

Essay Questions 2017-18

Please note: these essay questions are meant for the purpose of orientation only. Students – and especially finalists – are warmly advised to negotiate their own essay topics with the module tutor. Essay length is 2500 words. Students must follow the MHRA Style Guide (<http://www.mhra.org.uk/Publications/Books/StyleGuide/download.shtml>). Footnotes should be used for the sole purpose of referencing; footnotes and bibliography do not count towards the word limit. Secondary sources (no less than five text, including books, articles, and book chapters) should be effectively employed, and not merely referenced as ‘authorities’. Wikipedia, non-scientific online articles, and generic websites are not considered as acceptable secondary sources. Whenever possible, students should access and quote sources in their original languages. Quotations should be kept to a minimum, and only when required for analytic purposes. Translating quotations from French, German, Italian, and Latin is not required.

1. Analyze and discuss the editor’s preface to Polidori’s *The Vampyre*, paying specific attention to its sources and to its role as a paratext from a reader-oriented perspective.
2. Analyze and discuss the role of folklore in one or more of the literary texts you studied for this module.
3. Analyze and discuss the historical and political implications of early case studies in vampirism (*Mævia*, Tournefort’s story, ‘Peter Plogojowitz’, ‘Arnold Paole’, or the story of Cabrerias) by taking into account the geopolitical situation of Greece and/or the Balkans in the eighteenth century.
4. Analyze and discuss the implications of the story of ‘Arnold Paole’ in terms of gender and sexuality, and discuss its possible influence on Polidori’s *The Vampyre*.
5. Why was the story of ‘Arnold Paole’ so influential in the construction of the vampire myth across Europe? Discuss.
6. Discuss the relationship between vampire stories and the changes in the biopolitical approach to death in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, by taking as a starting point the following passage from Schulze’s *Die Todtenbraut/La Morte fiancée/The Death-Bride*:

My astonishment was extreme when, that very same evening, the count gave orders to have Hildegard's tomb opened in his presence: but he beforehand related briefly what I have just told you, and proposed my assisting the duke and him in opening the grave. ‘It is morally impossible’, said the count to me, as we walked together, ‘that any trick can have been played respecting my daughter’s death: the circumstances attendant thereon are but too well known to me. You may readily believe also, that the affection we bore our poor girl would prevent our running any risk of burying her too soon: but suppose even the possibility of that, and that the tomb had been opened by some avaricious persons, who found, on opening the coffin, that the body became re-animated; no one can believe for a moment that my daughter would not have instantly returned to her parents, who doted on her, rather than have fled to a distant country. This last circumstance puts the matter beyond doubt: for even should it be admitted as a truth, that she was carried by force to some distant part of the world, she would have found a thousand ways of returning. My eyes are, however, about to be convinced, that the sacred remains of my Hildegard really repose in the grave. To convince myself!’ cried he again, in a tone of voice so melancholy yet loud that the sexton turned his head.

7. Discuss the image of the vampire as a political metaphor in relation to this passage from Franco Moretti’s ‘The Dialectic of Fear’ (1982):

The fear of bourgeois civilization is summed up in two names: Frankenstein and Dracula. The monster and the vampire are born together one night in 1816 in the drawing room of the Villa Chapuis near Geneva, out of a society game among friends to while away a rainy summer. Born in the full spate of the industrial revolution, they rise again together in the critical years at the end of the nineteenth century under the names of Hyde and Dracula. In the twentieth century they conquer the cinema: after the First World War, in German Expressionism; after the 1929 crisis, with the big RKO productions in America; then in 1956-57, Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee, directed by Terence Fisher, again, triumphantly, incarnate this twin-faced nightmare. Frankenstein and Dracula lead parallel lives. They are indivisible, because complementary, figures; the two horrible faces of a single society, its extremes: the disfigured wretch and the ruthless proprietor. The worker and capital: ‘the whole of society must split into the two classes of property owners and propertyless workers’. That ‘must’, which for

Marx is a scientific prediction of the future (and the guarantee of a future reordering of society), is a forewarning of the end for nineteenth-century bourgeois culture.

8. Assess and discuss the coexistence of popular traditions and modern setting in *Die Todtenbraut/La Morte fiancée/The Death-Bride*.
9. Discuss the specificity of the female vampire by taking into account Le Fanu's *Carmilla* and Schulze's *Die Todtenbraut/La Morte fiancée/The Death-Bride*.
10. Provide a critical assessment of the bibliographical appendix to Paban's *Histoire des vampires et des spectres malfaisans*, paying specific attention to the variety of materials presented there, the genres they belong to, and the notion of 'supernatural' they convey.