluded spaces. Freud specifically accentuates that 'the idea of being buried alive while appearing to be dead is the most uncanny thing of all' (1919: 14) and this idea is evidently expressed in *The Hunger*, as aged characters are sealed in coffins while still being in a state of living-dead, weak in the body, but still conscious of their existence. The best illustration of the uncanniness created by this process in the film is when we see John being buried alive with tears shimmering on his face and his pants wet when being placed in the coffin and similarly disturbing is a scene of Miriam calling out for help from within her coffin. Amelia DeFalco (2010: 5) in reference to de Beauvoir notes, that ageing is more frightening than death since death involves a complete transition into nothingness, while the ageing process 'promises potentially distressing transformation'. Therefore, we can say that the aged individuals inhabit a very uncanny position

in the contemporary society, which seems to be even more distressing than death, as the characters wish for death. Brigid Cherry (2009: 175-176) suggests that horror films centre on a form of monstrosity that is represented within the narrative in opposition to the dominant ideological stance. This can be linked to social and cultural anxieties of those who are socially marginalized or othered (Ibid., p. 176). The aged characters are positioned as an alienated and marginalized group, and the monster – Miriam – is also a member of this group as she is later also entombed by Sarah. This leads me to another point of my analysis of this chapter. Having already discussed the film through the Gothic trope of haunting, I would like to move on to discussing how the adaptation reinterprets the source text and works as an instrument of social critique.

### 3.2. Gothic Polarities

The adaptation averts the attention from the real sources of contemporary anxieties towards mystic phenomena, as the blame for societal disintegration is projected onto the figure of vampire which allegorically serves as a vehicle of the social and cultural forces that were putting a lot of pressure on the oppressed groups. Unlike traditional vampires, vampires in *The Hunger* cast reflections in the mirrors and shadows on the walls, and they can also be captured in pictures, which suggests that image and appearance is of crucial importance for the vampires of the time. Nevertheless, I suggest that the values that Miriam embodies are compatible with the values of the society that she inhabits as *The Hunger* presents contemporary American consciousness to be consumer oriented and ready to do anything in order to stay young 'forever and ever'. Following Hutcheon's (2006: 94) reasoning that adaptations can engage in larger cultural and social critique, we can suggest, that Scott produces a new kind of monster, having different ideological significance than the one in the adapted text, which functions as a tool for social critique. The vampire of *The Hunger*, obsessed with his image in the mirror, therefore reflects not only his own image, but also the values of society it is a part of. Horror films are a reactionary genre as they blame occult forces for life out of control and societal downfall, thus diverting attention from the real sources of social suffering (Kellner 2003: 127). Even though there is a hint in the movie that institutions are the real source of contemporary struggles, the origin of the anxieties is displaced onto the sources outside of human understanding, the bloodsucking species that Miriam Blaylock belongs to. Nevertheless, a closer analysis of Scott's adaptation seems to suggest that society itself is vampiric, as it prays on itself. The vampire is only a symptom of societal disintegration rather than the cause of it. The problem lies within the upstanding heroes — the institutions and their representatives.

Both Gothic books and films tend to create polarities, such as extreme good and extreme evil, extreme youth and extreme age, extreme innocence and extreme power (Hopkins 2005: XII). In *The Hunger*, Sarah is presented as working for the betterment of humanity, trying to find the cure for ageing, what is more, instead of staying with Miriam she attempts suicide. Whereas Miriam is made into a monster responsible for everything, she is portrayed as guilty for the suffering caused by the ageing process as she is the one who transforms and later entombs her lovers. The research centre that Sarah is a representative of, stands as a structure whose values and actions go unquestioned, whereas the vampire is seen as the root of instability and suffering. Therefore, Miriam and Sarah might be interpreted to be opposites. Nevertheless, according to Linda Hopkins (Ibid., p. XII), the polarities created by the Gothic are not always as absolute as they seem and can actually be uncannily similar. The ending of *The Hunger* destroys the antagonist, liberates the entrapped lovers of Miriam, but changes nothing in the social structure of the world. The powerful scene where Sarah objects to stay with Miriam and rather chooses suicide is cancelled by her unexpected reappearance in the final shots of the film where she occupies the same position as Miriam did, with two young lovers in a London flat and Miriam confined in a coffin. *The Hunger* is marked by ideological contradiction: the image of the representatives of institutions as working for a greater good is reversed into an image of them as agents of social destruction. It should be noted, that horror films can offer radical critique by presenting suffering and oppression being caused by institutions that must be reconstructed (Kellner 2003: 127). Therefore, this contradiction created by the film should not be surprising as from the very beginning the narrative of the film drew a parallel between Miriam and Sarah, Sarah turning rhesus monkeys into monsters just as Miriam did people.

Similarly, as early as the opening credits, the film portrayed John and Miriam in a club, the shots presenting them and other people in a structure comparable to a wire cage. On itself, these shots meant virtually nothing. Nevertheless, later on, the film presented shots of an angry rhesus monkey in a research centre in a wire cage tearing apart its fellow monkey as a result of an experiment. If these shots are related in their metaphorical and ideological relationship, they yield the apparent meaning: the characters in the club, the society, are in the same position as the experimental monkeys in the hands of institutions and their representatives. This suggests, that not the vampire, but the institutions should be blamed for the marginalization and oppression of the aged.

Significantly, when Sarah entombs Miriam, the coffin from which we can hear Miriam desperately calling out Sarah's name is also set behind a wire cage. This suggests that Miriam is not the one responsible for the oppression of aged individuals in the society, as when she ages, she inhabits the same position as they did, therefore the blame for societal downfall should not be limited to a single figure standing outside of the structure.

The ending of the film departed significantly from the adapted text as in the novel Sarah tries to take Miriam's life, not her own, Miriam being an alien threat. Nevertheless, after the unsuccessful attempt, she is entombed just like all the other lovers. Miriam, on the other hand, is presented as moving on with her life. Therefore, even though in the novel Miriam remains a frightening and violent monster, in the film, however, the vampire is only a reflection of values and anxieties of the era. The vampire and the society that it inhabits are muddled, indicating the ideology of the film which suggests that the society itself, and the institutions in power are monstrous. Following Sanders (2006: 98) reasoning that adaptations have the ability '(…) to respond or write back to an informing original from a new or revised political and cultural position (…)', I would like to suggest that Scott addresses and challenges Strieber's ideology by making changes from telling to showing mode, thus subverting the adapted text's ideology to show that the responsibility for social disintegration should be ascribed to institutions and their representatives, rather than some alien species. This also falls in line with Hutcheon's (2006: 12) idea that the focus of an adaptation can be changed by transfiguring the point of departure or conclusion in major ways. The adaptation reveals the real threats and signals that the institutions are the ones in power. What is more, the ending of the film perfectly encapsulates power relations with the words of a sales agent who is handling the sale of Blaylock's house as it is thought that the owners of it are deceased '(…) whatever profits are left over are going to some kind of a research centre or clinic in town'. Therefore, Miriam's disappearance shows who holds the power. In a way, the movie parodies the practices of science, by presenting professionals who are more concerned about making money rather than in the advancement of scientific cause. The film offers social commentary which, nevertheless, does not penetrate the surface, as it lacks radical negation or possible social alternatives. Without a doubt, the film's limitations reside in the specific genre of the film and in the Hollywood narrative conventions, which, notably, Scott often tries to expand.

Moreover, the film confronts its viewers with universal fears of ageing and death. Douglas Kellner (2003: 133) suggests that horror films tend to play on anxieties over rapid change by presenting life out of control, multiplying or mutating at a rapid pace, or disintegrating and falling apart with frightening pace and intensity. The display of these horrifying images accordingly manipulates fears that people have of disease, bodily disintegration, and death. *The Hunger* begins to articulate these fears very early on in the film by presenting bodies being burned in the furnace, the contours of a human head clearly discernible. According to Barry Keith Grant (2015: 6), visual representation of bodily difference is the groundwork for the experience of horror in films. Accordingly, the thrilling scene of the lovers rising from their coffins, their repulsive corporeality with disintegrating flesh confronting us can be read as embodying our primal fears of disintegration and death. We are also presented with a filmed material of a rhesus monkey ageing rapidly and disintegrating into dust, literally embodying deep-rooted fears of ageing and death. Most importantly, the fear of ageing is articulated through John's and Miriam's characters which are used to present not only the physical and emotional transformation that the ageing process involves, but also to disclose the possible social pressures. Thus, the film disintegrates aged people both metaphorically and literally, as the narrative of the film clearly demonstrates.

### 3.3. Concluding Remarks

The main issue that this chapter dealt with is how the adaptation, by implementing certain shifts within the narrative of the film, changed the ideology of the source text. In this chapter I attempted to employ the Gothic trope of haunting to reveal how Miriam, a passive consumer beguiled by the idea of eternal youth, came to terms with her own fragility by encountering the repressed content of her psyche which manifested in the form of her lovers hidden in the attic. The closer consideration of the film discloses that the main characteristics of the haunted house are apparent in *The Hunger*, most importantly the unresolved problem from the past which also bears ideological significance. In the overall context of the Gothic theory the trope of haunting is especially important as it is one of the tropes capable of externalizing social oppression, the entombed characters representing the position of aged individuals within the contemporary society. The use of the Gothic trope of haunting reveals how the film uses the familiar space of the house to comment on contemporary fears and anxieties and in particular, the situation of an aged individual within the society.

As the present analysis shows, the film also offers social critique and reveals that even though the blame for social anxieties is projected on to the monstrosity, the real sources of social oppression are the institutions and their representatives. Graeme Turner (1999: 171) has suggested that films are a kind of battlegrounds for 'competing and often contradictory positions' and this competition 'usually results in a victory for the culture's dominant positions, but not without leaving cracks or divisions through which we can see the consensualizing work of ideology exposed'. *The Hunger* works as a good illustration of that, the final shots presenting the victory of the dominant ideology, nevertheless allowing us to read through surface of the film and see the workings of ideology. Susan Hayward (2000: 4) has noted that 'A literary adaptation creates a new story, it is not the same as the original, it takes on a new life, as indeed do the characters'. The adaptation of *The Hunger* provides the characters with new lives, and the shifts that were made in the move to the cinematic text prove to be instrumental in creating a new meaning of the story which tells us something about contemporary life.

# Conclusions

Resting on Linda Hutcheon's (2006) and Julie Sanders's (2006) observations of adaptation that go beyond fidelity criticism, this thesis was commenced by proposing to conduct an analysis of adaptation of Whitley Strieber's gothic horror novel *The Hunger*. Using adaptation studies and Sigmund Freud's essay *The Uncanny* (1919) as a theoretical framework, this paper aimed at analysing how uncanny fears are rewritten from novel to the cinematic text. The analysis was complemented by Amelia DeFalco's considerations on narratives of ageing, as the thesis was also aimed to disclose how ageing is perceived to be the source of uncanny difference within the adaptation. In particular, the paper aimed to illustrate how the essence of fear can change completely in the move to another medium even within a short period of time, and to highlight ideological shifts and their implications on broader socio-cultural levels.

The analysis shows that the source text and the adaptation deal with different concerns. Both the novel and the film introduce fears that can be conceived as uncanny, nevertheless they externalize different ideological implications. The analysis of the motif of the double and of the haunted space of the house allowed to effectively unmask ideological strategies and negative scripting of ageing. Even though in both texts there is a monstrosity, it expresses different anxieties. In the source text the vampire is portrayed as an external threat, in the film, however, Miriam is only a reflection of the values of the society that she inhabits. Old age, rather than Miriam, is the central horror in the film: the vampire simply works as a medium through which this horror can be actualized.

Significantly, the examination of the adaptation suggests that U.S. society and culture were torn apart over the issue of age and the domination of youth culture, and presents older people struggling for equality and independence. The analysis of the film shows it to be the product of competing ideologies and reveals discrimination against the elderly, the dominant ideology clearly favouring the young. The film presents a society in crisis which is uncertain of its values and the way of life. It confronts us with our deep-rooted fears and it can also be noted that it raises complex questions concerning the fear of losing one's identity in a contemporary society. Approaching Scott's adaptation from a psychoanalytic and culturally critical standpoint, along with an understanding of the tradition of the Gothic, shows the movie to be a reflection of fears of 1980s culture, as when confronted with frightening realities of ageing and death, the characters of *The Hunger* are incapable of coping with the climatic changes. Although excessively criticized for concentration on visual aspects, I believe the film to be an example of the ability of the Horror

genre to reflect the issues and fears of society in which it was produced. Even though Whitley Strieber's use of the image of the vampire reflects certain attitudes towards contemporaneity, Scott uses it to different ends, as the present analysis shows. A new work of art that the film is, Tony Scott's *The Hunger* invites us to rethink our practices of evaluating and interpreting adaptations.

# Summary in Lithuanian

## Perinterpretuota nejauka: Whitley Strieber romanas „The Hunger" ir Tony Scott adaptacija

Whitley Strieber gotikinis siaubo romanas „The Hunger" buvo perinterpretuotas ir transformuotas kino terpėje režisieriaus Tony Scott. Nors tiek knyga, tiek jos adaptacija seka tą pačią fundamentalią siužeto liniją, kurioje pasakojama vampyrės Miriam Blaylock, kuri palaidoja savo susenusius mylimuosius palėpėje istorija, tam tikri reikšminiai pokyčiai įvykdyti romano transpozijos metu į kitą terpę, pakeičia teksto ideologinę raišką. Įvykdytų pokyčių reikšmes šiame magistro darbe analizavau pasitelkusi kritikių Julie Sanders ir Linda Hutcheon įžvalgas apie adaptacijos teoriją. Šis magistro darbas susitelkia ties romano transpozicijos analizavimu traktuojant filmą kaip naują kūrinį, atsisakant „ištikimybės" diskurso bei kreipiant dėmesį į medijos ir konteksto specifiką. Kadangi ypatingas dėmesys skiriamas vampyriškumo motyvui bei siaubą keliančių faktorių transpozicijai bei perinterpretavimui, jų analizei pasitelkiu psichoanalitiko Sigmund Freud įžvalgas išdėstytas esė „Nejauka" (angl. „The Uncanny"), jas paremdama Amelia DeFalco pastebėjimais apie seno žmogaus vietą šiuolaikiniuose naratyvuose bei kultūroje.

Pirmoje analizės dalyje  žvelgiau kaip adaptacija, pasitelkus medijos privalumus įdiegė antrininko motyvą kaip išstumtojo turinio grįžimo metaforą. Taip pat žvelgiau į tai kaip šio motyvo įdiegimas įgalino filmą perteikti siaubą bei pavaizduoti senyvą amžių kaip socialinės skirties rodiklį. Atliktas medijos keitimo veiksmas įgalino įdiegti naujas ideologines žinutes į kino medijos sukurtą tekstą. Analizėje išskleidžiau, kad abiejuose tekstuose esantis monstriškumas perteikia skirtingas baimes ir ideologines žinutes. Monstriškumo pokytį adaptacijoje perskaitau kaip tuometinės visuomenės bei engiamų socialinių grupių situacijos anspindį.

Antroji dalis susitelkia į tai, kaip filmas perinterpretuoja namo, kuriame vaidenasi motyvą. Personažo, susiduriančio su vaidenimosi faktoriais pakeitimas, įgalino įdiegti naujas ideologines žinutes į kino medijos sukurtą tekstą. Apsėsto namo mizanscena veikia kaip engiamos socialinės grupės padėties pavaizdavimas filmo sukūrimo laikmečio kontekste. Adaptacijos analizė parodė, kad režisierius Tony Scott nepaverčia filmo Strieber romano pakaitalu, o suteikia istorijai naują tapatybę.

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