

# Narrative Vampirism as a Symptom of Emotional Deficiency in an Affluent Society – Silke Scheuermann’s “Vampire”<sup>1</sup>

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So entlockt sie ihm ähnliche Ergüsse, die in sündiger Glut brennen, schwelgt darin, ihre Armut zehrt wie ein Vampyr am fremden Reichtum; doch nicht genug! [...] Dies Weib zerstört mir das Leben [...]

(Thus she elicits from him similar outpourings burning with sinful ardor and wallows in them. Her poverty of spirit lives like a vampire on alien riches. But, not content with that [...]. This woman has destroyed my life [...])<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

Silke Scheuermann’s *Reiche Mädchen* (*Rich Girls*) consists of seven autonomous stories, which, at least as far as the characters are concerned, do not stand in an immediate relationship to each other. In contrast to the usual tendency to transfer the title of one of the stories to the collection as a whole, *Reiche Mädchen* does not refer to any individual narrative, but instead seems to point to a general theme. On the one hand, it is noteworthy that, essentially, the central characters in all the stories are girls or women.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, and even though it is not immediately obvious how to interpret the attribute *reich/rich*, the title can be taken as a comment on the female characters who obviously belong to, or have their roots in, the middle classes of the affluent post-war or post-unification

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<sup>1</sup> This contribution is an adapted version of: Thorsten Päplow (2012), “Narrativer Vampirismus als Symptom emotionaler Mangelerscheinungen einer Wohlstandsgesellschaft – Silke Scheuermanns “Vampire”, in: Martin Hellström & Edgar Platen (eds.), *Armut. Zur Darstellung von Zeitgeschichte in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*, Vol. VII. Munich, p. 144-160. Translated with the help of Thorsten Schröter.

<sup>2</sup> Gottfried Keller (2000), “Die missbrauchten Liebesbriefe”. In: Peter Villwock et al. (eds.), *Gottfried Keller: Sämtliche Werke. Historisch-Kritische Ausgabe Band 5. Die Leute von Seldwyla. Zweiter Band*. Basel/Frankfurt a. M., p. 97-180, p. 129-130. Translation: Gottfried Keller (1974), *The misused love letters (translated by Michael Bullock) & Regula Amrain and her youngest son (translated by Anne Fremantle): Two Novellas*. New York, p. 44-45.

<sup>3</sup> Even when it comes to the stories “Die Umgebung von Blitzen” (“In the Vicinity of Lightning”) and “Puppenwelt” (“Doll’s World”), which topicalise pair relationships, it could be argued that the female characters play a key role, even if the focus is primarily on the men. All translations, if not indicated otherwise, are mine.

society in (West-)Germany – in other words, they are materially secure. There are, however, different ways to construe the title *Reiche Mädchen*. The blurb of the Goldman edition, for example, makes a well-intentioned suggestion:

Wie Franziska [in der ersten Erzählung "Krieg oder Frieden", T.P.] so stehen auch die anderen Frauen in diesem poetischen Erzählband vor einem Wendepunkt in ihrem Leben. Sie alle begehen einen Fehler, verwechseln Sex mit Liebe, Gewöhnung mit Sicherheit, Undurchschaubarkeit mit Freiheit und kehren doch – *um eine Erfahrung reicher* – ins Leben zurück.<sup>4</sup>

(Just like Franziska [in the first story "Krieg oder Frieden" ("War or Peace"), T.P.], the other women, too, face a turning point in their lives in this poetic volume of narratives. They all commit a mistake, confuse sex with love, habituation with security, unfathomability and intransparency with freedom, and yet they return – *richer by one experience* – to life.)

This conciliatory interpretation of the title is more likely due to a marketing strategy than to an in-depth reading of the stories. If the characters in *Reiche Mädchen* are perceived as at least partially representative, Scheuermann's stories can be read as a declaration of emotional bankruptcy or as the diagnosis of a society that has created relative material affluence for many, but where there is nevertheless a poverty in interpersonal relationships that extends into the pathological. This was argued by a reviewer in the style of a journalistic literary review:

Man skulle kunna säga att temat för samlingen *Rika flickor* är kärlekens patologi [...]. Trots titeln handlar inte berättelserna om någon finansiell överklass, utan om vanliga människor som på något sätt borde klara av att vara nöjda. Men dessa människor, företrädesvis kvinnor, sitter som i dödens väntrum, medan medelklasslivet pågår runt dem.<sup>5</sup>

(One might say that the theme of the collection *Reiche Mädchen* is the pathology of love [...]. Despite the title, the stories are not about some financial upper class, but about ordinary people who somehow should be capable of being content. Yet these people, predominantly women, are sitting in the antechamber of death, while middle-class life goes on around them.)

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<sup>4</sup> Silke Scheuermann (2006), *Reiche Mädchen*. Munich (stress added).

<sup>5</sup> Malin Ullgren (2011), "Hård förälskelse. noveller med fin känsla för utsiktslösa relationer" ("Hard love. Stories with a delicate feeling for dead-end relationships"), in: *Dagens Nyheter*, 10 September 2011.

Perhaps one could be more precise and say that the stories are not about a “pathology of love”; instead, the dysfunctional relationships and the attempts – sometimes crossing the line into the pathological – to satisfy a desire for love, closeness and partnership reveal an interpersonal poverty. Representatives of the German middle class are used to illustrate this in an exemplary manner: from the adolescent girl Nette in “Zickzack oder die sieben Todsünden” (“Zigzag or The Seven Deadly Sins”), via the young female employee at a scientific institute in “Krieg oder Frieden” (“War or Peace”), to the retired male police officer in “Die Umgebung von Blitzen” (“In the Vicinity of Lightning”).

If one wishes to interpret Scheuermann’s title in not only ironic terms, it could thus represent a categorisation of most characters as belonging to a financially secure middle class, even though, or perhaps just because, none of the female characters distinguishes herself through particular material wealth. If Maslow’s hierarchy of needs is used as a point of reference, most of the female as well as the male characters can collectively be associated with unfulfilled needs on the second and third levels. After all, they suffer from neither absolute nor relative poverty in the sense that their basic physiological needs are satisfied, for example when it comes to food, water, warmth and security, which a modern western society is generally able to provide.

From this perspective, the characters in *Reiche Mädchen* are ‘rich’ in the sense that they do not suffer from hunger as does the husband in Wolfgang Borchert’s famous “Das Brot”; nor do the characters suffer from the ‘hopeless stench’ of poverty such as the one described by John Banville in his portrayal of the slums of Dublin in the 1950s:

[...] the smell that hung on the stairs and in the corridors, summer and winter, the brownish, tired, hopeless stink of peed-on mattresses and stewed tea and blocked-up lavatories – the smell, the very smell, of what it was to be poor [...].<sup>6</sup>

Still, the characters in the stories of *Reiche Mädchen* seem to experience a sort of hunger, that may not be as concrete and all-powerful as the Orwellian “[...] when one’s belly is empty, one’s only problem is an empty belly”, but a pervasive hunger nonetheless.<sup>7</sup> Despite or perhaps because of the relative material security which most of the characters ‘enjoy’, they seem to be unhappy, discontent or downright starving in a physically less immediate sense or, according to Maslow’s hierarchy, because of “higher needs”:

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<sup>6</sup> Benjamin Black (2007), *The Silver Swan*. London, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> George Orwell (1970), “As I please (3 March 1944)”, in: Sonia Orwell & Ian Angus (eds.), *The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell*, Vol. 3. Harmondsworth, p. 127. Cf. also: “People with empty bellies never despair of the universe, nor even think about the universe, for that matter”. (George Orwell (1970), “Inside the Whale”, in: Sonia Orwell & Ian Angus (eds.), *The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell*, Vol. 1. Harmondsworth, p. 558.)

Undoubtedly these physiological needs are the most prepotent of all needs. [...] A person who is lacking food, safety, love, and esteem would most probably hunger for food more strongly than for anything else. [...]

It is quite true that man lives by bread alone – when there is no bread. But what happens to man's desires when there is plenty of bread and when the belly is chronically filled?

*At once other (and higher) needs emerge* and these, rather than physiological hungers, dominate the Organism.<sup>8</sup>

What is striking in *Reiche Mädchen* is that when it comes to socio-emotional needs – those that regard love, intimacy, belonging, partnership and family – obvious deficiency symptoms emerge.<sup>9</sup>

A kind of starvation, including deficiency symptoms, that transcends the purely physiological thus overshadows all the stories in *Reiche Mädchen*. One example is the protagonist of “Lisa und der himmlische Körper” (“Lisa and the Heavenly Body”), who in her longing for love and security again and again allows herself to be sexually exploited and even raped by men. Another is the youthful Nette in “Zickzack oder Die sieben Todsünden”, who suffers from an eating disorder and, in her need for love and recognition, desires her older brother. Yet in view of the hopelessness of this desire, she tortures her friend Daniel, who is in love with her, with sexual approaches and rejection.

As Ullgren states, the stories are about “ordinary people who somehow should be capable of being content”, yet contentedness and well-being cannot be attributed to any of the characters in *Reiche Mädchen*, despite the evident pecuniary and social security provided by a modern, western welfare society under the rule of law. From the perspective of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it is precisely under such conditions, when the basic physiological and security-related needs have been satisfied, that the emotional and interpersonal needs come to the fore:

Now the person will feel keenly, as never before, the absence of friends, or a sweetheart, or a wife, or children. He will hunger for affectionate relations with people [...] and may even forget that once, when he was hungry, he sneered at love as unreal or unnecessary or unimportant. Now he will feel sharply the pangs of loneliness, of ostracism, of rejection, of friendlessness, of rootlessness.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Abraham H. Maslow (1970), *Motivation and Personality*. New York, p. 36-37 & 38.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. “The Belongingness and Love Needs” (Maslow, p. 43-45).

<sup>10</sup> Maslow, p. 43.

Such urgent emotional needs, a distinct lack of love and healthy intimacy, as well as the symptoms of this shortage, which in *Reiche Mädchen* frequently tend towards the pathological, can be said to culminate in the story “Vampire” (“Vampires”), since the vampire motif moves the interpersonal poverty, through the hunger of the vampire, into the realm of the physiological and life-sustaining. To be sure, Scheuermann’s female vampire is not a blood sucker. Rather, we are dealing with a variation on the vampire motif, in that the ‘undead’ person secures her emotional and spiritual survival with the help of the stories that she coaxes out of her victims.

### **The vampire motif in literature**

Upon closer investigation of the literary motif of the vampire, it is quite possible to arrive at Eric Nuzum’s conclusion: “In popculture, vampires are like cockroaches. They’ve always been around, and once you notice them, they’re everywhere.”<sup>11</sup> Analogous with the common cockroach, vampires in literature and art, or as a metaphor in common language use, are characterised by their legendary propensity to shun the light and also by the fact that they are considered vermin and parasites that are hard to get rid of, and thus appear to be perpetual and inevitable companions of humanity. However, in contrast to the cockroach, it is a lot easier to get a grasp on the motif of the vampire, at least with the tools of literary analysis.<sup>12</sup> Yet however changeable the vampire motif may be with regard to its realisation and function in various narrative contexts,<sup>13</sup> something is quite noticeable in the study of the motif itself, as well as in the scientific examination of vampires:

Im Vampir spiegeln sich seit jeher die Ängste und Sehnsüchte der Gesellschaft, die ihn zu immer neuem Leben in ihren Büchern und Filmen erweckt. Es sind auch grundlegende Fragen der Religion und Theologie – nach Leben, Tod und Ewigkeit, Eros und Gewalt, Körper und Seele, Gut und Böse, Schuld und Erlösung – die am Vampir abgehandelt werden, ist er doch ein anderer, eine reine Fiktion, und doch uns Menschen so ähnlich

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<sup>11</sup> Cited in: Anna Höglund (2009), *Vampyrer. En kulturkritisk studie av den västerländska vampyrberättelsen från 1700-talet till 2000-talet (Vampires. A Cultural Study of Western Vampire Stories from the 18th until the 21st Century)*. Växjö, p. 9.

<sup>12</sup> A review of the significant and continually growing number of vampire-related studies within the realms of literature, film and culture studies, as well as other research areas, is not possible within the framework of the present contribution. Where scientific studies are referred to, these often stand as representatives for many other investigations into the vampire motif.

<sup>13</sup> These include the domains of literature, pictorial art and film, as well as legends, oral narrative traditions etc., in various parts of the world and throughout a wide range of cultures and times.

erdacht, dass Aussagen über ihn auch immer Aussagen über uns sind.<sup>14</sup>

(The vampire has always embodied the fears and desires of a society that reawakens him to ever new life in its books and films. Yet it is also the fundamental questions of religion and theology – about life, death and eternity, eros and violence, body and soul, good and bad, guilt and redemption – that are analysed with the help of the vampire motif; after all, he is different, pure fiction, yet so similar to us humans that claims about him will also always be claims about ourselves.)

It is significant in this context that questions about ‘life, death and eternity, eros and violence’ etc. are ‘also’, and not exclusively, questions of religion and theology. In addition, prudence is also called for in the investigation of vampires in literary and artistic contexts, because the assumption of a pure mirroring function of the vampire motif would run the risk of simplifying complex interrelations. After all, vampires not only reflect a time or society in a one-dimensional manner, but usually form part of an, e.g., literary tradition that is implicitly or explicitly referred to through intertextual means. Due to the pervasiveness of the motif even outside the genre of dedicated ‘vampire literature’, intertextual and intermedial references are virtually unavoidable.<sup>15</sup> However, if the goal is a general representation of a figure as multifaceted, unstable and (darkly) scintillating as a vampire, Heimerl and Feichtinger’s summary is valid even beyond the focus of the investigations in *Dunkle Helden (Dark Heroes)*, as confirmed by numerous other studies on the vampire motif.

Even though Stoker’s *Dracula* may have come to epitomise the vampire – just as Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes the private detective – this partly obscures the circumstance that “[e]very culture in recorded time has had its own legends of hungry ghosts who feed on the energy of the living, in one way or another”.<sup>16</sup> The reasons for the common occurrence of

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<sup>14</sup> Theresia Heimerl & Christian Feichtinger (2010): “Einleitung” (“Introduction”), in: Id. (eds.), *Dunkle Helden – Vampire als Spiegel religiöser Diskurse in Film und TV (Dark Heroes - Vampires as mirrors of religious discourses in Film and TV)*. Marburg, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup> Though it can be questioned whether such a categorisation in terms of genre is possible at all.

<sup>16</sup> David J. Skal (2009), “Foreword”, in: John Edgar Browning & Caroline Joan Picart (eds.), *Draculas, vampires, and other undead forms: Essays on Gender, Race, and Culture*. Lanham, p. v. – In *Jane Eyre*, for example, fifty years before Stoker’s paradigmatic *Dracula*, the vampiristic ‘Madwoman in the Attic’ is placed within a German tradition: “[...] the lips were swelled and dark; the brow furrowed; the black eyebrows widely raised over the bloodshot eyes. Shall I tell you of what it reminded me? [...] Of the foul German spectre – the Vampyre.” (Charlotte Brontë (2001), *Jane Eyre*. New York & London, p. 242.)

vampire-like creatures in various guises – wiedergängers, undead, lamiae, ghosts, etc.<sup>17</sup> – in cultural and thus also artistic contexts may be general ones or specific to a time, region or society. The more general ones most certainly include fear of death, the (failed) processing of the loss of dear ones, superstition or religious influences, (suppressed) sexual needs, and many other ‘popular issues’.<sup>18</sup>

As Pütz affirms, the vampire motif is also always present in politics or in political or societal commentary:

Hier avanciert das Bild des blutsaugenden Wiedergängers schnell zu einer gängigen Metapher, mit der absolutistische Herrscher, Vertreter des Staatsapparates und andere Personen des öffentlichen Lebens charakterisiert werden.<sup>19</sup>

(“Here the image of the blood-sucking wiedergänger quickly develops into a standard metaphor with which absolute rulers, representatives of the state apparatus and other public personalities are characterised.”)

Apart from the circumstance that the vampire constitutes a common motif at virtually all times, Höglund asserts in her study on Western vampire narratives from the 18<sup>th</sup> into the 21<sup>st</sup> century: “The vampire narrative has always attracted most attention in times of social and cultural unrest.”<sup>20</sup> According to her, Bürger’s ballad “Lenore”, for example, can be read against the backdrop of the Seven Years’ War.<sup>21</sup> Its line “Denn die Todten reiten schnell” (“For the dead travel fast”), gains a special status not least because it is quoted, in German and with explicit reference to Bürger, in Stoker’s *Dracula*.<sup>22</sup> It metaphorically reflects the idea that revenants or wiedergängers and vampires seem to become ubiquitous especially in times of crisis.<sup>23</sup> Regardless of whether this happens against the backdrop of rampant syphilis, as in Maupassant’s *Le Horla*, or with reference to

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<sup>17</sup> For comprehensive entries regarding the various types of vampires and vampire-related traditions, cf. e.g. Bunson (2000), *The Vampire Encyclopedia*, New York. A detailed classification of vampire-like creatures like that in Scheuermann’s “Vampire”, taking into account the great variety of such creatures in art, religion, culture, etc., will be more or less done without here, due to limitations of space.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Susanne Pütz (1992), *Vampire und ihre Opfer. Der Blutsauger als literarische Figur (Vampires and their victims. Blood suckers as literary characters)*. Bielefeld, p. 14-22.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23-24.

<sup>20</sup> Höglund, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, p. 56-58.

<sup>22</sup> Bram Stoker (2011), *Dracula* (ed. by Roger Luckhurst). Oxford, p. 13. – Bürger’s original does not seem to contain the conjunction “denn”; cf. Gottfried August Bürger (1796), *Lenore*. London, p. 7-10.

<sup>23</sup> The concept of the wiedergänger is often linked to that of the vampire, but not an inherent part of all vampire-related traditions. Cf. Pütz, p. 15.

the gambling bug as a pecuniary vampire in the English *Ye Vampires* or to alcoholism as a life-draining force,<sup>24</sup> or whether Stoker's *Dracula* wants to metaphorically nourish himself at the main artery of the (crumbling) British Empire, the literary vampire motif often proves to have societal or situational connections. Where misfortune, epidemics, diseases, famines or crises of whatever nature threaten, the vampire is not far away. One might say, that vampires, as it were, have their fingers on the pulse a society, and that every age produces its own types and variants of vampire narratives and vampire creatures. As the extensive research literature confirms, different takes on the vampire motif refer both to a rich literary or artistic tradition, and also function as social, moral, political or other kind of commentary.

### **Narrative vampirism in Silke Scheuermann's "Vampire"**

Scheuermann's story represents such a take on the vampire motif, for it is not about a hematophage, a bloodsucker in the conventional sense,<sup>25</sup> as embodied by Stoker's Count *Dracula*, for example. As confirmed by many studies, a definition of the vampire exclusively as a bloodsucker is too narrow and does not do justice to the diversity of vampire figures. In this context, Brian J. Frost's conceptualisation seems to be more appropriate, both in general as well as for the analysis at hand:

In short: the vampire has no fixed image and no fixed abode. Taking all this into account, it is clear that the standard dictionary definition of the vampire is totally inadequate, and a much broader definition is required [...]: A Vampire is fundamentally a parasitic force or being, malevolent and self-seeking by nature, whose paramount desire is to absorb the life-force or ingest the vital fluids of a living organism in order to sate its perverse hunger and perpetuate its unnatural existence.<sup>26</sup>

Put succinctly, in the words of Fritz Leiber: "There are vampires and vampires, and not all of them suck blood."<sup>27</sup>

Natalie, for example, the female protagonist of "Vampire", is not a blood-thirsty vampire creature, but an undead in the sense that she has

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Höglund, p. 187-194 and 73.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. for example Pütz, p. 14.

<sup>26</sup> Brian J. Frost (1989), *The Monster with a Thousand Faces. Guises of the Vampire in Myth and Literature*. Bowling Green, p. 27. Whether 'malevolence' is as necessary component of a broader definition of the vampire is here left for others to consider.

<sup>27</sup> Cited in: John Langan (2008), "'Feed Me, Baby, Feed Me': Beyond the Pleasure Principle in Fritz Leiber's 'Girl with the Hungry Eyes'", in: Benjamin Szumskyj (ed.), *Fritz Leiber. Critical Essays*. Jefferson (North Carolina), p. 106.



no life of her own and ‘parasitically’ nourishes herself by ‘absorbing the life force’ of others. This she does by tricking her, it would seem, exclusively male victims into relinquishing their life stories as well as past and present thoughts. Just as most other characters in *Reiche Mädchen*, Natalie has a job – she works as a photo lab assistant<sup>28</sup> – and lives, to a casual observer, under secure circumstances. It is precisely against this background, however, that the inner, emotional poverty or emptiness of the protagonist becomes obvious, since, in Maslow’s terms, basic physical needs are satisfied, revealing ‘higher’ deficiencies, which cannot be alleviated by physical (blood-sucking) means.<sup>29</sup> In this respect, Scheuermann’s “Vampire” takes its place in the development of the vampire motif since the 20<sup>th</sup> century – a development that Pütz describes as follows:

Differenzen zum 19. Jahrhundert ergeben sich in erster Linie durch eine andersartige künstlerische Gestaltung und eine abweichende Auslegung der einzelnen Dimensionen. Was etwa die nach wie vor häufige Beschäftigung mit der psychogenen Komponente betrifft, können vor allem zwei Veränderungen konstatiert werden: Erstens sind es nun vorwiegend weibliche Revenants, die dieses Moment verkörpern, zweitens entpuppen sich diese jetzt weitaus öfter als ‘femmes fatales’, die ihre männlichen Opfer aus weitgehend destruktiven Beweggründen heraus gezielt in den Tod ziehen.<sup>30</sup>

(Differences in comparison with the 19<sup>th</sup> century result primarily from a different artistic representation and a deviating interpretation of different dimensions. As far as the still common preoccupation with the psychogenic component is concerned, for example, two changes in particular can be identified: firstly, it is now mostly female revenants who embody this aspect; secondly, they now reveal themselves far more often as ‘femmes fatales’, who, out of essentially destructive motives, draw their male victims into death.)

Even if Natalie does not ‘draw anybody into death’ directly, she still belongs in this category of female vampires, as she lures her male victims through sex, among other things. The story begins with a post-coital scene, where, on the one hand, the vampire motif is alluded to through the word *Geschmack* (‘taste’), even though it is not about ‘tasting’ to begin with, and,

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Scheuermann, *Reiche Mädchen*, p. 142 or Silke Scheuermann (2005), “Vampires” (translated by Isabel Cole). Literaturportal [www.litrix.de](http://www.litrix.de), (<http://www.litrix.de/mmo/priv/16392-WEB.pdf>, accessed 10 September 2014), p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Maslow, p. 38.

<sup>30</sup> Pütz, p. 154-155. Dijkstra’s study *Evil Sisters* provides many examples, especially from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, that support Pütz’s statement.

on the other hand, it is made clear that this vampire is no bloodsucker.<sup>31</sup> Rather, she begins the ‘draining’ right after the sexual act – the “heftiges Atmen” (‘heavy breathing’) of her “Opfer” (‘victim’) is mentioned<sup>32</sup> – by sucking in the layout and furniture of his sleeping room, in order to gather first pieces of evidence about her victim:

Wie war er – ordentlich, unordentlich, hatte er Geschmack? Sie betrachtete die hohen Fenster, die Stoffvorhänge, deren Farbe sie im ovalen Lichtkegel der Tischlampe nicht sehen konnte, vielleicht orange, ja, die Vorhänge mußten orange sein, der Teppich war schließlich hellgelb, anders würde es nicht passen. Die Blätter der Kübelpflanze zeichneten große Schatten auf den Vorhang, der sich leicht bewegte, so daß es aussah, als tanzten da merkwürdige Dschungelfiguren ihre archaischen Tänze. Sie sollte ihn vielleicht auf das Schattenspiel aufmerksam machen. Aber er hatte sich abgewendet und atmete hörbar. Sie ließ ihn in Ruhe. Jetzt war sie ungestört und konnte die Zeit nutzen, ihren Blick spazieren lassen in wilden Kurven durch das fremde Terrain, *schließlich wollte sie sich alles merken*. Wie der Bücherschrank dastand, das Tablett auf dem Boden, eine Kaffeetasse, und dann, nein, mehr war da nicht, jetzt hatte sie’s komplett, das war sein Schlafzimmer.

(What was he like – neat, messy, did he have any taste? She studied the tall windows, the cloth curtains whose color she couldn’t see in the oval beam of light from the desk lamp, maybe orange, yes, the curtains had to be orange, after all the carpet was bright yellow, otherwise it wouldn’t go. The leaves of the potted plants cast large shadows on the curtain, whose slight movement made it look as if strange shapes from the jungle were dancing their archaic dances there. Maybe she should draw his attention to the play of shadows. But he had turned away, breathing audibly. She let him be. Now, left undisturbed, she could use the time to let her gaze swerve across the alien terrain; *after all, she wanted to make a note of everything*. How the bookcase stood, the tray on the floor, a coffee cup, and then, no, that was it, now she had it down, that was his bedroom.)<sup>33</sup>

In her vampire-like zeal to force from her victim Stephan as much as possible about himself, in order to make him all hers by and by, she absorbs

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<sup>31</sup> Scheuermann, *Reiche Mädchen*, p. 140 & Scheuermann, “Vampires”, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139 & *ibid.*, p. 1 (stress added).

every little detail of the room, already fearful of missing something: “Vielleicht sah sie es nie wieder” (“Maybe she would never see it again”).<sup>34</sup>

This unusual introduction to a vampire story is explained by the narrator’s pointing out that Natalie is a different kind of vampire, though one who requires as much cunning as a classical vampire, if not more:

Sie mußte vorsichtig sein. Den Mund halten und nicht zu viele Fragen stellen. Irgendwann würde sowieso jedes ihrer Opfer merken, daß sie mit ihrer Liebe die Männer aussaugte,<sup>35</sup> alles aus ihnen herauspreßte, ihre Geschichten wissen wollte, ihre Gedanken, erzähl doch, erzähl doch, es war wie eine Sucht [...].

(She had to be careful. Keep her mouth shut and not ask too many questions. Anyway, at some point every one of her victims would realize that she sucked men dry with her love, squeezing everything out of them, wanting to know their stories, their thoughts, go on and tell, go on and tell, it was like an addiction [...].)<sup>36</sup>

Natalie’s addiction or vampirical hunger thus does not aim at her victims’ blood, but at their stories, thoughts and memories. She is not undead in the sense that she has to ingest new life in the form of others’ blood, but

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> In Herbert Grönemeyer’s “Deine Liebe klebt” (‘Your Love is Sticky’), an example from popular culture, a related idea is to be found in connection with a love relationship: “Deine Freundlichkeit macht mich fertig / [...] Saugt mir die Kraft aus den Adern” (‘Your friendliness wears me out / [...] Sucks the power out of my veins’), (Herbert Grönemeyer (1991), “Deine Liebe klebt”, *Luxus* (CD)). Similarly, though literally referring to bloodletting, Dr Seward’s diary in *Dracula* declares: “No man knows till he experiences it, what it is to feel his own life-blood drawn away into the veins of the woman he loves.” (Stoker, p. 167)

<sup>36</sup> Scheuermann, *Reiche Mädchen*, p. 140 & Scheuermann, “Vampires”, p. 1. Natalie’s choice of profession, her work in a photo shop, thus fits her narrative vampirism: “Ich entwickle die Leben anderer, versuchte [sic] sie zu erklären, ich schaue sie mir an, und du denkst nicht, was diese Bilder alles aussagen über die Menschen [...]” (“I develop other people’s lives, she tried to explain, I look at them, and you wouldn’t believe all the things these pictures say about people [...]”). Ibid., p. 142 & ibid., p. 2-3). – This type of appropriation of the life of others does seem to be a component of her vampirism or pathology, yet the contemplation of nothing but photos would not satisfy her: the pictures may ‘expose’ a lot, but to ‘extract’ is possible only through personal contact. Photographs function primarily as an ersatz or trigger for narrated life, as becomes clear in her joy over Stephan’s photo collection: “[...] er [könnte] ihr *anlässlich* der vielen Bilder erzählen [...]” (“[...] he could use all the pictures to tell her [...]”), Ibid., p. 150 & ibid., p. 7 (stress added)). That is why the present contribution focuses primarily on Natalie’s narrative vampirism.

rather because she gradually extracts, down to minute details, her lovers' life stories, memories, thoughts and plans for the future. The cause of this hunger for stories, for narrated life, is a considerable lack of inner drive or, 'vampirically' expressed, a chronic shortage of a life force of her own, which can only be attenuated, temporarily, by a supply of life force from others:

[...] auf die drei schönen Wochen folgten dann drei Monate, in denen die Liebhaber, geschockt vom Ausmaß der Langeweile, die Natalie offenbar quälte, versuchen würden, ihre neue Freundin anzuspornen, damit sie irgend etwas verändere, einen Sinn finde. Wie wäre es zum Beispiel mit der Kunsthochschule, Abteilung Fotografie? – aber Natalie würde nur den Kopf schütteln und den Fernseher einschalten, Peter hatte ihr einmal ins Gesicht geschlagen, als sie gähnte, während er ihr eine phantastische Zukunft ausmalte, doch auch wenn sie ihr nicht ins Gesicht schlugen, es käme die Zeit, in der kein Mann sich scheute, das Zusammensein mit ihr ein Unglück zu nennen, weil sie ihre Anrufbeantworter abhörte und ihre Briefe las und ihre Erinnerungen auslöschte, damit die Männer ihr ganz gehörten mit ihren Ideen, Projekten und Geschichten.

([...] the three wonderful weeks would be followed by three months in which her lovers, shocked by the extent of the boredom which evidently tormented Natalie, would try to prod their new girlfriend to make some changes, find some meaning. How about art school, for example, the photography department? – but Natalie would just shake her head and turn on the television. Peter had slapped her in the face the time she yawned while he was picturing her a fantastic future, but even if they didn't slap her in the face, the time would come when no man would hesitate to call life with her a disaster for the way she listened to their answering machines and read their letters and obliterated their memories so that the men would belong to her completely, along with all their ideas, projects and stories.)<sup>37</sup>

If one disregards the fact that the object of her desire is situated in the narrative realm, her behaviour is typically vampiristic: the inner emptiness and the resulting hunger; the almost indifferent acceptance of danger, including that of violence, in her attempts to still the insatiable craving for others' – in this case narrated – lives; her victims gradually being drained; the intimacy of the 'relationship'; the desire to own her victims entirely,

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 140 & *ibid.*, p. 1-2.

where complete appropriation simultaneously constitutes the climax and the end of the vampiristic process.<sup>38</sup> Her actions are parasitic in character also because she hurts the men, in so far as she spells “Unglück” (“disaster”) for them, and “auslöschte” (“obliterated”) their memories.<sup>39</sup> The basic tenet that vampires require a “special pabulum” to sustain their own life, and that vampires “eat not as others”, also applies metaphorically to Natalie’s hunger for life or, rather, the life force of others.<sup>40</sup>

Also when it comes to her *modus operandi*, she behaves like a traditional vampire, in that she works with deception and temptation. In the most classic of all vampire classics, Stoker’s *Dracula*, this necessity derives from the obstacle that vampires must be explicitly invited into a house before they may enter it.<sup>41</sup> For the victims, this means that they are, at least partly, to blame, since they have been too easily fooled or tempted. For the

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<sup>38</sup> In Stoker’s *Dracula*, too, there is a tendency towards narrative vampirism, even though it takes a different form. Count Dracula, who wants to leave his dilapidated castle beyond the forest, in Transylvania, in order to regain his strength in London and thus be rejuvenated in – and by – the centre of the British Empire, also uses the young lawyer Harker as a narrative source. During a tour of the Count’s library, Dracula says with reference to his books: “These friends [...] have been good friends to me, and for some years past, ever since I had the idea of going to London, have given me many, many hours of pleasure.” (Stoker, p. 31) Moreover, he asks Harker many questions about London and England, until the latter is quite exhausted from this interrogation: “He was interested in everything, and asked me a myriad questions about the place and its surroundings [...]”, “[...] and the Count stayed with me, chatting and asking questions on every conceivable subject, hour after hour.” (Ibid., p. 34 and 36) Dracula’s interest is, in contrast to that of Scheuermann’s vampire, not primarily narrative in nature, but rather instrumental, since he requires, apart from polite conversation, information pertaining to his imminent relocation to London. Also when it comes to the quote at the beginning of the present contribution, from Keller’s *Die missbrauchten Liebesbriefe*, it is different in so far as there is hardly anything left for the wife to do than to make use of somebody else’s literary or narrative abilities, even though her husband will later accuse her of being a vampire.

<sup>39</sup> Scheuermann, *Reiche Mädchen*, p. 140 & Scheuermann, “Vampires”, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Stoker, p. 307.

<sup>41</sup> “He may not enter anywhere at the first, unless there be some one of the household who bid him to come; though afterwards he can come as he please.” (Ibid., p. 308) In most vampire narratives that concern themselves with the details of being a vampire, vampires are subject to certain restrictions, regardless of the superhuman powers they may have otherwise. For example, daylight will make many vampires suffer or even kill them. Crosses, garlic or other pungent herbs may protect against vampires. These restrictions or weaknesses in the inevitable conflict with humans will differ from one vampire story to the next. In *Dracula*, for example, further limitations apply: among other things, Count Dracula can cross water, i.e. rivers and seas, only under certain conditions.

vampire, it means that he or she must obtain permission by some devious means or other.<sup>42</sup> In Scheuermann's "Vampire", Natalie employs temptation and sex to overcome the obstacle of having to be asked into Stephan's apartment. She uses the bait consciously and strategically, though not always, in her own estimation, optimally.<sup>43</sup> In the case of Stephan, her hunger causes her to be rash in a way that might spoil her plans:

Stephan durfte das nicht merken, jetzt noch nicht. Zurückhaltung war jetzt wichtig. Es war zu schnell gegangen, sie war zu schnell ins Bett zu kriegen gewesen – als ob sie aus irgendeinem Grund unter Zeitdruck stünde, als ob sie morgen schon eine alte Frau sein könnte [...].

(Stephan mustn't be allowed to notice that, not yet. Restraint was crucial now. It had gone too quickly, she had been too quick to go to bed with him – as if for some reason she were pressed for time, as if tomorrow she might be an old woman already [...].)<sup>44</sup>

As suggested above, it is possible to read the beginning of the story as a deliberate link to the vampirical tradition – e.g. in the reference to an ageing process accelerated by a temporal lack of 'special nourishment', or to

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<sup>42</sup> In several studies it is pointed out that, for example, Count Dracula's purchase of a property in London, or rather its conclusion by a British jurist, symbolically functions as the invitation with the help of which Dracula manages to 'enter' England (cf. e.g. Höglund, p. 260). A conspicuous feature of the vampire motif with regard to its moral dimensions is thus that the victim often has a 'share' in the blame, at least implicitly, e.g. because she was imprudent and let herself be duped, or foolish enough to be out at night, etc. Even when a specific victim is not to be blamed personally, it is often sufficient that, say, a family member or, in the case of *Dracula*, the representative of a country, commits a little mistake or lets caution slip for a moment in order to open the way for the vampire.

<sup>43</sup> In analogy to this, Natalie's temporally limited relationships, following the pattern of so-called serial monogamy, are a means to the necessarily time-bound vampirical end: "Eigentlich konnte sie sich nicht beklagen, bloß die Dauer ihrer Liebschaften, zuerst hatte die sie gestört, doch inzwischen rechnete sie schon von sich aus nur mit kurzen Abschnitten." ("She couldn't complain really, it was just the length of her love-affairs, it had bothered her at first, but now she herself reckoned with short segments.") Scheuermann, *Reiche Mädchen*, p. 146 & Scheuermann, "Vampires", p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 140-141 & *ibid.*, p. 2.

the corresponding rejuvenation caused by access to it.<sup>45</sup> In addition, Scheuermann's vampire figure stands in a well-established tradition of female vampires, notably that of the Lamia, who primarily chooses young men or children as her victims<sup>46</sup>:

Natalie stellte die Dusche lauwarm, sie erinnerte sich an ein anderes Badezimmer, an einen *Jungen*, der ebenso attraktiv gewesen war wie Stephan: Matthias, Matt. Hatten sie nicht immer zusammen geduscht, nein, nur einmal, immer zusammen geduscht hatte sie mit Jochen, der war mindestens so gutaussehend gewesen und außerdem freundlich und sehr klug. [...] Nach Matt, mit Reiner, diesem wortkargen Norddeutschen [...].

(Natalie ran the shower lukewarm, remembering another bathroom, a guy who'd been just as attractive as Stephan: Matthias, Matt. Hadn't they always taken showers together, no, just once, she had always taken showers with Jochen, he had been at least as good-looking and friendly too, and very smart. [...] After Matt, with Reiner, that taciturn North German [...].)<sup>47</sup>

This collection of young men remains rather anonymous since, due to the first person narrative from the point of view of the vampire. Only one of her lovers sticks out, because he is not that different from Natalie and, in his comportment, almost vampire-like:

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<sup>45</sup> Stoker's Van Helsing states: "The vampire live on, and cannot die by mere passing of the time; he can flourish when that he can fatten on the blood of the living. Even more, we have seen amongst us that he can even grow younger; that his vital faculties grow strenuous, and seem as though they refresh themselves when his special pabulum is plenty." (Stoker, p. 307, *sic*) In Scheuermann's *Die Stunde zwischen Hund und Wolf* (*The Hour Between Dog and Wolf*), the female first-person narrator describes her sister's pattern of vampiristic-artistic renewal or restoration after creative crises: "[...] sie hängte sich dann an eine andere Person, a oder b oder c, ganz beliebig, saugte deren Energie aus wie ein Vampir, bis a oder b oder c wie ein Schluck Wasser in der Kurve hing, Ines aber, gesundet, zu ihrer Staffelei zurücktänzelte." "[...] she clung to somebody, anybody, and sucked them dry of energy like a vampire, until that person was a limp dishrag; Ines, meanwhile, pranced back to her easel, fully recovered.") (Silke Scheuermann (2007), *Die Stunde zwischen Hund und Wolf*. Frankfurt a. M., p. 32.)

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Pütz, p. 154-155. For *lamiae*, cf. for example Bunson, p. 150.

<sup>47</sup> Scheuermann, *Reiche Mädchen*, p. 146-147 & Scheuermann, "Vampires", p. 4-5 (stress added).

Danach hatte Angelo sie tatsächlich beinahe alle *Regeln* über Bord werfen lassen, Angelos Geschichten waren die besten gewesen [...]. Angelo [...] dealte ein bißchen und hatte zuviel Geld und außerdem schon die halbe Welt gesehen, so daß er die meiste Zeit auf dem Sofa saß und vom Trinken verfettete, sie begriff das Dilemma. Angelo hatte *auch* schon zu viele Frauen gehabt, und wenn Natalie ihn nicht zuerst verlassen hätte, wenn sie nicht zuerst gegangen wäre, Angelo hatte noch jede satt gehabt, er hatte sie ausgesaugt und satt gehabt, sie konnte ihm das nicht übelnehmen, schließlich war sie genauso.

(After that Angelo had actually come close to making her throw all her *rules* overboard, Angelo's stories were the best. [...] [H]e did some drug dealing and had too much money and had seen half the world already anyway, so he sat around on the sofa most of the time going to fat from booze, she understood the dilemma. Angelo had had too many women *too*, and if Natalie hadn't left him first, if she hadn't been the first to go, Angelo had gotten his fill of everyone, he'd sucked them dry and gotten his fill, she couldn't hold that against him, she was just the same, after all.)<sup>48</sup>

Natalie, however, is not depicted as a vampire monster, but, and that is not uncommon in vampire stories focusing on the vampire, as vulnerable herself – even fearful. For her, too, special “rules” apply, and thoughtlessness or non-adherence to these rules, in this case the rule to be careful, will apparently have consequences for the vampire. When thinking back to previous or ‘used up’ lovers, she worries again that Stephan might slip away from her after all, if she is not careful:

Ein Gefühl von Panik machte sich in ihr breit, sie schmeckte es auf ihrer Zunge als etwas Metallisches. Wasser, sie brauchte Wasser, sie richtete den Strahl auf ihren Mund, schluckte, *ließ die Flüssigkeit ihre Kehle herunterströmen. Das meiste lief ihr das Kinn herunter.* Stephan rief: Hast du alles? Erschrocken drehte sie den Hahn ab. Aber es gab nichts zu befürchten. Da war nur wieder seine Aufmerksamkeit, sie würde sich mit Genuß daran gewöhnen [...]. Sie war gut aufgehoben.

(A feeling of panic filled her, she tasted it on her tongue, metallic. Water, she needed water, she aimed the jet at her mouth, swallowed, *let the liquid flow down her throat. Most ran down her chin.* Stephan called: Do you have everything you need?

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 147 & *ibid.*, p. 5 (stress added).



Frightened, she turned off the faucet. But there was nothing to fear. That was just his solicitude again, she would enjoy getting used to it [...]. She was in good keeping.)<sup>49</sup>

Both through the enjoyment with which she quenches her overwhelming thirst and through the metallic taste in her mouth, apparently caused by a sudden discharge of adrenaline but at the same time suggestive of the metallic taste of blood, the vampire theme is developed further. The “luke-warm” water of the shower, which causes her pleasure as she lets it “flow down her throat”, while reminiscing about earlier love affairs, evokes the image of a vampire who feasts on the warm blood of his victim.<sup>50</sup> Associations with a bluish-pale vampire and especially the colour of blood are made quite clear already at the beginning of the shower scene:

Natalie setzte sich auf den Badewannenrand, [...] sie sah an sich herunter, das Kunstlicht ließ *ihre Haut in einem merkwürdigen Blau* erscheinen [...]. Wieso hatte er keine roten Kacheln genommen, erdbeerrot, altrosa, *blutrot, etwas Lebendiges*, das wäre hübscher gewesen.

(Natalie sat on the edge of the bathtub, [...] she looked down at herself, the artificial light *made her skin look a strange blue* [...]. Why hadn't he chosen red tile, strawberry red, old rose, *blood red, something alive*, that would have looked prettier.)<sup>51</sup>

And indeed, Natalie is soon pleased to realise that she has come across a veritable goldmine in Stephan. With the words: “Hier ist mein Leben” (“Here's my life”),<sup>52</sup> he uncovers a box of photos that promise to still her hunger for narrated life – “erzähl doch, erzähl doch” (“go on and tell, go on and tell”)<sup>53</sup> – for a long time:

Da drin waren Rom und die Wiesbadener Villa, da waren seine verflossene Anja und seine verflossene Mareike, und darin war Stephan, Stephan vor Häusern, Sehenswürdigkeiten, Stephan mit Mädchen und Stephan mit Verwandten.

Sie beugten sich über den offenen Karton, er war gestopft voll, mindestens vierhundert Fotos. Als Stephan zwei dicke Pakete mit Bildern aus der Schachtel holte, sah er aus, als wolle

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 147-148 & *ibid.*, p. 5-6 (stress added).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 146 & *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 145-146 & *ibid.*, p. 4 (stress added).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 149 & *ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 140 & *ibid.*, p. 1.

er ihr etwas schenken, als habe er soeben Jahre seiner bisherigen Existenz aus der Schublade geholt, um sie nun ihr zu übergeben [...].

(Rome was in there and the villa in Wiesbaden, his ex Anja was in there, and his ex Mareike, and Stephan was in there, Stephan in front of houses, landmarks, Stephan with girls and Stephan with relatives.

She leaned over the open box, it was stuffed to the brim, there were at least four hundred photos. Stephan took two fat packs of pictures out of the box, looking as if he wanted to give her something, as if he had just taken years of his previous existence out of the drawer just to hand them over to her now [...].)<sup>54</sup>

And Natalie is by no means jealous of the ex-girlfriends. On the contrary, since her 'love affair' is nothing but a cover or a means to her vampirical ends, she impatiently anticipates the many stories, some of which will be triggered by the photos of his exes, and is happy that he makes it so easy for her, that he willingly bestows his life on her both photographically and narratively:

Und natürlich, ihre spezielle Eigenheit würde er bemerken mit der Zeit, natürlich, um ihrer Eigenheit willen war sie ja da. Er hatte jetzt gefunden, was er suchte: eine, die alles mitmachte mit eigentümlicher Demut, und er würde nicht merken, wie sie ihn, bei aller Lust, seine Spielchen mitzumachen, auslutschte bis auf die Knochen.

(And of course he would notice her specific peculiarity over time, of course, she was there because of her peculiarity. Now he had found what he was looking for: someone who went along with everything with a peculiar humility, and he wouldn't realize that for all her desire to go along with his games, she would be sucking his bones dry.)<sup>55</sup>

She is almost euphoric, can hardly believe her luck, and already imagines that together with Stephan, there might be salvation from her present existence, her emptiness, her hunger, her lack of drive and (his)story:

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 149-150 & ibid., p. 6-7.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 150 & ibid., p. 7.

[...] dann wäre sie Teil seiner Geschichte, sie alle sollten über sie erzählen, über sie, Natalie, die für eine eigene Geschichte keine Kraft hatte. [...] [U]nd sie wußte, dies war kein One-Night-Stand für ihn, sie hätten Tage, Wochen, vielleicht auch Monate zusammen, für die nächste Zeit war sie versorgt mit frischem Leben, wie glücklich sie diese Aussicht machte.

([...] then she would be part of his story, let them all talk about her, about her, Natalie, who didn't have the strength for her own story. [...] [A]nd she knew that this was not a one-night-stand for him, they had days, weeks, maybe months together, she was furnished with fresh life for the foreseeable future, how happy the prospect made her.)<sup>56</sup>

Yet as before with the hardly 'angelic' Angelo, in her elated state she is once again 'close to throwing all her rules overboard', as it turns out in the twist at the end of the story.<sup>57</sup> Upon closer inspection of the pictures of Stephan's previous girlfriends, the eyes of the exes reflect Natalie's own greedy look: "Denn schließlich erkannte sie sich in jeder Frau wieder, in Nicoles, Andreas, Maries hungrigen Augen, sie starrte sie an und erkannte sich wieder." (For ultimately she saw herself in every woman, in Nicole's, Andrea's, Marie's hungry eyes, she stared at them and saw herself.)<sup>58</sup>

The end of the story permits no safe conclusion as to whether Stephan is one who should not be missing from any vampire tale, namely a vampire hunter (though not one of the classic kind), or whether he is a kind of vampire himself. Through the first-person narrative, Natalie's motives are rather comparatively easily discernible; deductions regarding Stephan's motives and goals, on the other hand, are possible only on the basis of Natalie's impressions of his behaviour. It is patently unclear, in any case, who has lured whom and who is – or might become – whose victim. It appears as if Natalie is trying to seduce Stephan with her usual tactics, but also as if Stephan, with his promise of "frischem Leben" ("fresh life"), has enticed her.<sup>59</sup>

It certainly seems as if Stephan has the element of surprise on his side, should the encounter become antagonistic. As it turns out, Natalie's concerns appear to have been justified, though she had assessed the reasons incorrectly. It had indeed been too easy to seduce him, to get some stories out of him already that night, for now it seems as if they have lured each other. The end of the story suggests as much: "[...] und dann war er plötzlich hinter ihr, biß sie in den Nacken und sagte: Vampir, Vampir, vor dir

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p. 153 & ibid., p. 8.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. ibid., p. 147 & ibid., p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 153 & ibid., p. 9.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 153 & ibid., p. 8.

muß ich wohl aufpassen, und sie sagte, leise, oder ich vor dir.” (“[...] and suddenly he was behind her, biting her in the neck and saying: Vampire, vampire, I’ll have to watch out for you, and she said softly, or I’ll have to watch out for you.”)<sup>60</sup>

As the plural in the title “Vampire” (“Vampires”) suggests, Natalie is not the only vampire parasitically feeding on others in love affairs.<sup>61</sup> In Angelo and Stephan’s ex-girlfriends, Natalie recognises the same kind of behaviour as that which the narrator of *Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte* (*The Dark Side of History*) identifies as quasi-vampiristic in his little daughter: “Nach kurzer Zeit kroch sie in die Leute hinein, um etwas für sich aus ihnen herauszuholen.”<sup>62</sup> (“After a short time she crawled into people, to get something out of them for herself.”) If the vampire motif in Scheuermann’s “Vampire” is considered in the way suggested here, it can be understood as the perhaps clearest example, in *Reiche Mädchen*, of a diagnosis of poverty in interpersonal relationships. Even intimate and, at least on the surface, amorous relationships are all about the parasitical and vampirical draining of others, in order to temporarily overcome one’s own inner emptiness, emotional undeath, and ultimately insatiable hunger for life, which exists beyond material safety.

### Concluding comment

The fact that in a Western society, for large parts of the population, the most basic physiological and safety-related human needs, as expressed in e.g. Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, have been satisfied, does not lead to relative contentedness, at least not in “Vampire”. Rather, if one follows Scheuermann’s diagnosis of a civilised, progressive welfare society, the proverbial principle according to which ‘man is a wolf to man’ – or ‘vampire to man’, as the case may be – seems to be applicable to the realm of seemingly romantic relationships nowadays.<sup>63</sup> Few if any other motifs combine ruthless preying and civilised behaviour as well as the vampire.

Also with regard to the observation by Ullgren, that despite or because of their relative prosperity, the characters in *Reiche Mädchen* “are sitting in the antechamber of death, while middle-class life goes on around them”,

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 153-154 & ibid., p. 9.

<sup>61</sup> The infectious or epidemic aspect of vampirism cannot be pursued further here. See instead Detlef Klewer (2007), *Die Kinder der Nacht. Vampire in Film und Literatur*, Frankfurt a. M., p. 281, among others. Cf. also Stoker’s *Dracula*: “Then I stopped and looked at the Count. [...] This was the being I was helping to transfer to London, where, perhaps, for centuries to come he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless.” (Stoker, p. 71)

<sup>62</sup> Nicolas Born (2008), *Die erdabgewandte Seite der Geschichte*. Essen, p. 61.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Plautus (2006), *Asinaria – The One about the Asses* (translated and with commentary by John Henderson). Madison (Wisconsin), p. 52 & 53.

even though they “somehow should be capable of being content”, it can be stated that, in Scheuermann’s collection of stories, a society of emotional and interpersonal poverty is depicted, which finds its most drastic expression in “Vampire”.<sup>64</sup> Beyond the context of the present analysis, it would have to be examined, in further studies, exactly what interpersonal – and thus human – crisis situations predominate in the other stories of *Reiche Mädchen*. The following intriguing and more comprehensive questions would lead even further: to what extent does Höglund’s claim that “[t]he vampire narrative has always attracted most attention in times of social and cultural unrest” apply to the case of Scheuermann’s “Vampire”, and is it possible to generalise from the analysis presented here, beyond the horizon of the book and with regard to contemporary German or, indeed, Western society at large?<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Ullgren.

<sup>65</sup> Höglund, p. 1.

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