E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Vampirismus* (1821)
One of the most significant romantic proses of the period dealing with the vampire.

Die Serapions-Brüder (The Serapion Brethren, 1819-1821)

The novella summons up the entire tradition of this figure, since it recalls the German literary and scientific “history” of the vampire.

A case of necrophilia, rather than vampirism.

The tale begins with a frame in which Sylvester, Lothair, Ottmar and Cyprian – the Serapions Brethren – talk about the vampire by making reference to Lord Byron’s *Siege of Corinth* and by comparing the author to Walter Scott and Thomas Moore:

“It is remarkable,” said Sylvester, “that - unless I mistake - another great writer appeared on the other side of the channel, about the same time as Walter Scott, and has produced works of equal greatness and splendour, but in a different direction. I mean Lord Byron, who appears to me to be much more solid and powerful than Thomas Moore. His ‘Siege of Corinth’ is a masterpiece, fall of genius. His predominant tendency seems to be towards the gloomy, the mysterious and the terrible; and his ‘Vampire’ I have avoided reading, for the bare idea of a vampire makes my blood run cold. So far as I understand the matter, a vampire is an animated corpse which sucks the blood of the living.”

Walter Scott (1771-1832)

*The Lay of the Last Minstrel* 1805

*Marmion* (1808)

*The Lady of the Lake* (1810)

*The Vision of Don Roderick* (1811)

*Rokeby* (1813)

*The Bridal of Triermain* (1813)

*The Lord of the Isles* (1815)

*Harold the Dauntless* (1817).

Ivanhoe (1820)
EXTRACT OF A LETTER
FROM GENEVA.

Among other things which the lady, from whom I procured these anecdotes, related to me, she mentioned the outline of a ghost story by Lord Byron. It appears that one evening Lord B., Mr. P. B. Shelly, the two ladies and the gentleman before alluded to, after having perused a German work, which was entitled Phantasmagoriana, began relating ghost stories; when his lordship having recited the beginning of Christabel, then unpublished, the whole took so strong a hold of Mr. Shelly's mind, that he suddenly started up and ran out of the room. The physician and Lord Byron followed, and discovered him leaning against a mantle-piece, with cold drops of perspiration trickling down his face. After having given him something to refresh him, upon enquiring into the cause of his alarm, they found that his wild imagination having pictured to him the bosom of one of the ladies with eyes (which was reported of a lady in the neighbourhood where he lived) he was obliged to leave the room in order to destroy the impression. It was afterwards proposed, in the course of conversation, that each of the company present should write a tale depending upon some supernatural agency, which was undertaken by Lord B., the physician, and Miss M. W. Godwin. My friend, the lady above referred to, had in her possession the outline of each of these stories; I obtained them as a great favour, and herewith forward them to you, as I was assured you would feel as much curiosity as myself, to peruse the ebauches of so great a genius, and those immediately under his influence."

INTRODUCTION
THE superstition upon which this tale is founded is very general in the East. Among the Arabians it appears to be common: it did not, however, extend itself to the Greeks until after the establishment of Christianity; and it has only assumed its present form since the division of the Latin and Greek churches; at which time, the idea becoming prevalent, that a Latin body could not corrupt if buried in their territory, it gradually increased, and formed the subject of many wonderful stories, still extant, of the dead rising from their
graves, and feeding upon the blood of the young and beautiful. In the West it spread, with some slight variation, all over Hungary, Poland, Austria, and Lorraine, where the belief existed, that vampyres nightly imbibed a certain portion of the blood of their victims, who became emaciated, lost their strength, and speedily died of consumptions; whilst these human blood-suckers fattened—and their veins became distended to such a state of repletion, as to cause the blood to flow from all the passages of their bodies, and even from the very pores of their skins.

In the London Journal, of March, 1732, is a curious, and, of course, credible account of a particular case of vampyrism, which is stated to have occurred at Madreyga, in Hungary. It appears, that upon an examination of the commander-in-chief and magistrates of the place, they positively and unanimously affirmed, that, about five years before, a certain Heyduke, named Arnold Paul, had been heard to say, that, at Cassovia, on the frontiers of the Turkish Servia, he had been tormented by a vampyre, but had found a way to rid himself of the evil, by eating some of the earth out of the vampyre's grave, and rubbing himself with his blood. This precaution, however, did not prevent him from becoming a vampyre[2] himself; for, about twenty or thirty days after his death and burial, many persons complained of having been tormented by him, and a deposition was made, that four persons had been deprived of life by his attacks. To prevent further mischief, the inhabitants having consulted their Hadagni,[3] took up the body, and found it (as is supposed to be usual in cases of vampyrism) fresh, and entirely free from corruption, and emitting at the mouth, nose, and ears, pure and florid blood. Proof having been thus obtained, they resorted to the accustomed remedy. A stake was driven entirely through the heart and body of Arnold Paul, at which he is reported to have cried out as dreadfully as if he had been alive. This done, they cut off his head, burned his body, and threw the ashes into his grave. The same measures were adopted with the corse of those persons who had previously died from vampyrism, lest they should, in their turn, become agents upon others who survived them.

[2] The universal belief is, that a person sucked by a vampyre becomes a vampyre himself, and sucks in his turn.

This monstrous rodomontade is here related, because it seems better adapted to illustrate the subject of the present observations than any other instance which could be adduced. In many parts of Greece it is considered as a sort of punishment after death, for some heinous crime committed whilst in existence, that the deceased is not only doomed to vampyrise, but compelled to confine his infernal visitations solely to those beings he loved most while upon earth—those to whom he was bound by ties of kindred and affection.—A supposition alluded to in the "Giaour."
But first on earth, as Vampyre sent,
Thy corse shall from its tomb be rent;
Then ghastly haunt the native place,
And suck the blood of all thy race;
There from thy daughter, sister, wife,
At midnight drain the stream of life;
Yet loathe the banquet which perforce
Must feed thy livid living corse,
Thy victims, ere they yet expire,
Shall know the demon for their sire;
As cursing thee, thou cursing them,
Thy flowers are withered on the stem.
But one that for thy crime must fall,
The youngest, best beloved of all,
Shall bless thee with a father's name.

THE VAMPIRE

IT happened that in the midst of the dissipations attendant upon a London winter, there appeared at the various parties of the leaders of the ton a nobleman, more remarkable for his singularities, than his rank. He gazed upon the mirth around him, as if he could not participate therein. Apparently, the light laughter of the fair only attracted his attention, that he might by a look quell it, and throw fear into those breasts where thoughtlessness reigned. Those who felt this sensation of awe, could not explain whence it arose: some attributed it to the dead grey eye, which, fixing upon the object's face, did not seem to penetrate, and at one glance to pierce through to the inward workings of the heart; but fell upon the cheek with a leaden ray that weighed upon the skin it could not pass. His peculiarities caused him to be invited to every house; all wished to see him, and those who had been accustomed to violent excitement, and now felt the weight of ennui, were pleased at having something in their presence capable of engaging their attention.

In spite of the deadly hue of his face, which never gained a warmer tint, either from the blush of modesty, or from the strong emotion of passion, though its form and outline were beautiful, many of the female hunters after notoriety attempted to win his attentions, and gain, at least, some marks of what they might term affection: Lady Mercer, who had been the mockery of every monster shewn in drawing-rooms since her marriage, threw herself in his way, and did all but put on the dress of a mountebank, to attract his notice:—though in vain:—when she stood before him, though his eyes were apparently fixed upon her's, still it seemed as if they were unperceived;—even her unappalled impudence was baffled, and she left the field. But though the common adulteress could not influence even the guidance of his eyes, it was not that the female sex was indifferent to him: yet such was the apparent caution with which he spoke to the virtuous wife and innocent daughter, that few knew he ever
addressed himself to females. He had, however, **the reputation of a winning tongue**; and whether it was that it even overcame **the dread of his singular character**, or that they were moved by **his apparent hatred of vice**, he was as often **among those females** who form the boast of their sex from their **domestic virtues**, as among those who **sully it by their vices**.

References to Moore, Scott and Byron (Polidori): Hoffmann’s aesthetic debate on the representation of “the gloomy, the mysterious and the terrible” – in other words the gothic – thanks to the vampire.

The vampire is a suitable figure to deal with the Gothic because he is endowed with the capability of trangresssing aesthetic boundaries.

To quote Foucault, the vampire is a half-living trangression: “the transgression of natural limits, the transgression of classifications, of the table, and of the law as table [...] there is monstrosity only when the confusion comes up against, overturns, or disturbs civil, canon, or religious law” (Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974–1975*, engl. trans. by Graham Burchell, New York: Picador Reading Group, 2003, p. 63).

Vampire is a figure between the signs, a liminal figure living in a middle domain between life and death, science and literature, reality and unreality.

Thus by E.T.A Hoffmann, the *Vampire* is a literary body able to become a device to probe the limits of the representation of the terrible and the Gothic in literature, but also able to question the language of science and religion.

In the framework of *Vampirism* Lothair recalls and even quotes Ranft’s treatise on the vampire in order to stress Sylvester’s need for the “fantastic”:

“Ho! ho!” cried Lothair, laughing, “a writer such as you, my dear friend, Sylvester, must of course have found it necessary to dip more or less deeply into all kinds of accounts concerning **magic, witches, sorcery, enchantment**, and other such works of the devil, because they are necessary for your work, and part of your stock in trade. And I should suppose you have gone into those subjects yourself with the view of getting some personal experience of them as well. As regards vampirism – **that you may see how well read I am in these matters** - I will tell you **the name of a delightful treatise** in which you may study this **dark subject**. The complete title of this little book is ‘M. Michael Ranft (Deacon of Nebra). *Treatise on the Mastication and Sucking of the Dead in their Graves; wherein the true nature and description of the Hungarian vampires and bloodsuckers is clearly set forth, and all previous writings on this subject are passed in review and subjected to criticism.’ Magister Ranft quotes in his book an official declaration made by an army surgeon before two of his brother officers concerning the detection and destruction of a vampire. This declaration contains, inter alia, the following passage: ‘Inasmuch as they perceived, from the aforesaid circumstances, that this was unmistakably a vampire, they drove a stake through its heart, upon which it gave vent to a distinct gasp, emitting a considerable quantity of blood.’ Is that not both interesting and instructive?”
The vampire is a “perverse ghost that holds the tale in tension required to convince the reader to suspend disbelief, a personification of Todorov’s principle of the fantastic” (Michael James Dennison, Vampirism: Literary Tropes of Decadence and Entropy (Frankfurt am Main-Berlin: Peter Lang, 2001), p. 15.

The dialogue evolves into an aesthetic debate concerning the representation of the terrible and the fantastic in European literature at their time. Central role of the vampire as a fantastic and gothic figure is underlined by Sylvester as follows:

“All this of Magister Ranft’s,” said Sylvester, “may, no doubt, be sufficiently absurd and even rather crack-brained; but, at the same time, if we keep to the subject of vampirism itself, never minding in what particular fashion it may be treated, it certainly is one of the most horrible and terrible notions imaginable. I can conceive nothing more ghastily repulsive to the mind.”

Cyprian replies by referring to the capability of the poet to handle properly the fantastic and thus to write such works of art able to transcend the horrible and the terrible, reaching the sublime. In other words, he sums up his aesthetic credo as follows:

“Still,” said Cyprian, “it is capable of providing a material, when dealt with by a writer of imagination possessed of some poetical tact, which has the power of stirring within us that profound sense of awe which is innate in our hearts, and when touched by the electric impulse from an unseen spirit world causes our soul to thrill, not altogether unpleasantly after a fashion. A due amount of poetic tact on the author’s part will prevent the horror of the subject from going so far as to be loathsome; for it generally has such an element of the absurd about it that it does not impress us so deeply as if that were not the case. Why should not a writer be permitted to make use of the levers of fear, terror, and horror because some feeble soul here and there finds it more than it can bear? Shall there be no strong meat at table because there happen to be some guests there whose stomachs are weak, or who have spoiled their own digestions?”

“My dear, fanciful Cyprian,” Theodore said, “there was no occasion for your vindication of the horrible. We all know how wonderfully great writers have moved men’s hearts to their very depths by means of that lever. We have only to think of Shakespeare. Moreover, who knew better how to use it than our own glorious Tieck in many of his tales? I need only instance the ‘Love-Spell.’ The leading idea of that story cannot but make
everybody’s blood run cold, and the end of it is full of the utmost fear and horror; but still the colours are blended so admirably that, in spite of all the terror and dismay, the mysterious magic charm so seizes upon us that we yield ourselves up to it without an effort to resist.

We have often spoken already,” said Lothair, “of this most genial writer; the full recognition of whom, in all his grand super-excellence and variety, is reserved for posterity, whilst Wills o’ the Wisp rapidly scintillating into our ken and blinding the eye for a moment with borrowed light, go out into darkness just as speedily. On the whole, I believe that the imagination can be moved by very simple means, and that it is often more the idea of the thing than the thing itself which causes our fear. Kleist’s tale of the ‘Beggar Woman of Lucarno’ has in it, at least to me, the most frightening idea that I can think of, and yet how simple it is. A beggar woman is sent contemptuously, as if she were a dog, to lie behind the stove, and dies there. She is heard every night hobbling across the floor towards the stove, but nothing is seen. It is, no doubt, the wonderful colouring of the whole affair which produces the effect. Not only could Kleist ‘dip’ into the aforesaid colour-box, but he could lay the colours on, with the power and the genius of the most finished master. He did not need to raise a vampire out of the grave, all he needed was an old woman.”

Kleist’s plastic and at the same time horrible approach to reality and Tieck’s fantastic rendering of the world converge in the figure of the vampire in E.T.A. Hoffmann’s Vampirismus.

In this tale the vampire embodies an aesthetic limen and it is itself a liminal narratological figure: it is the subject of the aesthetic debate carried out in the Rahmenerzählung (‘frame story’), but it is not the subject of the Binnenerzählung (‘embedded story’) of the novella.

It lives between the two parts of Vampirismus and becomes itself a limen between what is real and what is terrific.

Hoffmann exploited this features of the vampire in his tale and turned them into a narratological metaphor of the writing process itself.

The vampiric nature of writing is directly adressed in the frame of the story, where Hoffmann makes explicit reference to Ranft’s de masticatione mortuorum in tumulis and to a precise contemporary literary tradition that thematized the vampire and from which his tale takes nourishment:

a vampire is nothing other but an accursed creature who lets himself be buried as being dead, and then rises out of the grave and sucks people’s blood in their sleep. And those people become vampires in their turn. So that, according to the accounts received from Hungary and quoted by this magister, the inhabitants of whole villages become vampires of the most abominable description. To render those vampires harmless they must be dug out of their graves, a stake driven through their hearts, and their bodies burnt to ashes. Those horrible beings very often do not appear
The vampire is said to be “en masque” not only because he takes often the form of a bat, a wolf or fog, but also because as a half dead he plays life itself by taking nourishment by other people’s life. This disguise is a metaphor for Hoffmann’s writing process. A vampire appears “en masque”, masticates the deads and lives thanks to other people’s blood.

Hoffmann’s Vampirismus reinforces itself and grows up by devouring the literary and scientific works the author read and even cannibalized on this topic, as Cyprian’s reference to digestion in the frame of the history already underlined (“Shall there be no strong meat at table because there happen to be some guests there whose stomachs are weak, or who have spoiled their own digestions?”). **Relationship between cannibalism and vampirism**

A metamorphic reading of the tale

Tension between the frame of the story and the tale itself.

**Frame**: a dead, a vampire indeed, who survives by sucking other people’s blood.

**Tale**: live people who devour dead people, probably vampires.

“Chiastic structure” of the narration allows to sketch out the characteristics of the vampire in Hoffmann's tale.

After the aesthetic debate on the horror and the fantastic, Cyprian begins to tell “a ghastly story” he heard or read:

“This discussion about vampirism,” said Cyprian, “reminds me of a ghastly story which I either heard or read a very long time ago. But I think I heard it, because I seem to remember that the person who told it said that the circumstances had actually happened, and mentioned the name of the family and of their country seat where it took place. But if this story is known to you as being in print, please to stop me and prevent my going on with it, because there’s nothing more wearisome than to tell people things which they have known for ever so long.”

“I foresee,” said Ottmar, “that you are going to give us something unusually awful and terrible. But remember Saint Serapion and be as concise as you can, so that Vincenz may have his turn; for I see that he is waiting impatiently to read us that long-promised story of his.”

“Hush! hush!” said Vincenz. “I could not wish anything better than that Cyprian should hang up a fine dark canvas by way of a background so as to throw out the figures of my tale, which I think are brightly and variedly coloured, and certainly excessively active. So begin, my Cyprianus, and be as gloomy, as frightful, as terrible as the vampirish Lord Byron himself, though I know nothing about him, as I have never read a word of his writings.”

The beginning of the tale speaks of the setting of the action and introduces the
Count as the main figure of the story. The setting is quite and familiar, but the uncanny will soon penetrate this quite atmosphere.

The count will reveal not to be the vampire (vs. Polidori) but the victim of the female vampire:

Count Hyppolitus (began Cyprian) had just returned from a long time spent in travelling to take possession of the rich inheritance which his father, recently dead, had left to him. The ancestral home was situated in the most beautiful and charming country imaginable, and the income from the property was amply sufficient to defray the cost of most extensive improvements. Whatever in the way of architecture and landscape gardening had struck the Count during his travels -particularly in England- as specially delightful and apposite, he was going to reproduce in his own demesne. Architects, landscape gardeners, and labourers of all sorts arrived on the scene as they were wanted, and there commenced at once a complete reconstruction of the place, whilst an extensive park was laid out on the grandest scale, which involved the including within its boundaries of the church, the parsonage, and the burial ground. All those improvements the Count, who possessed the necessary knowledge, superintended himself, devoting himself to this occupation body and soul; so that a year slipped away without its ever having occurred to him to take an old uncle’s advice and let the light of his countenance shine in the Residenz before the eyes of the young ladies, so that the most beautiful, the best, and the most nobly born amongst them might fall to his share as wife.

The plot of the story is quite simple and immediately refers to the figure of the vampire dealt with in the frame of Vampirismus by reenacting its image in an old Baroness, who along with her daughter Aurelia pays a visit to Hippolytus.

The man falls at once in love with the maiden and wants to marry her. This in spite of the fact that Aurelia’s mother seems to him “a bedizened corpse”, her “cadaverous body” is invalid and she behaves like a lamia, a monster that according to the Ancient Greek mythology hunts and devours the children of others.

Furthermore people say that the Baroness “had been involved in some most remarkable and unprecedented criminal trial in which the Baroness had been involved, which had led to her separation from her husband, driven her from her home which was at some considerable distance- and for the suppression of the consequences of which she was indebted to the prince’s forbearance”.

“When Hyppolitus heard her name he remembered that his father had always spoken of her with the greatest indignation -nay, with absolute abhorrence, and had often warned people who were going to approach her to keep aloof, without explaining what the danger connected with her was”.

The uncanny has just entered the House of the Count, in fact:
“Never had any one, without being at all ill-favoured in the usual acceptation of that term, made by her exterior such a disagreeable impression upon the Count as did this Baroness. When she came in she looked him through and through with a glance of fire, and then she cast her eyes down and apologized for her coming in terms which were almost over humble. [...] In warmly enforcing this request he took her hand. But the words and the breath died away on his lips and his blood ran cold. For he felt his hand grasped as if in a vice by fingers cold and stiff as death, and the tall bony form of the Baroness, who was staring at him with eyes evidently deprived of the faculty of sight, seemed to him in its gay many tinted attire like some bedizened corpse”.

“Oh, good heavens! how unfortunate just at this moment,” Aurelia cried out, and went on to lament in a gentle heart-penetrating voice that her mother was now and then suddenly seized by a tetanic spasm, but that it generally passed off very quickly without its being necessary to take any measures with regard to it.

Love and Live vs. hate and death

Hyppolitus disengaged himself with some difficulty from the Baroness, and all the glowing life of sweetest love delight came back to him as he took Aurelia’s hand and pressed it warmly to his lips. Although he had almost come to man’s estate it was the first time that he felt the full force of passion, so that it was impossible for him to hide what he felt, and the manner in which Aurelia received his avowal in a noble, simple, child-like delight, kindled the fairest of hopes within him.

The Baroness recovered in a few minutes, and, seemingly quite unaware of what had been happening, expressed her gratitude to the Count for his invitation to pay a visit of some duration at the Castle, saying she would be but too happy to forget the injustice with which his father had treated her.

Thus the Count’s household arrangements and domestic position were completely changed, and he could not but believe that some special favour of fortune had brought to him the only woman in all the world who, as a warmly beloved and deeply adored wife, was capable of bestowing upon him the highest conceivable happiness.

The Baroness’s manner of conduct underwent little alteration. She continued to be silent, grave, much wrapped up in herself, and when opportunity offered, evinced a gentle disposition, and a heart disposed towards any innocent enjoyment. The Count had become accustomed to the death-like
whiteness of her face, to the very remarkable network of wrinkles which covered it, and to the generally spectral appearance which she displayed; but all this he set down to the invalid condition of her health, and also, in some measure, to a disposition which she evinced to gloomy romanticism. The servants told him that she often went out for walks in the night-time, through the park to the churchyard.

On the morning of the wedding-day a terrible event shattered the Count's hopes. The Baroness was found lying on her face dead, not far from the churchyard: and when the Count was looking out of his window on getting up, full of the bliss of the happiness which he had attained, her body was being brought back to the Castle. He supposed she was only in one of her usual attacks; but all efforts to bring her back to life were ineffectual. She was dead.

Aurelia, instead of giving way to violent grief, seemed rather to be struck dumb and tearless by this blow, which appeared to have a paralyzing effect on her. The Count was much distressed for her, and only ventured -most cautiously and most gently- to remind her that her orphaned condition rendered it necessary that conventionalities should be disregarded, and that the most essential matter in the circumstances was to hasten on the marriage as much as possible, notwithstanding the loss of her mother. At this Aurelia fell into the Count's arms, and, whilst a flood of tears ran down her cheeks, cried in a most eager manner, and in a voice which was shrill with urgency: “Yes, yes! For the love of all the saints. For the sake of my soul's salvation- yes!”

The Count could not but suspect the existence of some secret evil mystery by which Aurelia's inner being was tormented, but he very properly thought it would be unkind and unfeeling to ask her about it whilst her excitement lasted, and she herself avoided any explanation on the subject. However, a time came when he thought he might venture to hint gently, that perhaps it would lie well if she indicated to him the cause of the strange condition of her mind. She herself at once said it would be a satisfaction to her to open her mind to him, her beloved husband. And great was his amazement to learn that what was at the bottom of the mystery, was the atrociously wicked life which her mother had led, that was so perturbing her mind.

“Can there be anything more terrible,” she said, “than to have to hate, detest, and abhor one's own mother?”

But how profound was her horror when, speaking to her mother in this blessed sense of the merciful intervention of Heaven in her regard, the latter, with fires of hell in her eyes, cried out in a yelling voice—

“You are my misfortune, horrible creature that you are! But in the midst of your imagined happiness vengeance will overtake you, if I should be carried away by a sudden death. In those tetanic spasms, which
your birth cost me, the subtle craft of the devil—“
Here Aurelia suddenly stopped. She threw herself upon her husband’s breast, and implored him to spare her the complete recital of what the Baroness had said to her in the delirium of her insanity.

This doctor, on one occasion when he was at table with the Count and Countess, permitted himself sundry allusions to this presumed state of what the German nation calls “good hope.” The Countess seemed to listen to all this with indifference for some time. But suddenly her attention became vividly awakened when the doctor spoke of the wonderful longings which women in that condition become possessed by, and which they cannot resist without the most injurious effects supervening upon their own health, and even upon that of the child. The Countess overwhelmed the doctor with questions, and the latter did not weary of quoting the strangest and most entertaining cases of this description from his own practice and experience.

“Moreover,” he said, “there are cases on record in which women have been led, by these strange, abnormal longings, to commit most terrible crimes. There was a certain blacksmith’s wife, who had such an irresistible longing for her husband’s flesh that, one night, when he came home the worse for liquor, she set upon him with a large knife, and cut him about so frightfully that he died in a few hours’ time.”

Scarcely had the doctor said these words, when the Countess fell back in her chair fainting, and was with much difficulty recovered from the succession of hysterical attacks which supervened.

[…] an old, privileged servant took an opportunity, when he found the Count alone, of telling him that the Countess went out every night, and did not come home till daybreak.

The Count’s blood ran cold. It struck him, as a matter which he had not quite realized before, that, for a short time back, there had fallen upon him, regularly about midnight, a curiously unnatural sleepiness, which he now believed to be caused by some narcotic administered to him by the Countess, to enable her to get away unobserved. The darkest suspicions and forebodings came into his mind. He thought of the diabolical mother, and that, perhaps, her instincts had begun to awake in her daughter. He thought of some possibility of a conjugal infidelity.

She herself used, every evening, to make the tea which the Count always took before going to bed. This evening he did not take a drop of it, and when he went to bed he had not the slightest symptom of the sleepiness which generally came upon him as it got towards midnight. However, he lay back on his pillows, and had all the appearance of being fast asleep as usual. And then the Countess rose up very quietly, with the utmost precautions, came up to his bedside, held a lamp to his eyes, and then, convinced that he was sound asleep, went softly out of the room.
It was a fine moonlight night, so that, though Aurelia had got a considerable start of him, he could see her distinctly going along in the distance in her white dress. She went through the park, right on to the burying-ground, and there she disappeared at the wall. The Count ran quickly after her in through the gate of the burying-ground, which he found open. There, in the bright moonlight, he saw a circle of frightful, spectral-looking creatures. Old women, half naked, were cowering down upon the ground, and in the midst of them lay the corpse of a man, which they were tearing at with wolfish appetite. Aurelia was amongst them.

The Count took flight in the wildest horror, and ran, without any idea where he was going or what he was doing, impelled by the deadliest terror, all about the walks in the park, till he found himself at the door of his own Castle as the day was breaking, bathed in cold perspiration. Involuntarily, without the capability of taking hold of a thought, he dashed up the steps, and went bursting through the passages and into his own bedroom.

There lay the Countess, to all appearance in the deepest and sweetest of sleeps. And the Count would fain have persuaded himself that some deceptive dream-image, or (inasmuch as his cloak, wet with dew, was a proof, if any had been needed, that he had really been to the burying-ground in the night) some soul-deceiving phantom had been the cause of his deathly horror.

He did not wait for Aurelia's waking, but left the room, dressed, and got on to a horse. His ride, in the exquisite morning, amid sweet-scented trees and shrubs, whence the happy songs of the newly-awakened birds greeted him, drove from his memory for a time the terrible images of the night. He went back to the Castle comforted and gladdened in heart.

But when he and the Countess sate down alone together at table, and, the dishes being brought and handed, she rose to hurry away, with loathing, at the sight of the food as usual, the terrible conviction that what he had seen was true, was reality, impressed itself irresistibly on his mind. In the wildest fury he rose from his seat, crying-

“Accursed misbirth of hell! I understand your hatred of the food of mankind. You get your sustenance out of the burying-ground, damnable creature that you are!”

As soon as those words had passed his lips, the Countess flew at him, uttering a sound between a snarl and a howl, and bit him on the breast with the fury
of a hyena. He dashed her from him on to the ground, raving fiercely as she was, and she gave up the ghost in the most terrible convulsions. The Count became a maniac.

At the end: a vampiric image and remains unclear if Aurelia’s necrophilia depends on a supernatural cause or on a trauma suffered by the maiden. Principle of ambiguity between supernatural and natural is typical of Hoffmann’s Serapion Brethren. Vampire as a metaphor of Hoffmann’s creative process, that needs to take nourishment from its sources and eventually becomes itself a source that will be “eaten” by others writers – and so on, ad infinitum.

The Story of Sïdi Nu’mâns, told in the Arabian Nights (1706). Literature is a cannibalic act and that it survives by eating its sources. Aurelia’s embodies both necrophagia and the vampiric disposition surrounding the literary and creative process.