

Chapter 10

Monsters: Monstrous Identities in Young Adult Romance

Clare Bradford

Scenario 1

Fifteen-year-old Sophia is going to her first dance at the school she attends. She has told her parents Ben and Miranda, that her friend Quinn is her partner for the dance. Her parents have not met Quinn and have asked that he visit the family home to meet them before the two young people leave for the dance. The doorbell rings and Sophia ushers in Quinn. He is good-looking and well-dressed, and greets Ben and Miranda politely. After chatting for a few minutes Quinn and Sophia depart. But Ben remains concerned. "What if he's a wolf in sheep's clothing!" he frets. "Don't be ridiculous," responds Miranda. "He seems a fine young man."

Scenario 2

Fifteen-year-old Sophia is going to her first dance at the school she attends. She has told her parents, Ben and Miranda, that her friend Ramon is her partner for the dance. Her parents have not met Ramon and have asked that he visit the family home to meet them before the dance. The doorbell rings and Sophia ushers in Ramon. He looks several years older than Sophia and is dressed in leathers. Ben and Miranda notice the tattoos on his arms and hands and the studs and rings on his face. When they ask him some tentative questions he returns monosyllabic responses. After Ramon and Sophia depart Ben exclaims, "To think of that monster with our little girl! I'm going to follow them to make sure they go to the dance!" "Leave them alone," responds Miranda. "Sophia has to learn how to look after herself."

C. Bradford (✉)
Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia
e-mail: clare.bradford@deakin.edu.au

These scenarios comprise a meet-the-parents episode reminiscent of equivalent scenes in narratives for the young, particularly in film and television. Banal though they are, they point to some of the thematics and tensions that manifest in Young Adult (YA) romance narratives. The third-person perspective in these scenarios observes events from the outside, offering very little information about the motivations or emotions of the young people, although it enables access to Sophia's parents, Ben and Miranda, by incorporating their conversational exchanges.

In both these scenarios, Ben projects monstrous identities onto two young men who enter the domestic space of home and family in order to accompany his young daughter into the public space of the school dance, with its overtones of romance and sexual activity. Quinn, the first of the two boys, appears "safe" with his good looks and easy manner; in this case, Ben's phrase "wolf in sheep's clothing" discloses a fear of the monster within, the lascivious or threatening presence lurking beneath a suave exterior. The second boy, Ramon, presents as experienced (some years older than Sophia) and his leathers, studs and piercings suggest a tough and somewhat sinister identity. While Ben describes him as a monster, Miranda seems to focus rather on Sophia's capacity to "manage" the apparently monstrous Ramon.

The protagonists who feature in the scenarios above and in many YA romances are: young woman, young man, father (or father-figure) and mother (or mother-figure). In this discussion I consider four monstrous figures that appear in YA romance, the traditions to which they refer, and what they imply about cross-generational relationships. I discuss two monstrous versions of the young man: the vampire, and the werewolf; the monstrous mother of fairy romance, and the monstrous father of retellings of Charles Perrault's "Donkey Skin". Monsters in art, literature and popular culture play out a range of symbolic functions. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen says that the monster is an embodiment of "a certain cultural moment—of a time, a feeling, and a place" (Cohen 1996, p. 4). At the same time, the monster always escapes; even if it is killed, it returns on another occasion and place, in a different story. No matter how often the vampire is pierced through the heart with a stake, for instance, he lives on in other narratives. Thus each new manifestation of a monster needs to be examined in relation to the social, cultural and literary-historical formations and practices in which it is produced.

YA romance implies young audiences and generally presents events and situations through the perspective of a young protagonist, either through first-person narration or by focalising part of the narrative through the perspective of one of the young characters. The authors and publishers who produce romance for the young are, whether they are aware of it or not, powerfully influenced by cultural norms and anxieties. In particular, contemporary YA romance, directed in the main to female readers, identifies cultural pressure-points which manifest in representations of young women and their relationships to men. Writing on medieval romance, Geraldine Heng notes that women in literature "constitute a figural presence through which the concerns, ideas, pressures, and values of a culture can be expressed, can signify" (Heng 2003, p. 192). Such significations in YA romance typically centre on relationships between young women protagonists and monstrous figures.

10.1 The Virtuous Vampire of YA Romance

In the Middle Ages many theologians believed that revenants (reanimated corpses) were occupied by the Devil who used them to perform evil deeds (Keyworth 2010). Nineteenth-century versions of the vampire such as Bram Stoker's Count Dracula treat the vampire as an ambiguous figure, a foreigner or stranger whose otherness symbolises his location outside the norms of European society and whose sexuality contravenes gender binarisms; in the 1922 film *Nosferatu* the vampire Count Orlok is associated with disease as all who contact him fall prey to the plague. Vampire narratives of the late twentieth century have increasingly treated the vampire as an oppressed and disenfranchised identity within society, positioning readers to feel sympathy for vampire figures constructed as sites of personal and social transition. The television series *True Blood*, for instance, features a range of vampire figures, including a teenage girl conflicted by her emerging sexuality.

Contemporary YA vampire novels draw upon literary and popular texts, from the gothic novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and they respond to the popularity of vampire fiction from the 1990s, particularly Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series. They commonly feature gothic settings and elements such as decayed buildings, graveyards, religious icons, and various versions of the undead. The commercial success of the *Twilight* series has brought renewed attention to the many vampire novels which preceded the series, including L. J. Smith's *The Vampire Diaries*, published as a trilogy in 1991 and developed as a TV series in 2009; after a break of seventeen years Smith has also embarked on the Return Trilogy, dealing with the characters of the original series. I focus here on *The Awakening*, the first volume of Smith's trilogy.

The novel employs third-person narration and excerpts from the diaries of Elena Gilbert, written after she returns to the town of Fell's Church, Virginia, following a summer holiday in France. Elena's parents have died some years previously after a car accident. The narrative is structured by the development of a romantic relationship between Elena, the golden girl of Robert E. Lee High School, and the vampire Stefan Salvatore, who comes to Fell's Church to begin a new life, seeking to "join the world of daylight" (Smith 1991, p. 11).

The imagery associated with the vampire in *The Awakening* evokes a late-medieval world populated by aristocrats and replete with descriptions of hand-wrought jewelry, garments made of silk and velvet, and the precious objects with which Stefan surrounds himself: a dagger with an ivory hilt, an agate cup, an iron coffer. When Elena first looks at Stefan she sees in him echoes of antiquity: "The dark curly hair framed features so fine that they might have been taken from an old Roman coin or medallion. High cheekbones, classical straight nose... and a mouth to keep you awake at night, Elena thought. The upper lip was beautifully sculpted, a little sensitive, a whole lot sensual" (Smith 1991, p. 19). Elena thus reads Stefan's face as an uncanny combination of classicism and sensuality. He is literally a Renaissance man, born into an aristocratic family in the late fifteenth century and transformed into a vampire by his German lover Katherine.

One of Stefan's functions in *The Awakening* is to offer a corrective to modernity; specifically, to contemporary American urban life. In the world of Robert E. Lee High School, with its predictable panoply of high school types (jocks, nerds, beauty queens, wannabes), Stefan differentiates himself from the other boys because of the cut of his Italian leather jacket, his bearing, and his impeccable manners. Elena's former boyfriend Matt suffers in comparison, although as captain of the school football team he has previously been a desirable and predictable partner. He is, it turns out, altogether too American; too nice; not quite enough: "it was as if [Elena] were always reaching for... something. Only, when she thought she'd got it, it wasn't there. Not with Matt, not with any of the boys she'd had" (Smith 1991, p. 21). Stefan brings the Old World to the New, in the process showing up the New for its crassness and superficiality.

Stefan is, like many versions of the vampire figure, a tortured soul at war with his instincts. After falling in love with Elena he lives in fear that one day he will be powerless to withstand his desire for her blood, and will "find Elena's graceful body limp in his arms, her slim throat marked with two red wounds, her heart stilled forever" (Smith 1991, p. 180). Stefan can be read, then, as a metaphor for the young man struggling with his sexual instincts, the kind of young man who is the object of Ben's mistrust in Scenario 1 at the beginning of this essay. In mapping the vampire figure onto that of the "normal" young man, the narrative evokes cultural myths about young men's sexual appetites, which are traditionally linked with violence in the models of hegemonic masculinity which persist in Western societies (Connell 1995). This treatment of the vampire accords with the version described by Cohen as "the monster of prohibition [who] polices the borders of the possible, interdicting through its grotesque body some behaviors and actions, envaluing others" (Cohen 1996, p. 13). Stefan's desire for violence is presented as natural and normal, and his struggle to overcome his urge is celebrated as heroic. Elena, the object of Stefan's lust, is endangered by his desire; while she is drawn to him romantically she senses his suffering and seeks to alleviate it.

The climax of *The Awakening* occurs when Stefan bites Elena's throat and feeds her with his blood. Andrea Dworkin memorably read Bram Stoker's *Dracula* as a pivotal story in the history of discourses of intercourse. The act of vampirism, she said, was a metaphor for sex; but she saw *Dracula* as much more than this; as a manifestation of the "appetite for using and being used... the submission of the female to the great hunter; the driving obsessiveness of lust... the great craving" (Dworkin 1987, p. 118). In *The Awakening*, vampirism is certainly treated as a sex-like act: the pain of Stefan's bite fades immediately, "replaced by a feeling of pleasure that made [Elena] tremble. A great rushing sweetness filled her, flowing through her to Stefan" (Smith 1991, p. 238). In this sequence the narrative focuses on the intimacy of the event and not its violence. Vampirism in *The Awakening* is, then, a kind of safe sex, having no consequences other than an uncanny bond between Elena and Stefan, since Elena has not consumed enough blood to change her into a vampire. Dressed in pre-modern clothing, the vampire of *The Awakening* both promises and withholds sex, so that *The Vampire Diaries* anticipate the effect, associated with the "Twilight" series, where abstinence is sexualized through depictions of longing, yearning and gazing. Heroically controlling his monstrous desire, Stefan functions as a metaphor for the "good boy" who controls his sexuality, thereby protecting female virtue.

10.2 The Werewolf and Ethnicity

If the smooth-talking Quinn in Scenario 1 evokes the vampire Stefan in *The Awakening*, the rough and tattooed Ramon in Scenario 2 has something in common with two figures from traditional narratives: the werewolf, which transforms, either at will or because of a spell, from human to wolf; and the Beast (often a lion or a mixture of animal forms) in the fairy tale “Beauty and the Beast.” Reworkings of this fairy tale include a large number of Young Adult romances such as Donna Jo Napoli’s *Beast* (2000), Barbara Cohen’s *Roses* (1985), Melanie Dickerson’s *The Merchant’s Daughter*, and Robin McKinley’s two versions, *Beauty* (1978) and *Rose Daughter* (1997). The Beasts of these narratives take the shape of the wild and animal-like lover whose taming at the hands of Beauty provides erotic pleasure to readers, while legitimising the idea that violence is a natural and expected feature of hegemonic masculinity.

The werewolf has in common with the Beast of “Beauty and the Beast” an uncanny admixture of animal and human. The “were-” component of the word “werewolf” derives from the Old English “were,” or “man,” so that the etymology of the word suggests a hybrid combination of wolf and man. The werewolf features in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and is common in European folklore and literature of the Middle Ages, where it functions as a vehicle for investigations into what it means to be human, and for reflections on the relationship of animal to human. Contemporary representations of the werewolf in literature for children and young adults tend to focus on packs and groups of werewolves rather than on individuals, and they frequently treat lycanthropy as “a genetically inherited or inborn feature” (Chappell 2009, p. 22). This view of werewolves readily translates into depictions where they function as metaphors for ethnic and/or racial difference. In Scenario 2 Ramon’s name, which suggests Hispanic ancestry, suggests such an interpretation.

In Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* series the werewolf Jacob and the vampire Edward are rivals for the affections of Bella Swan. Whereas Edward is of human stock, having been transformed into a vampire at the age of seventeen, Jacob is a shapeshifter who takes on lupine form when he is under the influence of powerful emotion. Significantly, he is Native American, a member of the Quileute tribe and the son of the elder, Billy Black. The contrast between Edward and Jacob is enforced through the novels’ descriptions of their bodies and faces. Again and again descriptions of Edward linger on his whiteness, his “chalky pale” skin (Meyer 2005, p. 18), his ineffably European appearance: he looks as if he has been “painted by an old master as the face of an angel” (Meyer 2005, p. 19). Jacob, on the other hand, has “russet-coloured” skin and dark eyes “set deep above the high planes of his cheekbones” (Meyer 2005, p. 119). This description of his skin and facial appearance conforms to stereotypes of Native American appearance common in American popular culture in visual images of the chief or the brave in advertisements, sports insignia, film and television.

Whereas Edward is of human ancestry and is human-like even in his vampire form, Jacob’s transformation into a wolf aligns him and the Quileute with animals and with the natural world. This association is consistent with colonial discourses which compare Indigenous peoples and cultures with animals and which

are informed by contrasts between humans and animals, between advanced and primitive humans, and between culture and nature. Even if Jacob is represented as attractive and likeable in his human state, comparisons between him and Edward play out these colonial tropes. Thus, Jacob lives in the Quileute reservation at La Push, in an area surrounded by forests and close to beaches. In comparison with these references to the natural environment, the Cullen family home is a site of culture: its grand rooms are “all varying shades of white” (Meyer 2005, p. 322) and its grand piano, towering bookshelves and oil paintings refer to sophisticated tastes based in European traditions.

The werewolves in the Twilight series are enemies not of humans but of vampires, whom they refer to as “the cold ones” (Meyer 2005, p. 124). If the Cullens are cold and contained, Jacob and his werewolf clan are emotional, volatile and often rash. Again, this comparison underscores the werewolves’ marginal location as racialised others: they are the victims of their biological and psychic drives, powerless to resist shape changing whereas Edward and his vampire family control their desire for human blood. Complaining of Bella’s preference for Edward, Jacob assumes the petulant tone of a disappointed child: “Well, I’m so sorry that I can’t be the *right* kind of monster for you, Bella. I guess I’m just not as great as a bloodsucker, am I?” (Meyer 2005, pp. 306–307). Of the two monsters, Edward and Jacob, Edward is the closer to humans, Jacob to animals. The romantic arc of the series inevitably privileges human over animal, so that it is never really in doubt that Edward rather than Jacob is to be Bella’s romantic partner.

In *Breaking Dawn*, the last book of the series, Jacob becomes the guardian of Renesmee, the daughter of Bella and Edward. Reconciled to the fact that Bella and Edward are sexual partners and that Bella has become a vampire, he sublimates his love for Bella by “imprinting” on Renesmee, so forming an indelible psychic link with her. Taking on the obligation of protecting her and of furthering her interests, Jacob behaves like the myriad Indigenous figures in colonial literature who sacrifice themselves for white protagonists, often dying to save their lives. Such relationships always pivot on the idea that self-sacrifice on the part of Indigenous individuals is appropriate and right because it is their role to serve the interests of Europeans (Bradford 2007, pp. 75–77). The werewolf of Twilight is, then, a tamed monster, rendered compliant because his marginal status requires that he serve the dominant white culture.

10.3 Monstrous Mothers in Fairy Romance

Miranda, the mother who features in Scenario 1, is a placatory figure, reassuring her suspicious husband as to Quinn’s character. Scenario 2 suggests a less comfortable set of motherly attitudes, since instead of expressing concern for Sophia, Miranda demonstrates a somewhat callous disregard, expressed in her view that girls need to protect themselves. This unsympathetic portrayal of Miranda can be linked to the hard-hearted and/or monstrous mothers or mother-substitutes who

appear in much paranormal fiction, notably in the fairy romances which have become popular during the last decade. This sub-genre of paranormal romance has found a ready market in part because of readers' exposure to fairy narratives and products as young girls, in part because of its appeal to female readers already familiar with other romance genres such as vampire and werewolf fantasy. The fairy romance genre incorporates novels by authors including Holly Black, Maggie Stiefvater, Melissa Marr, Malinda Lo, Lisa Mantchev, Aprilynne Pyke, Cyn Balog, and Lesley Livingston.

Fairy romance directed to female readers typically features narratives where human girls either discover their fairy connections (often linked to dead mothers), access fairy worlds where they become romantically involved with fairies or human-fairy hybrids, or (more rarely) undergo a transformation from human to fairy. These girls always have "the sight," a gift inherited from mothers or grandmothers. As this narrative pattern suggests, a female line of descent is a common explanation for the manifestation of fairy abilities and qualities in human girls. Countering this tendency, the figure of the monstrous mother appears in narratives featuring fairy queens who have ruled empires for hundreds of years. In this segment I focus on Melissa Marr's *Wicked Lovely* (2007) and Maggie Stiefvater's *Lament* (2010), both of which feature romantic triangles where their respective female protagonists, Aislinn and Deirdre, must choose between human and fairy lovers, a narrative played out in fairy realms ruled by ancient, despotic Fairy Queens.

Aislinn's mother has died young, and in *Lament* Deirdre is at odds with her controlling, superficial mother. In both *Wicked Lovely* and also *Lament*, human grandmothers possess insight about fairy practices and are anxious about the dangers their grand-daughters might face if they fall in love with fairies. This emphasis on the knowledge or insight of grandmothers privileges ancient traditions over a rootless and shallow modernity. The two mortal grandmothers, with their fairy connections, are powerless to protect Aislinn and Deirdre, and are contrasted to the monstrous mothers who rule the fairy realms. In *Wicked Lovely*, Keenan is the Summer King who has searched for his Summer Queen for nine centuries, and he has selected Aislinn for the role. If Aislinn, like previous girls he has entrapped, turns out not to be "the one," his malevolent mother Beira, the Winter Queen, will destroy summer altogether, maintaining her control over the dystopian world of the fairies. Humans, then, are in thrall to the fairy realm without realising it, in an uncanny version of climate change. In *Lament*, Deirdre is a cloverhand; the four-leafed clovers that appear wherever she goes signal her capacity to see fairies where other humans do not. Despite the warnings of her grandmother, Deirdre is attracted to Luke Dillon, a former human whose soul has been captured by the Fairy Queen and who performs her bidding as an assassin. Deirdre is his newest assignment, but he is drawn to her and becomes her protector instead.

In *Wicked Lovely*, Beira is identified as monstrous because of her cruelty to her son Keenan, combined with her assumption of the external features of a middle-class human woman. When Keenan visits Beira he sees her as a "mockery of a mortal epitome of motherhood" (Marr 2007, p. 38). She lives in a Victorian mansion that is perpetually shrouded in frost, its front lawn immaculate and frigid.

The extravagance with which the novel describes Beira and her home establishes the sense that Beira is a caricature of feminine monstrosity: the walls of her home are adorned with “black-and-white prints of murders, hangings, and a few torture scenes” (Marr 2007, p. 38), where touches of red are displayed in images of lips and bleeding wounds. These images, yoking together sexuality and violence, are offset by the novel’s description of Beira’s appearance, which conjures up the gentility of a society matron entertaining guests: she wears “a modest floral dress, frilly apron, and single strand of pearls” her hair caught up in what she calls “a chignon” (Marr 2007, p. 38). This description sets the scene for a description of ritualised torture: Beira’s idea of family fun is to torture Keenan by freezing him until he loses consciousness. Her touch produces ice that gradually permeates his body causing horrible pain but not quite killing him.

Beira tortures Keenan for no better reason than that she wishes to assert her power, and the plot turns on her downfall when she loses this power. In the last moments of the novel, after Aislinn has become the Summer Queen, she and Keenan together kill Beira by piercing her with sunlight, but the violence of this episode is undercut because it is treated as inevitable and indeed necessary. The slippery ethics of assassination (or targeted killing) are thus swept aside in the glow of a romantic closure where Aislinn and her human partner Seth, Keenan and his sweetheart Donia, fade into the sunset as happy couples.

Like the Winter Queen in *Wicked Lovely*, the Fairy Queen in *Lament* is a tyrant who maintains power by cunning and violence. When Deirdre first sees the face of the old Queen, she recognises her power, then her age, disguised by the glamour she wears: “She was one of those beautiful girls that made you despise looking in a mirror.... Then her eyelids flicked open and two ancient eyes stared at me.... It was as if I’d peeked in a baby carriage and found a snake looking back at me” (Stiefvater 2010, p. 300). Like Beira, the Queen is killed when it is clear that her control is waning. At the end of the novel the fairy hordes tear her to pieces, and her blood-stained crown is placed on the head of the new queen, Eleanor. In *Wicked Lovely*, Donia as Winter Queen and Aislinn as Summer Queen undertake to work together in the interests of balance and harmony. In *Lament*, however, Eleanor is as ruthless as the old Queen, inaugurating a new era of tyrannical rule. These assassination episodes cater to youthful audiences by thematising the destruction of ancient, powerful females who are supplanted by younger queens. The violence perpetrated on Beira in *Wicked Lovely* and the old Queen in *Lament* is justified by their monstrosity: in effect they are treated as scapegoats for the corrupt, violent regimes over which they reign.

10.4 Monstrous Fathers, Beautiful Daughters

Ben, the father in Scenarios 1 and 2, can in one sense be read as a conventional father evincing protectiveness over his young and (presumably) inexperienced daughter as she embarks on new narratives of heterosexual romance. But is there not

something extravagant about Ben's suspicion of the unexceptionable Quinn? Having no reason to believe that Quinn is other than he seems, Ben immediately assumes that the boy's bland exterior belies sinister intentions. In Scenario 2, his threat to follow Sophia and Ramon betrays his excessive protectiveness of his daughter.

A less benign reading of Ben's behaviour might read him as a patriarchal figure determined to maintain control over Sophia. The most sinister expression of this desire for control and power manifests in incest, where the universal law proscribing sex between father and daughter is transgressed. Narratives dealing with incestuous relationships between father and daughter are relatively common in fairy tales, including Charles Perrault's "Peau d'Ane" ("Donkey Skin"), where the beautiful queen of "the most powerful ruler in the world" (Perrault 2012) dies, leaving a young daughter. Just before she dies the queen asks her husband to marry a woman wiser and more beautiful than she. Having searched in vain for such a woman, the king comes to the conclusion that his daughter is the only eligible partner, and he decides to marry her. Perrault's version of "Donkey Skin" combines this story with the motif of the magical animal—in this case a donkey whose excrement is made of gold. The princess's fairy godmother assists her by suggesting that she ask her father for three gifts, each more extravagant than the last. Finally the princess requests the skin of the magical donkey, but so great is her father's passion that he kills the donkey and brings its pelt to his daughter. She escapes from the castle, dressed in the donkeyskin, and finds menial work in a Cinderella-like setting from which she is liberated by a handsome prince. Finally, the king, having repented of his illicit desire for his daughter, begs her forgiveness and she is reconciled with him.

As Marina Warner observes, Perrault's version skips over the theme of incest by introducing the fantasy element of the magical donkey and by restoring the patriarchal order at the end of the tale. However, the final sentence of Perrault's "Donkey Skin" gestures toward the continuing significance of the story: "The story of Donkey Skin may be hard to believe, but so long as there are children, mothers, and grandmothers in this world, it will be remembered by all" (Perrault). In line with this reference to mothers and grandmothers, Warner regards "Donkey Skin" and similar narratives as "women's stories; they can be seen to reflect women's predicaments and stratagems from their point of view" (Warner 1994, p. 345).

There are relatively few retellings of "Donkey Skin" for young adults; most take the form of short stories such as Jane Yolen's "Allerleirauh" (1995), Emma Donoghue's "The Tale of the Skin" (1997), and Terri Windling's "Donkeyskin" (1995). The most extended reworking of the story is Robin McKinley's *Deerskin* (1993), in which the princess Lissar is raped and impregnated by her father the king. Lissar flees the castle and wanders alone, miscarrying her father's child. Assisted by a supernatural woman (the Lady) who endows her with magical gifts, Lissar is healed by the ministrations of the various women she meets as well as by the love of Orrin, the prince who presented her with a dog, Ash, when she was a young girl.

The narrative of *Deerskin* follows the progress of Lissar, whose focalising perspective invites readers to align with her. My interest here, however, is in her monstrous father. Far more than in Perrault's "Donkey Skin," the king's obsessive desire for

Lissar is explicated in terms of its familial history. Lissar's mother, too, has been the focus of her own father's affection, to the extent that he invents ever more impossible tasks so as to keep his daughter with him. The old king reluctantly agrees to the marriage of his daughter to Lissar's father and dies, heartbroken, shortly afterwards. The exclusive and passionate relationship of Lissar's parents is built on the obsessive devotion of the old king for his daughter. The novel thus produces an aetiology of obsessive love which at its most extreme manifests in Lissar's rape by her father following her mother's death. This monstrous act is cruel and violent, motivated by the king's unshakeable belief that his daughter belongs to him and that he is entitled to her body: "he was her father and the king, and his will was law" (McKinley 1993, p. 296).

When the king announces his intentions of marrying Lissar, the courtiers and citizens are horrified; but they quickly turn their criticism onto Lissar, blaming her for enticing her father: "How evil the girl must be, to have brought her own father to this pass" (McKinley 1993, p. 74). In this way the novel blends its folktale antecedents with contemporary critiques about the tendency of the popular press to blame victims of rape. During the five years following Lissar's flight from the castle, the king, supported by the conniving courtiers, maintains the fiction that she has died. Whereas Perrault's king reconciles with his daughter at the end of "Donkey Skin," *Deerskin* concludes with a scene in which Lissar throws off the shame she has experienced, and returns this shame and guilt to her father, exposing his monstrosity in front of ministers, courtiers and people. Bereft of his power over her, the king is reduced to "a broken old man," (McKinley 1993, p. 301) incapable now of oppressing other women, disgraced both because of his lust and his greed for power and also because of his solipsism, his lack of insight into the suffering he has caused Lissar.

10.5 Conclusion

The monstrous identities I have discussed assume the anxieties of the times and cultures in which they are produced. The narratives that I have discussed circle around representations of young women embarking upon romantic and sexual relationships, and position readers to align themselves as reading subjects with these female protagonists. The relatively tame vampire figures of paranormal romance play out cultural anxieties about the sexuality of young women. The urbane vampire of *The Awakening* warns female readers about sex at the same time that he invites them to admire the restraint of the good vampire who resists his desire for blood. Jacob the werewolf, Edward's rival for Bella in the *Twilight* series, patrols the boundaries between white and non-white, us and them, always drawing readers' attention to the unsettling nature of metamorphosis. Having little power over his transformations from human to animal, he functions as a sign of the ascendancy of whiteness and humanness.

The monstrous mothers and fathers of YA fiction comprise metaphors for the tensions that are a common feature of relations between young people and the generation which precedes them. The evil queens of fairy romance, destroyed

when their influence wanes, seem to flatter readers into a sense of the power of the young and the inevitability of cyclic movements which favour the ascendancy of young queens. If the existence of such cycles anticipates the eventual decline of these new orders, fairy romance evades such possibilities by focusing on romantic liaisons between human and fairy. McKinley's treatment of the monstrous father of *Deerskin* maps post-Freudian psychology onto the patriarchal assumptions of Perrault's "Donkey Skin," constructing an agential female hero whose seemingly impossible task is to shake off the internalised shame wrought by her father.

Cohen observes of monsters that they permit safe expression to "fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion... in a clearly delimited and permanently liminal space" (Cohen 1996, p. 17). Young adulthood itself is often regarded as a liminal space between childhood and adult, such that the changing bodies and developing subjectivities of young people constitute an almost-monstrous lability. Sophia, in the two scenarios at the beginning of this chapter, is the object of anxiety on the part of her father Ben because of his fear of her becoming the "wrong" kind of young woman under the influence of young men with whom she is romantically involved. He projects these fears onto the figures of Quinn and Ramon. Fantasies of aggression and domination manifest in struggles between young women and despotic fairy queens in fairy romance, and between Lissar and her incestuous father in *Deerskin*. Monsters, says Cohen, "ask us how we perceive the world, and how we have misrepresented what we have attempted to place" (Cohen 1996, p. 20). The monstrous identities I have discussed have much to say about how young women are perceived and how they are positioned as reading subjects.

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