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Transgression of Postindustrial Dissonance and Excess: (Re)valuation of Gothicism in Jim Jarmusch's *Only Lovers Left Alive*

ABSTRACT

The paper gives insight into the revaluation of popular Gothic aesthetics in Jim Jarmusch's 2014 production *Only Lovers Left Alive*. Drawing on critical theory and the postmodern theoretical framework, the article suggests that the film transgresses contemporary culture immersed in a "culture of death" that has produced a vast amount of cultural texts under the rubric of "Gothicism." By considering Jean Baudrillard's concept of transaesthetics and Judith Halberstam's writings on contemporary monstrosity, the paper shows that a commodified Gothic mode has lost its older deconstructive functions that operated on the margins of the mainstream. Now entirely focused on the duplication of the same aesthetic codes and signs, Gothic productions conform to the rules of postindustrial culture, enriching entertainment imagery with the neutralized concept of "otherness." Hence, the article engages primarily with Jarmusch's indie aesthetics that goes beyond easily recognizable patterns and generic conventions and allows the director to emphasize that the arts are rejuvenating forces, the antidote to a commoditized environment. Then, the focus is on the construction of main characters—Adam and Eve, ageless vampires and spouses—who thanks to nostalgic theatricality and performance reconfigure the mainstream monstrosity. Ultimately, the article emphasizes that Jarmusch's film, to a large extent, becomes a warning against the inevitable results of advanced capitalism practiced on a global scale.

This is no longer a productive space, but a kind of ciphering strip, a coding and decoding tape, a tape recording magnetized with signs. It is an aesthetic reality, to be sure, but no longer by virtue of art's pre-mediation and distance, but through a kind of elevation to the second power, via the anticipation and the immanence of the code.
(Baudrillard 146)

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The article focuses on the revaluation of Gothicism in Jim Jarmusch's latest film *Only Lovers Left Alive*. While delimiting postindustrial ethics of accumulation and material production, the paper stresses that Jarmusch's film subverts popular culture mechanisms to redefine its simulated surroundings and normative categories. Thus, the film implies a criticism of the homogeneity of cultural codes in the context of the postindustrial condition. In a way, the paper argues that Jarmusch's cultivation of cinematic liminality, which is characterized by the elusiveness and indeterminacy of his characters and aesthetics, becomes a continuing negotiation with mainstream trends.

In his essay "Symbolic Exchange and Death" (1984), Jean Baudrillard refers to Walter Benjamin's assertion of the indefinite reproducibility in its modern industrial phase to draw a comparison between premodern society dominated by symbolic exchange¹ and the succeeding development of capitalism. While following Benjamin's line of reasoning, Jean Baudrillard unfolds categories and taxonomies via which information is habitually transmitted, and cultural capital is co-opted in the postindustrial phase. In this sense, the text implies that the processes of meticulous duplication of visual material accompanied by aestheticization of the every day, contributed to the elimination of symbolic exchange and death as natural components of the cycles of life. In effect, having annulled all alternatives to itself, capitalism entered a new era of simulation in which social reproduction replaces production as the organizing force (146), ultimately contributing to a postmodern break.

Since postmodern societies are organized around the appropriations of forms and codes, art, economy and politics mutually exchange signs to neutralize and ultimately dissolve all differences. In this light, forms of artistic subversion appear to be futile since the system's economy forthwith regulates non-normative activities.² As a matter of fact, at this level,

¹ For Baudrillard, symbolic exchange is understood as an alternative to the values and practices of capitalist system as its activities and practices do not comply with the rules of production.

² As Jean Baudrillard points out, "the capitalist system is the master: like God, it can bind and unbind energies, but what it cannot do (and also what it cannot escape), is to be

the dominance of “sign value” over a value/exchange distinction controls the world. Under the conditions of postmodernity, where signs no longer refer to either reality or signifying principles but themselves, the reproduction of the same cultural codes is immanent in its repetitions. Hence, aesthetic value is based on the visual repetition of the same material. In fact, Baudrillard repeatedly emphasizes in his succeeding publications that reality has become absorbed by the “hyperreality of the code and simulation, triggering a fabrication of effects, artificial world without meaning” (Baudrillard 120). Interestingly, as the philosopher concludes, “there is no longer such a thing as ideology; there are only simulacra” (120), a procession of the same signs that govern our reality.

Subsequently, limitless combinations of visual material brought a dramatic increase in the production of imagery that ultimately contributed, following Jean Baudrillard's “The Transparency of Evil” (1994), to the formation of transaesthetics. This aesthetic reconfiguration exceeds itself, losing its purpose and specificity. Moreover, as Douglas Kellner highlights, reality is characterized by total simulation in which “there is no point of reference at all, and value radiates in all directions, occupying all interstices, without a reference to anything whatsoever, by virtue of sure contiguity” (219). In fact, when there are no criteria for value, taste and judgment, everything collapses in “a morass of indifference and inertia” (Kellner 220). In this manner, the ethics of accumulation of material results in the anaesthetization and desacralization of morality, producing a culture of death understood here as an absence of the human behind simulations.

Bearing in mind the account as mentioned above, one may still wonder what kind of effect anaesthetization has on contemporary Gothic aesthetics. Needless to say, popular culture immersed in a “culture of death” has produced a vast amount of cultural texts under the rubric of “Gothicism,” by degrees contributing to its revaluation. It is worth emphasizing that the Gothic genre—constructed as a marginalized, antirational, subversive, immoral and uncanny discourse—since its early beginnings has been a part of the popular culture market. However, the processes of anaesthetization accelerated by consumer culture have significantly affected the major tenets of its aesthetics. In effect, recycled Gothic conventions have saturated contemporary cultural texts to the point at which they provide normative images of vampire youths and soul-hunting cyborgs, zombies and Gothic settings to modern consumers (Hogle 287). In other words, a normalized and commodified Gothic aesthetics now constitutes a part of everyday

reversible. The process of value is irreversible” (124). Therefore, the emphasis is on the repetition of the same formulae that decrease the subversive potential of subjects.

iconography as it has lost its deconstructive functions that initially operated on the margins of the mainstream.

This redefinition of Gothicism in popular culture is particularly emphasized in the writings of Judith Halberstam, who draws comparisons between cultural texts from recent years and the Gothic novels of the nineteenth century. As Halberstam asserts, the texts from the nineteenth century “revealed certain material conditions of the production of horror, made strange the categories of beauty, humanity and identity that we still cling to” (6). As Halberstam subsequently points out, the Gothic in its early stage as “a rhetorical style and narrative structure was designed to produce fear and desire within readers . . . that emanated from the vertiginous excess of meaning” (2). In this structural model, “the experience of horror came from the realization that meaning itself runs riot” (2).³ However, now entirely focused on the duplication of the same aesthetic codes and signs, Gothic cultural texts conform to homogenous popular culture. In fact, they have enriched popular imagery with what was formerly associated with the concept of “otherness.” In other words, naturalization / neutralization of previously dialectically opposed terms (good vs. evil; man vs. woman; self vs. the other; normality vs. monstrosity; body vs. mind) has led to the repetition and domination of the same cultural codes.

Following this line of thinking, exposure to the fusion of previously contradictory material, which is now received in the form of a cultural pulp, generates inertia among contemporary consumers who eventually become ignorant of the content of consumed cultural texts. Contrariwise, consumers are concentrated on a quantity of simulations and their immediate visibility. These apathetic reactions of consumers derive from the fact that, referring once again to Jean Baudrillard, we are exposed to the same “genesis of simulacra” (128). Hence, the Gothic can be now represented as potentially meaning anything. It can be a lifestyle of its own, aesthetics, fashion and music that all attach to symbols of death, darkness and depressive moods, melancholy, sublime aspects of terror and horror. Hence, initially aestheticized Gothic works are transformed into anaesthetized cultural forms devoid of their transgressive character that would allow them to express a critical voice on socio-cultural constructs.

³ Since its beginnings Gothic convention has been a subversive tool that filtered, as Fred Botting emphasizes, “threats associated with supernatural and natural forces, imaginative excesses and delusions, religious and human evil, social transgression, mental disintegration and spiritual corruption. If not a purely negative term, Gothic writing remains fascinated by objects and practices that are constructed as negative, irrational, immoral and fantastic” (1). Postmodern culture has revaluated this boundless style characterized by excess and ambivalence.

The commercialized Gothic aesthetics has been subverted by Jim Jarmusch in *Only Lovers Left Alive*, released in 2014. Indeed, for the artist who cultivates aesthetic marginality and produces films under minimal conditions with a small group of friends—associated mainly with the avant-garde, New York pop vanguard, performance art and club culture—the above-mentioned economic and cultural exploitation constitutes an undesirable trend in independent filmmaking. Therefore, not surprisingly, the director engages in a dialogue with cinematic and artistic conventions imposed by the popular culture industry to explore the conceptual possibilities of Gothic narrative. In doing so, Jim Jarmusch reevaluates contemporary popular Gothic aesthetics to produce a cinematic vision that is a mixture of experimental art combined with the influence of pop, minimalism, classic street photography and performance, the currents that dominated the 1960s avant-garde. Placing himself beyond easily recognizable patterns and generic conventions, Jarmusch emphasizes that the arts are not just a reason to live, but are rejuvenating forces and an antidote to a commoditized environment.

Therefore, to determine the indie character of his production, Jarmusch decides to compose a minimalist narrative line in *Only Lovers Left Alive* which contrasts with contemporary mainstream vampire films. His ageless vampires Adam and Eve, who are spouses, take us on a journey through the streets of Detroit and Tangier rather than on a killing spree present in the majority of significant Gothic Hollywood productions. As Jarmusch's characters are both outsiders and loners, they have been living for centuries separately on the two continents, meeting only in critical moments of their lives. Having experienced various events throughout the centuries, they know the history of humanity in a timeline by having lived through it, but from the margins, from the shadows, as if observing it from the shadows. Additionally, we get to know that they used to lead attractive lives, socializing with the greatest poets, composers and writers. However, now Adam, a sensitive musician and outcast, lives in one of Detroit's derelict mansions and experiences depression. At the same time, Eve is in Morocco, hanging out with Christopher Marlowe, who has been a vampire for 400 years. Still, she drops everything to be with Adam. In effect, for the next 90 minutes of screen time, the spouses are together, mostly just admiring music, retelling stories from the past and discussing the posthuman present.

At this stage, it would be helpful to take into consideration Robert Miles's publication *Gothic Writing 1750–1820: A Genealogy*, which defines the Gothic “as not a genre as such, nor a specific style set by a system of conventions . . . but a discursive site, a carnivalesque mode for representations

of the fragmented subject” (28). Analyzed from that perspective, Jarmusch’s vision of disordered postindustrial reality with highly pronounced aesthetics comfortably fits this definition of Gothicism. As a matter of fact, from the establishing shots, one realizes that Jarmusch’s film is a crossover between cinematic genres and music styles. Interestingly enough, similar artistic assemblages enabled visual and performing artists to transgress the boundary between art and everyday life, creating bohemian counterculture in the sixties. Undeniably, Jarmusch’s collage of sounds and visual elements that accompany almost each and every scene in the film is inspired by the countercultural acts, punk music and cinema. In effect, the viewers are exposed to constant audiovisual stimuli that come from different backgrounds. Raw, chaotic, bleak, noisy and often improvised, the film’s scenes quickly redefine structure-oriented conventions used by the majority of mainstream film productions. However, contrary to one’s expectations, the subjects in *Only Lovers Left Alive* “do not rebel; they recur rhythmically as a sort of visual riff overlaid on the dialogue and the (in)action” (Suarez 94). Thus, one gains an impression of being involved in an apocalyptic vision that takes place in a paralyzed urban space in which vampires play the major roles. In this respect, Jarmusch’s production implies that liminal production can reevaluate highly commercialized artistic forms, bringing them back to the stage where a distinctly reflexive form of narrative plays a substantial role.

Detroit as a locus of the film’s action intensifies this alienating effect of confinement and socio-cultural suppression. There is no denying the fact that disorganized cities, houses filled with primitive energies and occult pasts, constituted the landscape of literary and cinematic works in the classical Gothic format from the early part of the twentieth century, bringing a sense of terror and horror which disturbed the present. In fact, as Fred Botting summarizes, “old castles, houses and ruins, as in wild landscapes and labyrinthine cities, situate heroines and readers at the limits of normal worlds and mores” in Gothic texts (21). In a sense, urban areas constituted places onto which cultural fears and fantasies could be projected (22).

Nevertheless, the derelict and abandoned city of Detroit is devoid of these intensities and deregulating forces as its dwellers cannot resist even the passivity of its surroundings. Hence, Adam often indicates that contemporary urban space became a shelter for “zombies” and melancholic recluses who are tempted by its anomic landscape. In fact, Detroit, which was a former industrial paradise and a promised land, is now a dead desert abandoned by the state and partially by its residents. Also, cultural life has vanished in these liminal urban surroundings and what is left there are empty buildings without their former artistic vibes. At this point, it is

worth referring once again to Jean Baudrillard who claims in his studies on postindustrial cities that “the cemetery no longer exists because modern cities have taken over its function” (127). Undeniably, this critical voice can be easily applied to Detroit, which became a ghost town, having conformed to the politics of de-industrialization. In this manner, postindustrial Detroit with its exuberant gloom and existential agony aptly illustrates the destructive effects of late capitalism. In a way, Jarmusch draws a picture of the collapse of the substantial values of Western civilization left without ethical and cultural directions.

To accentuate the contrast between dehumanized mass production and the sophistication of the artistic world from the past, Jarmusch divides his characters into vampires and zombies. It is apparent from the initial scenes that it is the vampires that become increasingly humanized and sympathetic, whereas human beings embody all the features naturally ascribed to zombies. In fact, Jarmusch redefines the concept of a vampire present in contemporary popular culture imagery, adopting certain features from Gothic texts of previous centuries. Hence, for instance, the director replaces the everlasting youth, beauty and vitality of contemporary vampires with the sensitive individualism of his characters who genuinely desire to grasp the meaning of “self.”

Since humans, as Adam consistently implies, are now “emotionally and spiritually dead” (*Only Lovers Left Alive*), the stability and achievements of our civilization are gradually undermined. In such conditions, it is the vampires whose role is to restore order. Therefore, in contrast to classical representations of vampires who were both villains and ghostly diabolical agents who “demanded not a return to reason and morality, but a reawakening of spiritual energies and sacred awe” (Botting 95), Jarmusch’s characters might be perceived even as post-vampires as they appear to be more humane than humans themselves. They obey human laws and social norms, protect ethical values neglected by people, trying to surpass the postindustrial mayhem of socio-cultural inertia. And what is more important, Jarmusch’s vampires drink blood bought in blood donation centres, which deprives them of their monstrosity even further. Thus, it can be asserted that “they do not wish to destabilize, but to conserve” (Tenga and Zimmerman), respecting humanity and seeking legal alternatives to satisfy their vampirism. In the process, they aim to reform and elevate contemporary lives firmly determined by the consumer industry thanks to their creative powers and promotion of works of art from the past.

By way of contrast, mindless, hideous, passive, destitute of will and individuality, zombies gather in groups and pose a danger on the streets of postindustrial Detroit. As Lev Grossman asserts in his article “Zombies

Are the New Vampires,” “zombies wreak havoc and are a liberalization of what has already happened in our mechanized, depersonalized, consumer-powered age—the death of the individual that continues to lumber forward” (2). Zombies are not capable of noticing the mechanisms of advanced capitalism, such as the technological intrusion and schizoid logics of buying that has dominated our lives and robbed us of our creative powers. Instead, they are attached to consumption that intoxicates their minds. One thing is obvious: zombies in Jarmusch’s film do not work towards any goal beyond their fulfillment of simple drives. In that case, they are stirred by materialistic reasons. As Richard Green and K. Silem Mohammad aptly notice,

The vampire embodies a form of Nietzschean super-humanity, beyond good and evil, the zombie goes even further beyond. For the vampire, the knowledge that one is doing evil remains as a concept, and with this knowledge comes the erotic charge of unneeded guilt. For the zombie, this is all a non-issue. The zombie is sub-Nietzschean, sub-animal, really it is a Spinozan force of decomposition, an entirely non-moral and completely liberated interaction of matter with other matter. (24)

Adam consciously alienates himself from his surroundings dominated by zombies and their artificial sense of being, also expressing his critical voice on humans. In short, he deliberately positions himself on the margin, as if convinced that his refined music, which is a fusion of different sounds from various epochs, would not be appreciated by any of the contemporary tastes. And even though his artistic output is well-known in underground music circles formed by the younger generation, he avoids contact with the unthinking, undifferentiated consumers. He tries not to be involved in their bleak and repetitive activities. Adam, as he points out on numerous occasions, cannot stand zombies and their fear of imagination, their lack of creative power and the way they treat the world. In fact, in the course of time he is haunted by suicidal thoughts that are the direct result of his obsessive hatred for the external world. In this light, similarly to Francis Ford Coppola’s *Dracula*, Adam is not a tyrant but more a victim and sufferer, artistic soul and a sentimental Romantic hero who does not understand the contemporary world.

In the course of time, Adam’s aversion to zombies contributes to his systematic withdrawal from the external world. He is eventually reunited with his wife who comes from Tangier to help him to overcome this misery. An online conversation scene with Eve particularly accentuates his emotional collapse.

Eve: Can't you tell your wife what your problem is?

Adam: It's the zombies. The way they treat the world.

It does feel like I'm the sands at the bottom of an hourglass or something.

Eve: Time to turn it over, then. Oh my liege lord . . . We've been here before . . . Remember? And you missed all the real fun like the Middle Ages, the Tartars, the inquisitions . . . The floods, the plagues . . . (*Only Lovers Left Alive*)

As it is indicated in the dialogue mentioned above, it is Eve who manages to distance herself from the passivity of her surroundings. She claims that they both have to adjust to such conditions as history and this kind of human energy continually repeat. As she notices, contemporary zombies and their actions resemble the invasions of 'Tatars, or even the Inquisition. Her emotionless and rational attitude emphasizes that the same zombie narrative has been circulating for centuries. However, since people willingly pose a threat transforming themselves into zombies, it is now vampires who could advise humans on how to sustain the balance in their existence.

In contrast to other directors of his generation, Jarmusch is a connoisseur of vintage objects, sounds and stylizations that are predominant in the majority of his *mise-en-scènes* in the film and highlight his aesthetic marginality. Indeed, the director is inspired by the nostalgic dimension of our contemporary culture also determined by the processes of commercialization, especially in the mass media. Nevertheless, he strongly expresses his critical voice on the mechanisms of cultural accumulation. In her essay "Irony, Nostalgia and the Postmodern," Linda Hutcheon notices that nostalgia "allows us to exile from the present as it brings the imagined past near. The ordered, and harmonious past is constructed in conjunction with the present, which in turn is presented as contaminated, complicated and confrontational" (2). Consequently, Jarmusch's vampires are nostalgic about artistic forms and technological inventions from the past. However, they both reject and recombine the constantly changing trends generated by postindustrial production. On the one hand, Jarmusch's film proves that disillusion and failure are the appropriate conditions for nostalgia, which could be defined at its simplest as an escape from reality and an attempt to return to a presupposed golden age. But on the other hand, *Only Lovers Left Alive*, which concentrates on the processes of remembering and forgetting the past, seeks to expose nostalgia through ironical statements that would undermine the assertions of authenticity and originality no longer present in the contemporary world. Hence, Jarmusch uses contrastive approaches while constructing his characters to indicate this ambivalent view on the contemporary artistic life.

Therefore, Adam as an artist cannot stand the systematic ignorance of the tactile and sensual glories of the old things that are regularly replaced by brand new gadgets and appliances. In fact, Adam's house is overfilled with a variety of instruments from different epochs, recordings and scientific inventions that were rejected by industry and which have never been widely used, despite their successful constructive solutions. Interestingly, what strengthens his connection with the "sublime" is his detailed knowledge of the objects and recordings he possesses. By way of contrast, what Adam finds in contemporary music is not remnants of a living romantic tradition, but, as he asserts, "just clichés," often meaningless expressions that invade his audio-visual space. Needless to say, the artistic productions of the past are of no value for the zombies as they are just old songs placed in the procession of simulacra on YouTube. However, it is worth noticing that it is Adam and Eve who at the same time love the funeral music of the seventeenth century and contemporary guitar wizard Jack White, whose childhood home makes a cameo in the film.

Similarly to Adam's passions for sounds, Eve is engrossed in reading and collecting numerous editions of books. She studies them carefully in various languages and learns their content by heart. Thus, viewers are exposed to numerous references to the literary canon, in particular to Shakespeare and Marlowe. These allusions constitute intertextual connections which open for us the multi-layered channel of cinematic and literary borrowings. There is no denying the fact that these extracts are the key to understanding the intellectual power of Jarmusch's post-vampires, whose primary focus is either on intensifying their individual spirit or educating new generations about the intricacies of the past. As consumer culture is dominated mainly by pulp products, Eve and Adam's appreciation of old artistic forms of various cultural backgrounds appears to be the remedy for products of mass quality. Hence, while listening or reading they often alienate themselves from the world, trying to live out the aesthetic hallucination of reality that would transgress spatial and temporal boundaries to depict the universal messages contained in various artistic productions. Whether in Detroit or in Tangier, they both appear to be guardians of the artistic heritage of Western civilization, often recalling transcultural references that would help them to validate the present state of affairs.

Nevertheless, at the same time, Eve tries to be up-to-date with the newest technological advancement and worldwide artistic trends to understand the complexity and mechanisms that govern contemporary conditions. She appears to be in between the two worlds, which makes her even more human in comparison to Adam, as she resembles a present subject who experiences multiphrenic intensities while being exposed to "sensory

overload,” “affect-charge-intensities,” and “floating signifiers” (Featherstone 64). In fact, Eve is driven by the passion to combat resignation and passivity, cherish the differences and “undo the oppositional dualism majority/minority” (Braidotti 41). She both transcends and affirms the chaos which does not appear to be chaotic at all to her, but rather, following Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, points to infinity as the *n*th power of becoming (127). In this manner, Eve might be perceived as a nomadic spirit⁴ who desires “the self” as a process of constant transformation, while challenging socio-cultural constructs and forming “new ecologies of belonging” (Braidotti 99) to understand the sensibilities of the world.

Additionally, Jarmusch indicates Eve’s performative identity and affirmative passion for the transformative flows of life in the scenes that take place outside Adam’s house. There is no denying the fact that Eve is depicted visually as an angelic figure who wanders the derelict urban sites, bringing light and hope to the dead city. Her white clothes and light hair contrast with the prevailing gloominess both on the streets of the former industrial city and in Adam’s heart. Thus, her appearance and distance from her surroundings perfectly match the ambiance and the colours of bright Tangier, the former mecca for hippies and beatniks in the sixties, offering an alternative to the westernized world. Additionally, Eve’s well-being results from the fact that she is fearless and tolerant, eager to explore the unknown and enter into a dialogue with the outside world irrespective of all the deformities that are despised so much by Adam. Interestingly, devoid of conflicting emotions, frustrations and antagonisms towards any forms of otherness, she is able to overcome the dialectics of woman/man, master/slave, evil/good, fostering her position which is neither in the centre nor on the margins of society. And even though there is no eruption of revolutionary desire in Eve, she appears to inspire enthusiasm and belief in the transformative power of the social, bringing some hope to the decadent ambiance of Jarmusch’s film. Also, in this case, art and a vast knowledge of the world enable the character to heal this socio-cultural fiasco triggered by the policies of global corporations that devour every creative act.

Ultimately, she is the agent and the initiator of all the major actions in the film, willingly taking risks even in the most complex situations. The last scene of the film presents Eve as a hunter, which implies the vampires’ despair to survive without blood, and particularly accentuates her

⁴ This essay refers to Rosi Braidotti’s concept of nomadic thought that stresses the dynamic and self-organizing structure of thought processes, “rejecting the psychoanalytical idea of repression, borrowing instead from Spinoza a positive notion of desire as an ontological force of becoming” (Braidotti 2).

transformative nature. Here, Eve performs both male and female roles, transgressing the patriarchal order to act freely beyond socio-cultural constraints. As both vampires make a last resort decision to attack a Moroccan couple, it is Eve who wants to assure herself that the planned act can have a more human dimension.

Adam: Is that what we're thinking?

Eve: Adam, really? So fucking 15th century. But they're deliciously beautiful, though, ain't they?

Adam: What choice do we have, really?

Eve: But, we're going just to turn them, right?

Adam: How romantic of you. I'll get the girl, though.

Eve: Excusez moi. (*Only Lovers Left Alive*)

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The closing scene proves that unlike humans, the vampires are not avid consumers, blindly driven by their needs and desires to devour readymade objects, products and patterns of behaviour. Having acknowledged that zombies are the creatures of id, dedicated to mindless self-gratification, the vampirism in this scene appears to transcend socio-cultural amnesia and inertia as the dead zombies are turned eventually into living subjects. The transformation of zombies into vampires may make them realize the consequences of capitalists modes of socio-cultural suppression. In this light, the monstrosity of Adam and Eve may be seen as a definite source of regeneration of human lives.

According to Jean Baudrillard, death is not just subjective or bodily but a form in which determinacy of the subject and value is lost (122–23). The postindustrial conditions of Detroit aptly illustrate this socio-cultural downfall caused by the unification of the capitalist system. Seen from this light, the passive and subjectless zombies of *Only Lovers Left Alive* embody the fragile and dark sides of identity exposed to the processes of advanced globalization of the Western culture. Thus, in their sheer number zombies “have evolved as disenfranchised victims to reveal the ugly reality of corporate greed” (Tenga and Zimmerman). In such conditions, rigorously stylized and nostalgic vampires seek the emotional and aesthetic sophistication that would allow them to transcend their simulated surroundings. Unquestionably, it is artistic and creative forces that enable Jarmusch to reevaluate, cross socio-cultural barriers and find an antidote to the anaesthetized conditions of the postindustrial world. In this light, Adam and Eve are the guardians of the ethical, moral and “the real” values once erased by what Baudrillard calls the social reproductive order. At the same time, their task is to retain human notions of the “self.” One thing is obvious,

Jarmusch does not want to identify monsters and fix the terms to their deformity but tries to warn us against the inevitable results of capitalism practiced on a global scale. Or maybe, while taking into account the last scene of the film, one should read Jarmusch's film as an attempt, following here Judith Halberstam's statement from *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*, to indicate that "even though the monsters always represent the disruption of categories, destruction of boundaries and the presence of impurities, we all need monsters and we need to recognize and celebrate our own monstrosities" (27). Thus, the realization of our inner monstrosity will help us to unfold the socio-cultural constraints and notice the impurities generated by the capitalist monster.

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