TEACHING GENDER SERIES

Gender in the Vampire Narrative

Amanda Hobson and
U. Melissa Anyiwo (Eds.)

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Gender in the Vampire Narrative

Teaching Gender

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Gender in the Vampire Narrative

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ADVANCE PRAISE FOR
GENDER IN THE VAMPIRE NARRATIVE

"The haunting durability of the vampire in popular culture attests to our enduring fascination with the undead as well as the figure's rich and dynamic complexity. Amanda Hobson and U. Melissa Anyiwo have brought together a diverse and far-ranging collection of essays that chase the vampire through history and across literature, film, television, and stage, exploring this complexity and offering insightful and accessible analyses that will be enjoyed by students in popular culture, gender studies, and speculative fiction. Authors pay homage to the classics – from *Bram Stoker* to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* – but push consideration of the vampire in new directions as well, from graphic novels to the Vegas stage, interrogating the vampire's presence and influence across multiple spheres of cultural production, always with a keen eye on gender and sexuality. This collection is not to be missed by those with an interest in feminist cultural studies – or the undead."

– Barbara Gurr, Associate Professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, University of Connecticut, and Author of *Race, Gender and Sexuality in Post-Apocalyptic TV and Film* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2015)

"U. Melissa Anyiwo and Amanda Hobson have compiled an impressive range of essays in this new, innovative text. As an instructor who consistently utilizes monster pedagogy in the college classroom, I deeply appreciate the range of theoretical and pedagogical applications in the volume as they will invigorate intersectional conversations about gender in regards to race, class, and culture. Of particular note is the commitment to exploring modern interpretations of vampire masculinity. This burgeoning area of scholarly inquiry speaks to the truly cutting-edge research contained in this text. I recommend it to monster researchers and educators alike."

– Ashley Szanter, Weber State University, and Author of "'The Blood is the Life!': Victorian Manifestations of Porphyric Anxiety and Bloodlust Bram Stoker's *Dracula*" in *The Journal of Dracula Studies* (2014)

"This book is a valuable contribution to the field, looking beyond the current popularity of *Twilight* and *True Blood* and examining a variety of texts both historical and contemporary. Questions of gender in the vampire narrative have been pervasive but seldom fully explored, and by making this the raison d'être for their book, Hobson and Anyiwo push the boundaries of the scholarship as it has been written until now: *Gender in the Vampire Narrative* will likely be referenced for many years to come."
– Catherine Coker, Texas A&M University, and Author of "Bella, Buffy, and the Feminist Ethics of Choice in Twilight and Buffy the Vampire Slayer" in *Slayage: The Online Journal of the Whedon Studies Association* (2011)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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We would like to thank our reviewers for the uncompensated time they took to ensure our manuscript was as perfect as it could be.

To our "Aca-Superheroines"—the true Children of the Night—Candace Benefiel, Cait Coker, Ana G. Gal, Lisa Nevarez, Rho Nicol, and Lauren Rocha, your endless friendship, support, ideas, and obsession with vampires was the inspiration behind this book and so much of our scholarship.

Amanda is grateful for the limitless support of my amazing parents, Jo Beth and Donn Hobson, who always believe in me and remind me to dream big, and for my friends, Chris Reghetti-Feyler and Andy Feyler, because sometimes friends become family too. To Peanut Butter (Blaike Hobson), who makes me strive every day to make the world a better place, I promise that one day we'll write a book together. To my niece (Madison) and nephews (Blaike, Noah, and Jase), I believe you can do anything.

Melissa would like to dedicate this, her third vampire text, to the women and girls in her life struggling to find their authentic selves in a sea of contradictory expectations. To my three nieces, Maeve, Freya, and Mya, astonishing bundles of intellect and joy; it's ok to be a princess and still save yourself. To my mother, who has almost convinced me that I can, and my brother (whose incredible art is on the cover), who inspires me to believe I should.

Our gratitude goes to our contributors who have stuck with us through this surprisingly long process. Their creativity and knowledge about gender and the vampire has informed this project.

I may never see the sunrise, but I can take you to worlds beyond your dreams.—Carmilla (Sheridan Le Fanu, 1872)

AMANDA HOBSON

1. INTRODUCTION

When you hear the word *vampire*, what does your mind conjure? You likely think of blood-drinking creatures stalking their prey in the night. You may think of a monstrous figure straight out of a horror movie, or perhaps like so many, you think of Edward Cullen and Bella Swan of the famous *Twilight Saga*. For most, the vampire is a creature of horror, fantasy, or even romance but one to be left in the fictional realms of film and pages of books; but for the scholars represented in these pages, the vampire is a creature of rich metaphors about life and death, sexuality and gender, cultural identities, and even political ideologies. J. Halberstam writes, "Monsters are meaning machines" (1995, p. 21), and the vampire is the ultimate incarnation of this sentiment. Every manifestation of the vampire explores underlying messages about what it means to be (in)human and how one navigates the world around them. The vampire, though, is a socio-cultural lens through which we can examine issues of justice and identity and one whom we recognize quite clearly as the most familiar monster because they share our faces, yet they operate as disconcerting mirrors of humanity.

In my childhood, I was given a copy of Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), a book that would help shape the course of my life as a scholar. This tale of vampires, who were the epitome of cultural outsiders, drew me into the darkness with them. They defied existing cultural norms, struggled with moral and ethical decision-making, and could live beyond natural death. It was Claudia, though, who most impacted my young mind. As she becomes a mature woman trapped in the body of a child, I could not help but recognize her inability to portray her inner life to the world around her through her physical body. It resonated deeply within the nerdy bookworm often unable to express my inner thoughts, and Claudia's specifically gendered experience would stick with me. The exteriority of her childish body and her femininity shaped the manner in which Louis and Lestat infantilized her, even when she was no longer emotionally, spiritually, and mentally a child. No one could see beyond that physical façade to her true being, and moreover, these interactions shaped how she viewed herself and the ways that she interacted with others. As I was reading Claudia's story,

A. Hobson & U. M. Anyiwo (Eds.), Gender in the Vampire Narrative, 1–8.

I was vividly reminded of the times that I was informed by well-meaning adults that I could not do something or dream something because I was a girl. Claudia, I, and other girls who continue to receive those messages, internalized ideas about the cultural norms of gender and what it meant to be a girl. I could never leave the vampire behind after reading *Interview with the Vampire*. In my scholarly life and my entertainment choices, vampires would just not stay buried. Moreover, I have continued my desire to explore the intersection of identity and social issues through the image of the vampire, just as I did when contemplating Claudia's particularly gendered portrayal.

Historically, vampires have existed in every culture, serving as reflections of the culture from which they came. Vampire tales find their place within religious texts, folklore, oral storytelling, and fictional explorations. They have long-stood as metaphors for a myriad of humans fears and desires, their struggle between good and evil, and discomfort with ambiguity and those who are different. Vampires rose within the context of folklore in order to explain that which human beings could not explain, such as coma, death, and the decomposition of bodies. In medieval times, vampires were part of the larger study of monsters. As the Christian church's involvement in the lives of people flourished, monsters, including the vampire, became portents, displaying God's displeasure with Man. When science began to study monsters, vampires became part of nature, even if they were aberrations of that natural world. The folkloric vampire exhibited undesirable and horrific characteristics. Vampires haunted villages infecting and killing others. Though the conception of monsters shifted over time, vampires have been an undeniable part of culture. Even after science advanced to explain that which had been previously unexplainable, vampires remained, becoming a mainstay in various fictions. Vampires, as literary trope, have pervaded cultural consciousness and invaded various genres, and they hold the fascination of the cultures to which they belong, demonstrated by the sheer number of vampire folktales, literature, graphic novels, theatre, art, films, television shows, and marketing.

In the contemporary era, there has been a sort of a bifurcation of the image of the vampire. On the one hand, we continue to see images of the monstrous vampire, who harkens to the folkloric past, a horrific killing machine. These vampires are represented predominantly in the horror and science fiction genres, such as Steve Niles and Ben Templesmith's *30 Days of Night* (2002) and the subsequent film adaptation directed by David Slade (2007), Guillermo del Torro and Chuck Hogan's *The Strain* (2009), and Justin Cronin's *The*

Passage (2010). On the other hand, there exists a romanticized vision of the vampire: a suave, debonair aristocrat that can be found frequently moralizing about their existence. These vampires are represented in romance and urban fantasy film and literature, such as *The Twilight Saga* (Stephenie Meyer's book series 2005–2008 and film series 2008–2012)*, The Vampire Diaries* (L. J. Smith book series 1992–1992 and television series beginning in 2009), and innumerable paranormal romance novels. There are some examples that blend these two ideas across all the genres in that the vampire is a beautiful monster. Think of many of the vampires in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003) and *Blade* (1998).

Just as there has been an evolution in the representation of the vampire, there, too, have been developments in the portrayal of gender within the narrative. This volume addresses issues of masculinity and femininity, unpacking cultural norms of gender, while understanding that there is a need to examine gender non-conforming identities. When it comes to male identified vampires, the writers of early vampire tales exploited the fear of miscegenation and threats of sexual violence to the perceived fragility of white upper-class women and their social connections. Some vampire stories have featured an emasculated male vampire either feminizing or androgenising him in order to heighten the fear—highlighting the notion of the dangerous non-normative sexuality and gender of the effeminate man. This approach served to further denigrate the cultural Other—the female and the homosexual. With the vampire romance novel, the hypermasculine alpha male image of the vampire has grown in popularity yet the presence of the female vampire has frequently felt secondary, used as a plot-device for masculine dominance within the text. Throughout the history of the vampire novel, for instance, women have traditionally been portrayed as hapless victims; they are prey to the supernatural predator and motivating force for the vampire hunters, such as Mina Harker in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Female vampires often have perverted natures, prey upon children, and eschew normative reproduction and motherhood. In this way, they have been portrayed as beautiful predators, sexually and emotionally devouring their prey, standing as a perfect metaphor for cultural fears about strong, independent women and female sexuality. Indeed the female vampire represents one of the most enduring cautionary tales, with historical figures like Erzsébet Báthory and fictional iconic representations, such as Carmilla and the Brides of Dracula, all punished for their failure to conform. In this manner, the vampire is a key figure for addressing gender norms and the ways that those norms enforce cultural ideas about what it means to be a man

or a woman. By examining gendered portrayals of vampires, these normative constructions seem arbitrary and false in their formation of ideals.

Gender in the Vampire Narrative offers classroom ready original essays, which outline contemporary debates about sexual objectification and gender roles, using the lens of the vampire in order to examine the ways those norms are undone and reinforced through popular culture. The vampire demonstrates conceptualizations of gender and identity that underscore issues of inequity and social interactions, and the pieces within this text attempt to unravel the ties that bind gender to beliefs about biology and the body, as well as the sociocultural institutions. Many essays address constructions of gendered identities and the intersectionality of identity factors that impact an individual's interactions with the world, such as examining the ways in which a character's race and ethnicity interact with her gender.

The volume opens with co-editor Amanda Hobson's "Dark Seductress: The Hypersexualization of the Female Vampire" establishing the historical and cultural idea of the hypersexual woman. She argues that no matter what the genre, our visual culture emphasizes the voracious and dangerous sexuality of the female body and the female vampiric body. Travelling through the worlds of television, film, and stage, Hobson argues that representations of the female vampire reflect the historical commodification of the female body and thus consistently remind us of the dangers of unfettered sexuality.

Kristina Deffenbacher takes us to the urban fantasy universe in "Hybrid Heroines and the Naturalization of Women's Violence in Urban Fantasy Fiction." In her chapter she examines the gender-blending roles of urban fantasy's kick-arse heroines in four core texts—Karen Marie Moning's *Fever Series* (2006–2015), Charlaine Harris's *Southern Vampire Mysteries* (2007–2013), Nicole Peeler's *Jane True* (2009–2013) and Jeaniene Frost's *Night Huntress Series* (2007–2013). Urban fantasy, she argues, provides a space in which the typically limited roles for women are expanded to counter the fairytale archetype where the heroine must wait passively for her prince to save her. By overlaying the traditional female with superhuman abilities and placing her in violent worlds, the heroines of Urban Fantasy become females capable of saving themselves while experiencing emotional vulnerability, and getting the guy without compromising their strength. In these ways, Deffenbacher effectively demonstrates that urban fantasy, as a contemporary genre, bends and blends normative expectations of gender thus presenting a "new" broader definition of femininity in the modern world.

Kristina DuRocher's chapter "Men That Suck: Gender Anxieties and the Evolution of Vampire Men" examines the shifting roles of male vampires, by

unpacking the romantic heroes in *Dracula*, *Interview with the Vampire*, *The Twilight Saga*, and *The Vampire Diaries*. DuRocher effectively illustrates the development of the vampire male from monstrous creation to romantic hero while connecting their development to surprisingly static cultural anxieties related to the female body. Ultimately, she argues, while the surface presentation of men may seem to change, the purpose and intent remain couched in patriarchal concerns about a woman's "proper" place.

In "'There will never be more than two of us': *The Twilight Saga's* Monstrous Mothers," Amanda Firestone takes us to the world of *Twilight* and the presentation of motherhood as the only viable option for women. By connecting Stephenie Meyer's characters to Julia Kristeva's work about abjection, Firestone examines the ways in which each of these "frozen women"—Esme, Rosalie, Sasha Denali—are abject mothers unable to naturally reproduce and thus are presented as monstrous in various ways. Moreover, their monstrosity is reflected in the restrictive ways they cope with Bella's decision-making in regards to her own reproduction. Firestone argues that Meyer reproduces typical patriarchal attitudes that continue to value women only because of their reproductive abilities.

Benita Blessing, in "Sex, Blood, and Death: Vampires and Child-rearing," takes us from the medieval period to the present day with a chapter that looks at the enduring allure of the vampire narrative to reflect parental fears. By examining different vampire tales from dramatically different periods, Blessing demonstrates the persistent role of vampire tales to express fears parents have for their children regarding sexual violation and/or premature death demonstrating the conservative, cautionary nature of the vampire narrative when presented to children and young adults.

Co-editor U. Melissa Anyiwo unpacks one of the most common contemporary stereotypes of black women in "Beautifully Broken: *True Blood's* Tara Thornton as Black Best Friend." By dissecting the characteristics of this archetype, this chapter explores the meanings coded into Tara's characteristics and behaviour to illustrate the ways her character retains and expands existing concepts of blackness and black sexuality. In doing so she asks whether this beautifully broken supporting heroine offers more than a reductive stereotype of blackness, only available as the adjunct of the blond-blue-eyed heroine, or does the narrative structure of *True Blood* offer the chance for a complex non-white character and a fully rounded being?

Ryan D. Fong examines two little-known vampire texts, *The Blood of the Vampire* and "The Lady of the House of Love" in "A Feminist Bloodletting: Reading Suicide in Florence Marryat and Angela Carter." Despite a large

historical separation, Fong argues that both texts reinforce the idea of female vampirism as a sexual threat that needs to be contained by male authorities. Yet, as his work demonstrates, both Marryat and Carter use the suicides of their female protagonists to subvert patriarchal control and revive female agency. By literally reclaiming their bodies through their deaths and thus escaping male control, Fong suggests that these two feminist authors offer both a critique of white patriarchal control and a suggestion of female liberation.

In "Vampiras and Vampiresas: Latinas in the Graphic Novels *Bite Club* and *Life Sucks*," Lisa Nevárez takes us to the visual world of the graphic novel. As graphic novels increasingly become "accepted" modes of literature worthy of research (helped by their unending popularity), Nevárez examines the image of the Latina, looking beyond the traditional sexualized "hot tamale" stereotype to demonstrate that the graphic novel can offer an alternative vision of the vampire and the Latina, demonstrating women who thrive and survive despite their perceived gender and ethnic disadvantages.

In "'You were such a good girl when you were human': Gender and Subversion in *The Vampire Diaries,*" Rhonda Nicol analyses the emotional and social development of the three core female characters of the CW hit, Caroline, Elena, and Katherine. Through the multiple roles and storylines available to these three disparate archetypes, Nicol argues that today's girls are no longer imprisoned in limited gender roles, complicating what it means to be female in contemporary world.

Ana G. Gal, in "Performative Femininity and Female Invalidism in John Keats's 'La belle dame sans merci' and S.T. Coleridge's *Christabel*," argues that the female vampires of these narratives enact conventional femininity and fake invalidism to access their victims' privacy, possessions, and even household. Through etiquette and a rehearsed performance of feminine scripts designed to engage the male gaze, they imagine and attempt to carve out liberatory spaces for themselves. However, as her chapter suggests, despite the female vampires' ability to temporarily overthrow the rigid gender system, their performances are ultimately manipulated by the male poets to consolidate traditional gender roles for women as well as to promote a cult of female invalidism and passivity.

Finally, to celebrate our love of the female vampire we have constructed a list of our favourite characters from the popular culture universe, illustrating the astonishingly diverse ways in which female vampires have been seen. The list features highlights from core adaptations of Carmilla, Dracula's Brides, images of vampiras of colour and honourable mentions from the

world of television we believe would make great tools within and without the classroom.

In the current wave of the vampire's dominance in our cultural imaginations, vampires have become male romantic heroes with tales often reproducing and reinforcing typical gender, class, and racial expectations. Given that the vampire traditionally stood as a representation of our fears of gender and ethnicity, it seems odd that vampires remain largely white, heterosexual, and male with little focus on the ways in which they perform their gender, sexual, and racial identities. The role of women within vampire tales run the gamut of expressions, from vamp to vixen to victim to saviour to slayer. The construction of womanhood and gender is often an underlying and keenly powerful narrative within the vampire trope. At times traditional fops for limited gender norms for men and women; representations of gender in the vampire narrative traverse a large scope of expectations making it a fascinating area of discussion.

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AMANDA HOBSON

2. DARK SEDUCTRESS

The Hypersexualization of the Female Vampire

INTRODUCTION

The archetype of the female vampire as the sexual temptress has been a part of vampire fiction since Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) and the Brides in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Our visual culture emphasizes the voracious sexuality of the female body and more so of the female vampiric body. The vampire seductress fills our imaginations as she embodies contradicting ideals of femininity, such as fragility, strength, beauty, and power. In this chapter, I examine issues contained in the hypersexualization of the vampire and the manner in which these contemporary visual cultural examples demonstrate the reinforcement and re-envisioning of female sexuality. Engaging the symbolic connections of blood and female sexuality, this imagining of female hypersexualization occurs via the intersection of women's political power and sexuality and through renderings of both sexual desire and sexual violence. Their representations cash in on the economic rewards of the commodification of female bodies but also on the contemporary vampire craze within popular culture. This chapter will focus on Julie Delpy's *The Countess* (2009), Neil Jordan's *Byzantium* (2012), and Spike Lee's *Da Sweet Blood of Jesus* (2015). These examples illustrate the emphasis on the female vampire's sexual desirability and her ability to use that sexuality as a tool.

In 2004, the world of the Las Vegas stage show witnessed precisely this intersection of female sexuality and vampire hype with the premiere of Tim Molyneux's *Bite* at the Stratosphere. *Bite* was a topless female revue that entertained audiences with a hard-rock soundtrack, aerial acrobatics, martial arts, and contortionist acts. The plot revolved around a vampire lord and his harem of female vampires seducing unsuspecting victims in order to feed. In 2010, E! Entertainment described it as a "vampire vixen musical" and a "striptease with a story," and named working as one of the women in *Bite* as the twelfth sexiest Las Vegas job, where one cast member, Michelle, put it

A. Hobson & U. M. Anyiwo (Eds.), Gender in the Vampire Narrative, 9–27.

dancers "seduce the audience over to the dark side" (E! Entertainment, 2010). While its eight-year run ended on Halloween 2012 (Weatherford, 2012),[1] *Bite* highlights obvert female sexuality to titillate and seduce the audience into buying tickets for the show and even the opportunity to be brought on stage for a vampiric lap-dance. The vampire women of *Bite*, therefore, engage the audience members in a vision of female sexuality that is built upon the commodification of sex.[2] The presence of a cadre of female vampires as the focus of a Las Vegas stage show demonstrates the immense popularity of the image of the vampire, especially that of the hypersexualized female vampire. The women of *Bite* and the vampires at the heart of this chapter rely on the patterns established in *Carmilla* and *Dracula*, in which the female vampire illustrates historically specific and continuing cultural fears about women's sexuality as well as the titillation of the sexually voracious, beautiful, but deadly seductresses. The image of the female vampire emphasizes cultural obsessions with manifestations of women's bodies and sexualities.

This vampiric female sexuality has long pervaded popular culture, religious ideology, and psychoanalysis. The reliance on the medical and psychological diagnosis of hysteria for women demonstrating a wide variety of symptoms underscored a pathologizing of female sexuality. Rachel Maines writes, "the disease paradigm of hysteria and its 'sister' disorder in the Western medical tradition have functioned as conceptual catchalls for reconciling observed and imagined differences between an idealized androcentric sexuality and what women actually experienced" (1999, p. 22). She argues, "Normal functioning of female sexuality was defined as a disease" by the medical establishments of the eighteenth and nineteenth century (p. 38). As medicine and psychology developed from the male model, the cultural view of female sexuality was its oddity, its utter abnormality from this androcentric paradigm. The images of female sexuality oscillate on a dichotomous framework of frigidity and hypersexuality—both must be cured and contained.

This fear of women's sexuality particularly centres on women who embrace their sexual hungers and who act as agents of their own desire, and the female vampire embodies those cultural concerns. In discussing the "remarkable fear of female sexuality," Bram Dijkstra (1996) writes, "The 'discoveries' of early twentieth century biology saddled Western culture with a vicious eroticism centered on images of the sexual woman as vampire" (p. 5). This image arises from the notion of women's sexuality as inherently destructive if left unchecked and when not controlled by men, and vampiric sexuality is the ultimate in destructive forces. The female vampire, therefore, is the perfect

metaphor for that unstoppable force, draining her victims of vitality—their blood and sexual energy. These monstrous women slowly kill their prey, luring them into unproductive sexual encounters, draining them of blood and their perceived masculine essence—their semen, which has become a trope prominent particularly within vampire pornography of the contemporary era. Women's bodies and their sexuality are a problematic entity enticing men to spiritually bereft and physically exhausting sexual encounters, leaving the man weakened and demoralized. In the realm of fiction, both *Carmilla* and *Dracula* tap into the cultural ideology about women's bodies and sexuality of their particular contexts, and they also demonstrate the ways in which those concerns continue through time. These fictional tales articulated the cultural concerns about the dangers of female sexuality.

The 1897 classic novel, *Dracula*, launches a vision of the voracious appetite of the female vampire to seduce and devour. The Brides of Dracula offer sexual pleasure to the hapless Jonathan Harker, but that hedonism comes with an edge of teeth, seducing him in order to feed on his blood. Harker falls under the sway of the sexually aggressive trio of women, who stroke and entice him into passivity. *Dracula* establishes the vision of the female vampire sucking men dry, and these women have insatiable hungers for blood and for sex. While having no real agency, these female vampires hold power over men that they encounter through their hypnotic sexuality. The countless adaptations and immeasurable influence of *Dracula* continue to showcase the unquenchable destructive sexuality of the vampire and the subsequent cultural explorations and fear when that sexual appetite comes in the body of a woman.

In addition, sexual violence is indelibly linked to the image of the vampire, with the penetrative bite inflicted through coercion or preternatural physical strength. This highly sexualized act of the bite articulates fears of miscegenation, women's sexuality, and homosexuality, and it also highlights concerns about lack of self-control and sexualized violence. Bonnie Zimmerman writes, "The male vampire has been used to suggest that heterosexuality is sometimes indistinguishable from rape … The function of the lesbian vampire is to contain attraction between women within the same boundaries of sexual violence, to force it into a patriarchal model of sexuality" (1981, p. 23). As Zimmerman notes, lesbian sexual violence is prominent within contemporary vampire fiction and film, as the seducing lesbian becomes the destroyer of other women and undermines heteronormative masculine power. This trope grows from Sheridan Le

Fanu's 1872 character Carmilla, who uses the guise of friendship to seduce and drain her victim. It is the story of lonely young Laura and the mysterious visitor Carmilla, who befriends her. Carmilla's sexual advances and proclamations of romantic feelings unnerve Laura, especially as her health deteriorates because of Carmilla's nocturnal feedings. The fear established by *Carmilla* was two-fold for its era. First, the parental fear of their daughter being deflowered within the sanctity of the home. Second, Carmilla's romantic and sexual advances articulate concerns about lesbianism, as women began to seek non-traditional careers outside of the home and roles beyond that of marriage and motherhood. In this manner, Carmilla's lesbian desires illustrate the concerns of her era about unproductive and degenerate sexuality.

The vampire is a pre-eminently sexualized predator, who alternately uses horrific violence and smooth seduction. The vampiress is a hypersexualized image that blends that violence and seduction with fears of the destructive beauty and charm of womanhood. In this manner, vampires of all genders are very similar in that they draw in their prey through seductive charm and violence, but ideas about the female body and womanhood amplify the fears surrounding female vampires and their sexuality. Beliefs about womanhood centre on a notion of idealized feminine weakness and passivity and one specific type of weakness: the purported moral weakness manifested through the voracious and destructive nature of female sexuality. The female vampire with her heightened physical strength and her longevity move her firmly into the utterly uncontrollable category. She, therefore, embodies all of the cultural fears of women's sexuality; especially that it is unquenchable and uncontained by male dominated institutions such as the Church, the family, and even the government. The films at study in this chapter demonstrate the fear and the fascination with the sexualized woman. The body and being of the female vampire only heightens those anxieties and that allure because of their simultaneous familiarity and alienness. In speaking of the Gothic tradition from which the vampire derives much, J. Halberstam (1995) writes, "The Gothic …inspires fear and desire at the same time—fear of and desire for the other, fear of and desire for the possibly latent perversity lurking within the reader herself" (p. 13). In the contemporary era of the vampire, films titillate their audiences by stroking that perversity through the hypersexualized feminine body costumed to stoke desire and positioned to evoke uncanny pleasure in the possibility of fear for bodily destruction and the potential for unquenchable hedonistic bliss, while reinforcing that biological weakness.

THE INTERSECTION OF WOMEN'S POWER AND HYPER-SEXUALITY IN DELPY'S *THE COUNTESS*

Vampires of the modern era owe much to one historical figure: Erzsébet Báthory. While scholars disagree about the exact details of her life and crimes, the fact that she lived and has influenced our image of the vampire is undisputed. Despite being accused of murdering as many as 650 servant girls, making her one of history's most prolific serial killers, Báthory's legend and influence is unknown to most outside of vampire enthusiasts and Hungarian scholars. Because of the stories of the prolific murders, Báthory has been immortalized, not as a mere serial killer but as a notorious vampire, whose desire for immortality and bloodlust drove her to madness. It is the legends surrounding how she killed and her supposed desire of immortality gained through ingestion or bathing in blood that have solidified her place in our cultural imagination even as her name has been obscured from history. Báthory strongly influenced the fictional vampire from Le Fanu to Stoker's seminal tales as well as a long history of paintings, novels, and films based upon her legend.

Representations of Báthory's life range from the fantastic to the horrific. The historical fears about the power of female sexuality to upend dynasties and bewitch men into politically and economically damaging decisions as well as the concerns over women gaining their own political agency play a key role in the history of Báthory and in one of the most recent adaptations *The Countess* (2009). *The Countess*, which Julie Delpy wrote, directed, and starred as Erzsébet Báthory, premiered at the 2009 Berlin International Film Festival. The film uses the life of Báthory as a template to overlay a plot of intrigue and vanity with a contemporary indictment of the fear of women's political power and sexual agency, which is the core theme in all of the adaptations. Báthory is a historical embodiment and precursor to the hypersexualized female vampire that is evidenced in the characters of Carmilla and the Brides, and in Delpy's vision, her sexuality and her power are inextricably linked together. The overarching narrative of the film articulates Delpy's critique of cultural repression of female sexuality in the guise of a little-known historical figure. The film presents Báthory's embrace of her own sexuality and sexual appetites as the weapon her enemies used to unseat her position of power and seize her vast land and wealth.

In keeping with Delpy's desire to mix biography and contemporary critique of cultural views on women's sexuality, the film both suggests historical verisimilitude while highlighting Báthory's sexual voracity and her search for immortality combined with her desire for blood. Her curiosity about life

and death reigns as one of the prominent plot points of the film. Teenaged Báthory has a sexual relationship with a peasant boy. As a result, she becomes pregnant and is forced by her mother to hide away to give birth and then give away her child. Her mother makes her to watch the peasant boy's execution from the window of the room that becomes her cell during pregnancy and foreshadows the end of her life. This relationship and its outcome cement, for Báthory, a connection between sex, violence, loss, and death. Blood, sex, and political power intertwine to mark the passage of growth and development in Báthory's life and this early relationship, one that young Báthory views as love but that is framed as inappropriate given the difference in their stations, demonstrates the power of sexual relationships to her. This relationship sets the stage for her sexual and romantic relationships that bend normative constructions of sexuality in both the medieval and contemporary era.

Báthory has an arranged marriage, as tradition of her time and station demands, but she and her husband, Fenerec Nadasdy (Charly Hübner), spend little time together over the years as he was leading the forces fighting the Turks, leaving her to run the estate and broker deals with the King and other nobles and placing her in an atypical role for her time. Her traditional appearing marriage demonstrates her independence in a partnership that allowed both parties to utilize their skills—his military skill and her political savvy. After the death of her husband, others question her skills and independence, which pushed her to be more commanding over her estates and in the war against the Turks. She embraces the power of her role, even as others attempt to undermine her position and wealth, which would aid in the development of Báthory's legend. The King and the other noblemen wish to acquire Báthory's lands, wealth, and influence in the region. The King, for instance, had borrowed a substantial amount of gold and funds from Báthory and her husband, and with the death of Nadasdy, the King seeks a way to discredit her in order to be relieved of the debt. On top of this, Báthory's cousin and political rival, Gyorgy Thurzo (William Hurt), wishes to seize her family's estates. These machinations rely on cultural fears of female power as corruptible and unstable.

Freed by her husband's death, Báthory allows her sexuality to emerge and flourish crossing lines of class and gender, adding to the image of unfettered womanhood. She demonstrates through her sexual and romantic relationships a fluidity of sexuality and desire shifting along the continuum of sexual orientation and demonstrating a willingness to engage in a variety of sexual activities, including sadomasochistic practices. Lisa Diamond (2008) writes, "Sexual fluidity …means situation-dependent flexibility in women's

sexual responsiveness. This flexibility makes it possible for some women to experience desire for either men or women under certain circumstances, regardless of their overall sexual orientation" (p. 8). For Báthory, her sexual fluidity allows her to explore power dynamics and pleasure. It ultimately proves to be her downfall, as her detractors portray this fluidity as dangerous hypersexualization that must be corralled.

The film depicts Báthory's fluid sexuality through several sexual relationships. First, she engages in a relationship with her female advisor—Anna Darvulia (Anamaria Mirinca). Darvulia practices witchcraft, and Báthory, though a practicing protestant in public, also participated in magical rituals in the belief that it would increase her power and vitality, adding to the concept of dangerous and independent womanhood. The whispers of the servants of the estate spread the tales of Darvulia and Báthory's rituals and their sexual relationship, which underscored concerns about her instability and the unnatural influence upon her decision-making. This same-gender relationship offers sexual enjoyment, acts as an emotional outlet for Báthory, and is initially one of mutual desire and camaraderie. As the pressures of the political storm around Báthory intensify, their relationship deteriorates. Moreover, this relationship becomes a weapon wielded against her to prove her unfitness. The Catholic leaders use Darvulia's link to witchcraft to demonstrate the faithlessness of women, and her political enemies use her hypersexuality as evidenced by the lesbian relationship to prove her unfitness to lead. Moreover, it is Báthory's engagement with witchcraft that leads to her obsession with blood rituals and to drinking blood. Throughout folklore, witches were believed to be predestined to become vampires after death (Barber, 1988, p. 30) and, thus, solidifying Báthory's positioning as the vampire of legend. As the whispers of her crimes circulated, that link between female power, witchcraft, and vampirism strengthened.

Her most sexually explicit and least sexually normative relationship occurs with Count Dominic Vizakna (Sebastian Blomberg), the eventual agent of her downfall. He teaches her how to dominate him and fulfil his masochistic need for pain and danger. She, in turn, learns to revel in her sadism through whipping him and engaging in breath play. In being drawn into a sadomasochistic sexual relationship, Báthory discovers that she can have physical power over another but also that it fills the empty voids of her life, even if it is only temporary. She is able to wield her curiosity and her cruelty by inscribing her frustration upon the body of another. Unfortunately for Báthory, Vizakna is an agent of her greatest rival Gyorgy Thurzo. Vizakna goads Báthory into taking her desire to inflict pain outside of the sexual

context, encouraging her to beat an elderly woman who approached her in the park. Adding to the idea in a way that by giving in to her sadistic desires, she becomes unable to control her impulses to draw blood and mete out pain.

It is this sexual sadism combined with her desire for eternal youth that leads to her imprisonment and notoriety for heinous crimes of torturing and killing female peasant girls and young women. Báthory uses their blood as a salve against her fear of both aging and dying, which the audience sees her grapple with from childhood. She describes what she sees as the benefit of applying blood to her skin to her confidant, Darvulia, "I applied the blood, and I felt an incredible strength invading every part of my body" (Delpy, 2009). For thousands of years, blood was believed to be curative against aging, and it is this belief that drives Báthory's bloodlust.

Báthory drains her victims in order to coat her skin in the blood. She penetrates their bodies with knives and also a large cage device with multiple spikes and channels through which the blood could rain down upon her body as she stood underneath the device. While her penetration of their bodies comes not through her bite, she revels in their blood and the piercing of their young bodies with the metallic teeth of the spikes. Báthory fills the role of sexual predator, employing her co-conspirators to procure her victims, but she alone uses the blood. Her sexual drive for blood and power cause her to pursue more victims to fulfil her needs. Her young female victims play a multifaceted role as their blood harbours additional vitality because of their youth. Their virginity also amplifies their desirability as victims for Báthory because it adds potency of the untapped sexual energy within their virginity. In addition, that her victims were young women enhances concerns about the perversity of lesbian desires just like Carmilla because the belief is that it leads to madness and homicidal tendencies. Báthory demonstrates the type of veracious appetite that her contemporaries and beyond feared and loathed in the idea of female sexuality that once it was awakened it could not be satiated. Her engagement in sexual sadism is a key aspect of her hypersexualization and leads to her eventual downfall.

The film also adds an underlying plot of her being in love with a decade's younger man and the conspiracy to keep them apart that leads her to madness and murder. Love undermines her. Báthory engages in a brief sexual affair with Istvan Thurzo, and both confess their love for each other. Throughout their relationship, she sees the difference in their ages and is constantly reminded of her increasing age and his youth. When they begin their sexual relationship, she is approaching forty, and he is twenty-one. The camera focuses upon the differences in their ages, showing the wrinkles on her face

and hands juxtaposed to his vitality and smoothness of skin. She is encouraged to have a sexual affair with him. Yet when she wants more than just sex in the form of a relationship and marriage, her age and her believed lack of sexual desirability become the reasons that others tell her she cannot. It is her desire for youth in order to regain Istvan that unleashes her bloodlust. She turns to Vizakna and to sexual sadism in order to overcome the pain of losing Istvan engaging in bloodbaths with the fervent desire of regaining his affections. The loss of her relationship with Istvan and her sexual sadistic relationship with Vizakna are weaknesses that allow her enemies to conspire against her.

Delpy's script offers an indictment of the disdain for women's power and the fear of women's sexuality. Frequently the narrative turns to articulations of gender equity and a role for women's sexual agency. Báthory actively resists reduction to a sexual object, but she does embrace her sexuality completely for herself if not for women as a whole. During a discussion about women's intelligence at a dinner party, Báthory states, "I agree that most women are weak … I believe that both men and women are equal but different" (Delpy, 2009). Báthory places herself in the category of women who are not weaker than men and moreover espouses the notion that sameness is not the defining factor for equality.

As she is awaiting her punishment, Báthory says to Gyorgy Thurzo, the architect of her downfall:

> I will go to my grave completely sane. Your tale merely confirms that women are mad and vain and should not be given the right to rule. Your fable will keep the populace occupied for a very long time. They will be terrified of the bloodthirsty myth that you have made of me and forget about evils that are indeed very real. (Delpy, 2009)

She, therefore, reminds the viewer about their complicity in the image of her as an insane, vain murderer and also highlights the inability to reconstruct a complete historical picture of Báthory, the woman inside of the legend.

Ultimately, Gyorgy Thurzo, the King, and members of the Catholic Church use her perceived hypersexuality in order to imprison her and divide her wealth and property amongst themselves with some held back for Nadasdy's heirs. Báthory's life is, thus, established as a cautionary tale for other women not to attempt to rise above their station as a wife and mother and to not seek sexual pleasure. As feared by religious and cultural institutions, her downfall indicates that acting upon sexual desire leads women to unquenchable sexuality. At the most basic level, Báthory gives in to the hedonistic power of blood and sexuality, and therefore, her enemies are able to unseat her.

Her gender, her sexuality, and her mythical link to the vampire serve to underscore her legend and the beliefs about women's sexuality. She is the insatiable sexual woman, whose appetites cannot be tamed, needing ever more sex and blood in order to fulfil her. Báthory's sexuality and her quest for immortality through blood solidified the image of the female vampire driven by unquenchable hungers.

PROSTITUTION, VIOLENCE, AND MOTHERHOOD IN *BYZANTIUM*

While in *The Countess* women's uncontrolled sexuality leads to Báthory's eventual downfall, the narrative of *Byzantium* offers a vision of the seductive power of women's sexuality as a weapon against men and also outlines the precarious position of women vis-à-vis sexual violence. Moira Buffini adapted her play *A Vampire Story* for the screenplay of *Byzantium* (Dargis, 2013, para. 7), while it was directed by Neil Jordan best known for directing *Interview with the Vampire* (1994). The aesthetic of *Byzantium* is part art film and part horror film contrasting beautiful and scenic footage of a small run-down seaside town with traditional vampiric film techniques reliant on dark and gritty mood and blood, violence, and gore. The film's narrator and central character is Eleanor Webb (Saoirse Ronan) a young woman with a need for blood. Jordan's vampires go by multiple names reflecting multiple mythologies of the vampire. The vampires are *neamh-mhairbh*, the undead, a revenant, or a vampire of Celtic myth (Jordan 2012), which connects these vampires to *Dracula*.[3] Alternately, they call themselves soucriants, which arises from Caribbean folklore of "vampire witch[es]" (Dargis, 2013, para. 3). While Eleanor is centralized as the narrator, it is Clara's (Gemma Arteton) embrace of the power of her sexuality and her motherhood that make her a threat to the Brotherhood, which is the organizing body of the vampires that are responsible for carrying on knowledge and enforcing their codes, and in the end allow her to be victorious over them.

The film relies heavily on a dichotomy between innocence and promiscuity, a long established contrasted image of the woman the virgin and the whore. Eleanor and Clara tell people that they are sisters, though the viewer learns that Clara is Eleanor's mother. Clara supports the two of them through prostitution and establishing brothels as a madam, the only profession she has ever known. As a young girl, she meets a pair of men, Captain Ruthven (Jonny Lee Miller)[4] and Darvell (Sam Riley) on the beach as she gathers clams, and Ruthven takes her to a brothel. While we do not see their sexual interaction, the film indicates that the sex was not consensual. Clara says,

"You gave me nothing, sir, but you took." Ruthven's responds, "I gave you your profession. Welcome to your adult life, whore" (Jordan, 2012). Clara's human life is filled with a lack of access to power. When she becomes pregnant, the woman in charge of the brothel instructs Clara to kill the girl, but she does not. Instead, she takes the baby, whom she names Eleanor, to a private orphanage and pays for her care through her wages as a prostitute.

Like many women of her era, Clara's body is her most useful asset, a means by which she and her daughter can survive. In the case of Clara, she was introduced to her sexuality through sexual violence. She uses her sexuality for monetary gain, continuing her prostitution into the modern era at times being a stripper and a madam as well, and moreover, her role as prostitute gives Clara, who is a vampire, access to much-needed blood. Clara seduces a grieving man Noel (Daniel Mays) into inviting them to stay in his dead mother's boarding house located on the top floors of a building named Byzantium and turns that home into a brothel using sexual coercion. Additionally, Clara understands that her power as a beautiful woman and seductive vampire afford her the opportunity to gain power over men that are drawn in by her alluring nature. But she is a deadly and dangerous creature, who seduces the men into following her only for them to have their throats ripped out. The Brotherhood questions Clara about how she intends to use her immortality. She states that she will use the gift, "To punish those who prey on the weak. To curb the power of men" (Jordan, 2012). Her rage over her initial rape spurs her to function as the avenging angel, a protector of women, and punisher of men who would seek to harm women.

It is to avenge Eleanor that Clara commits her most defiant act: turning Eleanor into a vampire. For Clara, turning Eleanor was the only course of action to avenge the Ruthven's sexual violence. When Clara sees Darvell give Ruthven a map to the cave that grants immortality, she steals the map and gains her own immortality, leaving Ruthven dying of syphilis. In a rage because Clara stole his chance to become eternal, Ruthven rapes Eleanor infecting her with the deadly disease. Clara's is the avenging woman—here specifically the avenging mother. By making Eleanor a vampire, Clara also defies the code of the Brotherhood. According to the film's mythology, Clara is the first woman to have been changed into a vampire. Vampires, here, are all male, who are given the secret by other high-born and accomplished men. According to the men, Clara steals her eternal life, which leaves her an outcast via her gender. Only the men are permitted to create other vampires, and therefore, Clara breaks and additional taboo by turning Eleanor. Darvell tells Eleanor, "You have been condemned from the moment Clara made

you. Our code does not permit women to create" (Jordan, 2012), which is inherently redundant as no other female vampires exist within this world. Clara's reassertion of her motherhood—her biological motherhood and her preternatural motherhood of Eleanor—is an act of defiance of the order of the Brotherhood and masculinist paradigms of power.

Clara's sexuality, her gender, and her motherhood leave her at odds with the other vampires, but those same traits allow her to survive and to offer Eleanor a life. She taunts the men of the Brotherhood with her survival: "Amazing how two little girls with no money and learning slipped through your fingers for an eternity" (Jordan, 2012). Clara reminds them that all she has is her wiles and her sexuality, but those things defeated this group of educated and upper-class men for centuries. As Savella, one of the Brotherhood, stands over her with a sword preparing to cut off her head, Clara pleads to Darvell to be merciful, to show compassion, and to spare Eleanor. Savella remarks to Darvell, "See how this bitch uses her arts to the last," by this he means, her sexual appeal—her desirability to men. Her plea to live is dismissed as sexual wile, and it is in this manner that the audience witnesses the misogyny in the Brotherhood's approach to women generally and their utter disdain for Clara specifically, but in the end it is Clara—the female vampire—who triumphs over the masculine-oriented power structure. Clara, with the help of Darvell, defeats the members of the Brotherhood, and she sends Eleanor to discover a life of her own choosing. While their future is unknown, the end of the film offers a hopeful moment, and it shows that the female vampire's embrace of her particularly gendered skills can undermine the cultural norms, which reinforces the fears I earlier articulated about the unstable and pathologized female sexuality that has the ability to dismantle society.

Clara's embrace of her sexuality is overt, using her sexual desirability and drive as a method for gaining power, as Báthory does in *The Countess*. Much like a Venus flytrap enticing its prey, Clara uses her sexuality and beauty in order to feed herself through the blood of men but also to kill abusing men, while Báthory utilizes the blood of young women to grant her continuing vitality and amplify her political power. Báthory gains power on the backs of other women, whereas Clara punishes men for their corrupt uses of power over women and seeks to protect women from the patriarchal structures that surround them. She does so, though, using that which men have long used against her—her beauty and her sexuality. Clara and Báthory embody the image of the vampiric woman using her beauty, wiles, and preternatural strength to unseat masculine power. In Clara's case she upends

the authority of the male-only vampire world, and Báthory's reign at least temporarily undermines the masculine machinations of Kings, the Nobles, and the Church.

THE CONNECTIONS OF RACE, BLOOD, AND SEXUAL FLUIDITY IN *DA SWEET BLOOD OF JESUS*

Female vampires have traditionally drawn upon images of hypersexuality, violence, and gendered societal constructions as seen in *Byzantium* and *The Countess*, Spike Lee's *Da Sweet Blood of Jesus* (2015) offers a view of African-based mythologies of the vampire and raises questions about the intersections of racism and sexism within the sexual rendering of the female vampire demonstrating again the ways in which the vampiress can stand for multiple critiques of marginality. *Da Sweet Blood of Jesus* is based on the 1973 film *Ganja and Hess*, which was written and directed by Bill Gunn and starred Duane Jones and Marlene Clark with Gunn receiving co-writer credit on *Da Sweet Blood of Jesus*. According to the narrative Dr. Hess Greene (Stephen Tyrone Williams) engages in a research project about the Ashanti, an advanced African culture that became addicted to blood. He employs as his research assistant Lafayette Hightower (Elvis Nolasco) a psychologically unstable man, who kills Greene with an Ashanti dagger and then commits suicide by a gunshot to the head. Greene, though, rises from the dead as a vampire, due to the power of the Ashanti daggar. Hightower's ex-wife, Ganja (Zaraah Abrahams), comes in search of him, and Ganja and Hess begin a romance. Hess turns Ganja into a vampire without her consent, just one incident of sexualized violence against Black women perpetrated by Hess. As in *Byzantium*, sexual violence plays a key role in the creation of the female vampires within the narratives. In *Byzantium*, that sexual violence is committed through Ruthven's rapes of Clara and Eleanor that lead to their eventual vampirism. In *Da Sweet Blood of Jesus*, the sexual violence is in the act of feeding and the forcible turning of the women upon whom Hess feeds. Lee's narrative demonstrates that Hess is unable to cope with his vampiric condition, and yet Ganja's preparation to deal with the world as a Black woman allow her to survive and outlast Hess, who is ill-equipped for eternal life and portrayed as weakened by his bourgeois upbringing that taught him manners not survival skills.

When discussing her life, Ganja tells a story about her childhood, in which her father told her that life would always be more difficult for her because she was both Black and female. Her father told her,

> This world is a cruel harsh place, especially for a Black woman. And you're going to have to learn to deal with the double whammy. You're gonna be a woman one day soon and you were born Black. Ganja's got to learn how to take care of Ganja …Life's not fair. Life is as hard as steel. Ganja has to take care of Ganja. (Lee, 2015)

This commentary is the central lesson of her life. She says, "I've been taking care of myself since I was seven years old" (Lee, 2015). Ganja articulates the way that she has taken care of herself throughout her life by being able to be strong and by understanding that being a Black woman comes with multiple layers of oppression and that she cannot rely upon others to aid her throughout her life. Navigating this multiplicity of oppression, Ganja addresses the challenges that she faces by embracing a fervent self-reliance. As with Báthory and Clara, Ganja's strength and perseverance is dedicated to her survival. All three women present an image of the voracious hypersexualized woman who simultaneously uphold and tweak gendered norms in order to seek stability and continual existence. In the case of Báthory, she is unsuccessful and ultimately punished, but Ganja is a survivor at every turn throughout the film and in what the audience knows of her life. She demonstrates that she will use whatever means necessary to survive even as a being that she initially reviles—a blood drinker. As Hess kills himself, begging her to join him so he does not have to die alone, Ganja cries and holds him as he breathes his last breathe, but she will not join him in his death. She survives in the life he forced upon her and the ending indicates that she will thrive in this vampiric life, as she had throughout her human life, and in this manner, she, like Clara, demonstrate a cunning perseverance that highlights cultural fears about strong women who might utilize their sexualities to challenge male dominated spaces.

Similarly to Báthory and Clara, Ganja embraces her sexuality as a vital aspect of her being. While Báthory's hypersexualization becomes her downfall, Clara and Ganja navigate using their feminine-coded sexuality as an aspect of their survival. Ganja relays that she met Hightower while in an airport and that he tells her that he's been waiting for two thousand years for her. He objectifies her beauty and her strength. While she was initially wooed by the romanticism, those feelings quickly turned to disdain as he proved to be an unreliable partner, due to his deteriorating mental health and his inability to maintain a stable job, which reiterates stereotypes of Black masculinity. Ganja's strength and her desire for an equal partner highlighted Hightower's weakness and instability. Her relationship with Hess is similar, and the film shows a love-story montage of them that seems to be a type of

surface-level only exploration of their attractiveness to each other. He turns her into a blood-drinking creature because he desires to live and love with her forever, but it becomes apparent that Hess, too, is weak and unstable, which the film seems to argue is because of his upper-class upbringing that has made him unable to bear hardship. These fragile men contrast fiercely with Ganja's strength and her ability to adapt to even the most extreme circumstances.

The introduction of Tangier Chancellor (Náte Bova), a former lover of Hess, offers a glimpse of another sexual woman, one who also embraces sexual desire. Hess leaves Ganja and Tangier alone to converse, and the situation turns sexual. Ganja says as they dance without music, "I'll have some womanly companionship." Like Delpy's Báthory, Ganja and Tangier's fluid sexuality shows the women engaging in their desires for pleasure, seeking experiences in order to fulfil their needs but also participating in sex as an exploratory act. In this case, Ganja and Tangier, who have been connected to sexual relationships with men, show their sexual fluidity as they dance around one another seducing each other by inches, which is in direct opposition to the way Hightower reportedly wooed Ganja and the manner in which Hess pursues Ganja. With Tangier and Ganja, their sexual seduction of one another is mutual. By exploring their sexualities unconnected from the heteronormative paradigm, Ganja and Tangier are able to explore their identities as sexual beings. In *The Countess,* Báthory's female lover is presented as a witch, reflecting medieval concerns about same-sex relationships that turn women into unnatural beings, such as witches and vampires. In *Da Sweet Blood of Jesus*, Ganja and Tangier's relationship shows the progression of the image of the lesbian relationship and of the lesbian vampire more specifically. Within the context of the film, Ganja survives and sexual fluidity is, therefore, vindicated, though it is established early on as threatening because it undermines the core heterosexual relationship and plays a key role in Ganja's portrayal as a hypersexualized female vampire. While initiated by Hess, the perceived masculine authority, the sexual encounter between Ganja and Tangier turns to centre upon the erotic pleasure of the women devoid of the voyeurism of Hess's gaze.

Ganja and Tangier's sensual dance moves to sexual intercourse, when Tangier asks to shower. Ganja joins her in the bathroom, and the pair have sex on the floor. Tangier implores Ganja to choke her and then "harder." Her orgasm turns to agony as Ganja continues to strangle her. Though Tangier had invited the violent edge to their sexual encounter, Ganja cannot control her bloodlust and slices Tangier's wrists open to drink. At this moment, the film

indicates that the women's hypersexuality is a dangerous element that must be corralled into a more culturally normative one, and it is this scene that reminds us of the fears of uncontrolled sexuality present throughout history, as exemplified in both *Byzantium* and *The Countess*. Like Delpy's Báthory, Tangier's penchant for rough sex and her same-sex desire are punished, though in this case by her fright during the sex and her initial death. Ganja's sexual drives lead her to inflict violence upon Tangier in much the same way Hess had and demonstrates that once her sexuality and blood lust are unleashed she cannot contain them. This action initially drives her back to Hess and the heterosexual paradigm. Hess insists that they bury Tangier, even knowing that she will rise as a blood-drinker. Having found a kindred spirit in Tangier, Ganja protests, but Hess temporarily wins the argument. This moment of disagreement sows the seeds for the crumbling of Ganja and Hess's relationship. Once again female power and agency are subsumed by male control just as in the previous two examples, at least for the moment.

After Hess's death, Ganja stands on the beach looking out at the ocean, as the changed and nude Tangier approaches. They stand side by side as the film fades to the credits, and the moment signals that they will continue to survive together. Lee's *Da Sweet Blood of Jesus* offers an exploration of the connection between sexual desire, violence, and blood, and one in which it is ultimately the Black women who survive and thrive. Their sexual fluidity and their ability to adapt to the circumstances of life allow them to persevere when others are unable to do so. Despite the unsteady portrayal of female agency, Ganja and Clara are allowed to survive and thrive, while Báthory dies during her imprisonment. Nevertheless it is clear that regardless of the context, the female vampires' ability to reflect real concerns about female agency and fears of lesbianism remaining ever-present.

VORACIOUS FEMALE SEXUAL DESIRES

The examples in this chapter demonstrate the ways in which female vampires use their sexuality in order to gain power and independence but also the ways in which their sexuality is evidence of the fear of female power and unfettered sexuality. The female vampire in contemporary media relies heavily upon the fear of women's sexuality, the inability to contain a woman's desire once it is released, and the belief that that unbridled and voracious female sexual desire will upend stable gender and, in turn, cultural norms. The fears of female sexuality incorporate concerns about the strong and independent woman that can survive unconnected to men outside of the need for their

blood, which we see in *The Countess*, *Byzantium*, and *Da Sweet Blood of Jesus*. Only in *The Countess* does the woman not survive the tale. In the other films, the female vampires are indeed the survivors, sometimes at great cost but nonetheless they outlast their enemies in Clara and Eleanor's case and their male lovers in Ganja and Tangier's. Though all three films are made in the twenty-first century, they span several centuries of cultural norms, showing the shifts from medieval indictments of female sexuality as linked to witchcraft to the Enlightenment's ideals of fraternity that warn of women's irrationality to the contemporary era's conflicting visions of womanhood. Moreover, they also address the intersection of social class with gender as complicating factors in the women's fates. On-going concerns about the sexualization of women have continued to circulate through popular media and other cultural institutions, and the female vampires upon which I have focused demonstrate those characterizations and the ways in which those fears have persisted but also shifted.

The hypersexualization of the female vampire is evident in these films, as they focus upon the women's sexual desire, their sexual fluidity, and their willingness to use their sexualities for their survival. Dylan Ryan (2013) writes,

> Like many female viewers [of pornography], I had difficulty relating to the women in these films and their sexual presentations. Their bodies looked different from mine, and they seemed to embody a sexuality that was foreign to me, one of extreme femininity: vulnerable but hypersexual, passive but sexually desiring, ready for any sex act but without the impetus to make it happen. (p. 145)

Ryan, here, is speaking about her experience with mainstream pornography. As a scholar of popular culture generally and the vampire specifically, those words easily apply to my reaction to mainstream media's portrayal and engagement with female bodies and sexuality. Hypersexualization of the female body is unsurprisingly most pronounced in pornography, but it is clearly noticeable in the trope of the female vampire from the earliest literary approaches to contemporary film and television. As I opened with the image of a Las Vegas top-less revue, I could end with any of the large amount of small-screen examples of the hypersexualized female vampire from Olivia Godfrey of Netflix's *Hemlock Grove* (2013–present) to Claire Radcliff on the short-lived *The Gates* (2010) and *True Blood*'s (2008–2014) Pam Swynford de Beaufort. The hypersexualized dark seductress is a key image of popular culture, and the female vampire is the ultimate dark seductress.

She will kiss you, seduce you, and drain you dry in order to survive, but more importantly, she will remain and continue to thrive as an icon and archetype because she is too embedded within our cultural consciousness to ever be destroyed.

NOTES

[1] Though *Bite*'s run in Las Vegas has ended, the appeal for dancing vampire women has not. For instance, Dejà Vu Showgirls on Bourbon Street in New Orleans has three nightly shows that they call VuDoo Burlesque, which allows the audience to "experience [their] Sexy Vampires, Zombies, Witches, Voodoo Priestesses, and more." They tell the potential clientele, "You will put your very Soul at Risk" and offer the disclaimer that the establishment is not liable if you are indeed turned into a vampire. See http://dejavuneworleans.com/events/ for more information

[2] For more information on *Bite*, see E! News clip https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNIS5kg5UTI, the review by Mike Weatherford http://www.reviewjournal.com/columns-blogs/vegas-voice/entertainment-bite-gets-staked-halloween, the Official Website http://www.bitelasvegas.com/, or the Official Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/BiteLasVegas

[3] Every culture has at least one myth about a blood-drinking being. *Byzantium* draws on the Celtic image of the *neamh-mhairbh*. Scholars frequently link Dracula to the image of the Irishman and the Celtic tradition based on Stoker's nationality and the issues of Home Rule that were prominent at the time of his writing of Dracula. For more on the Celtic origins of this vampire myth, see Bob Curran's "Was Dracula an Irishman" (http://www.historyireland.com/18th-19th-century-history/was-dracula-an-irishman/) and Joseph Valente's *Dracula's Crypt: Bram Stoker, Irishness, and the Question of Blood* (2001).

[4] Ruthven is a nod to the history of vampire fiction as John Polidori's "The Vampyre" (1819) introduced the world to the aristocratic vampire that would become the main representation of the vampire. Polidori based Lord Ruthven on Lord Byron, Polidori's employer and dangerous playboy of his era.

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3. HYBRID HEROINES AND THE NATURALIZATION OF WOMEN'S VIOLENCE IN URBAN FANTASY FICTION

As the heroine of Karen Marie Moning's *Fever* series, MacKayla "Mac" Lane, struggles with her discovery of supernatural elements both in the human world and within herself, she realizes that the gender roles that fairy tales communicated to her as a child have ill-equipped her to deal with the threat of real fae: "I waited for Barrons to come and rescue me, the product, I suppose, of growing up in a world where nearly all the fairy tales I'd heard as a child had a prince rushing to the rescue of the princess" (Moning, 2007, p. 55). Mac quickly comes to see that the "glamour girl" raised as a human in the American South is not going to survive in fae-ridden Dublin; she then understands her inner conflict to be between the acculturated femininity of "Glam-girl Mac" and the violence of "Savage Mac" (Moning, 2007, p. 95). Nickie Callahan, the narrator and protagonist of Charlaine Harris's realist mystery novel, *A Secret Rage*, suggests that all women – and again, particularly Southern women – are internally divided along similar lines. Nickie's friend, Mimi, "is a sort of hybrid, like a lot of young southern women"; while she "believes fervently that woman are equal to (or better than) men in most ways" (Harris, 2007, p. 15); she finds "the old way," the acculturated femininity that insists women "propitiate, manipulate, never confront," to be "almost impossible to shake" (Harris, 2007, p. 155). After Nickie and Mimi aggressively attack and come close to killing a man who was attempting to rape them for a second time, supernatural figures stand in for the women's threateningly alien violence: Nickie's boyfriend is horrified by Nickie having bitten her attacker like a "Vampire," by a female violence that is "too maenadlike," and the novel closes with him unable to kiss her after seeing her mouth all bloody (Harris, 2007, pp. 186–198). The fundamental difference between the heroines of *A Secret Rage* and the heroines of a range of urban fantasy series, from Moning's *Fever Series* and Harris's Sookie Stackhouse novels to Jeaniene Frost's *Night Huntress Series* and Nicole Peeler's *Jane True* novels, is that the urban fantasy heroines'

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hybridity is embodied: they are genetically human/supernatural hybrids who, in order to survive in the human/supernatural worlds in which they suddenly find themselves, accept and integrate into their identities a capacity for violence.[1]

Hybridity is the defining feature of urban fantasy fiction; supernatural and contemporary urban worlds intermingle in the genre, and exemplars variously blend conventions of science fiction, fantasy, romance, detective fiction, horror, erotica, and the action thriller. This ambitious genre hybridity sets the stage for the apparent gender hybridity of urban fantasy's kick-ass heroines, while the boundaries that some sci-fi/fantasy authors and readers attempt to police between the gendered genres of science fiction and romance parallel the barriers to these heroines fully integrating "masculine" and "feminine" attributes, especially when a non-normative gender identity develops alongside a heterosexual romance (or two, or more).[2] While urban fantasy heroines' capacity for violence generally destabilizes gender categories, the heroines can only sustain a transgressive gender identity to the extent that the texts reject or reconceive normative heterosexual romance – which, as Judith Butler (1990) has suggested, produces and reifies binary gender codes (p. viii). In each of the four urban fantasy series that I examine here – Moning's *Fever Series* (2006–15), Harris's *Southern Vampire Mysteries* (2001–2013), Peeler's *Jane True Series* (2009–13), and Frost's *Night Huntress Series* (2007–13)—the heroine's ability to develop and maintain a hybrid gender identity depends upon both the genre hybridity that reframes heterosexual romance and the genetic hybridity that the heroine discovers in her biological heritage after being raised as a human.

Moning's Mac Lane, Harris's Sookie Stackhouse, Peeler's Jane True, and Frost's Catherine "Cat" Crawfield, are all human/supernatural hybrids that do not realize the fact of their dual heritage or their paranormal abilities as supernatural power until they reach late adolescence or early adulthood. By that point, the acculturated femininity entrenched in the heroines' human identities makes it difficult for them to integrate the capacity for aggression and violence discovered through their encounters with supernatural threats. These heroines' biological hybridity and their dual citizenship in human and supernatural worlds allow for some reconciliation of otherwise incompatible aspects of their identities: hetero-femininity and violence. Because the heroines discover that their capacity for aggression and violence has always been within their genetic makeup, it does not function as an external supplement to female identity; nor are their acts of violence simply performances of hegemonic masculinity. Instead, these heroines' hybridity performs the same

work that Halberstam (1993) ascribes to certain feminist representations of violent women: that is, it "transforms the symbolic function of the feminine within popular narratives and it simultaneously challenges the hegemonic insistence upon the linking of might and right under the sign of masculinity" (p. 191). These heroines' stories counter fairytales like the ones Mac heard as a child, by representing women as capable of *both* a violence that defends and avenges *and* the emotional vulnerability that sustains one's humanity and, in the worlds of these novels, allows for mutually fulfilling romantic relations with supernatural men who respect their strength.

"Hybridity," in these urban fantasy series, is both a genetic fact of the heroines' biological makeup and a conceptual vehicle for challenging gender norms, and thus functions in ways that condense and at points collapse the complex cultural history of the term. In the supernatural worlds of these novels, the hierarchical classification of supernatural and human beings and the perceived harms of mating across categorical boundaries invoke the 19th-century discourses of scientific racism that were used to justify colonialism and slavery. As Peeler's human/selkie Jane True reflects, "I had heard myself called a halfling by the supes, but that seemed a rather loaded term, like the words 'mulatto' or 'quadroon' from slave days" (Peeler, 2009, p. 113). Just as 19th-century scientific racism associated miscegenation and hybridity with disease and decay (Scott and Marshall), the enforcers of the supernatural hierarchy that Jane implicitly challenges see halflings as "defilements, corruptions" that "must be purged from our society" (Peeler, 2009, p. 313). All four heroines, but particularly Peeler's Jane and Frost's human/vampire Cat Crawfield, are alternately reviled, feared, and desired because their biological heritage transgresses known categories and threatens a social order that depends upon a rigid, hierarchical classification system.

These heroines' genetic hybridity is associated with, but does not directly map onto, their gender hybridity, which the series' authors generally frame in cultural terms – an invocation of the concept that echoes postcolonial critics' reappropriation of hybridity as a positive challenge to essentialist categories of identity and culture. All four heroines are repeatedly asked some version of the question, "what are you?" not just because their mix of human and supernatural traits eludes easy classification, but also because the conjunction of their feminine appearance and their aggressive power challenges seemingly ontological gender categories. It is on this latter front that most of the heroines' identity struggles are waged; each must work to reconcile the feminine identity associated with her humanity with the violence elicited by her initial encounters with the supernatural world.

Before any of the heroines learn of their supernatural heritage in late adolescence, each is aware of an internal power or drive that is alien to heteronormative femininity and is thus experienced as a kind of defect or madness. Both Moning's Mac Lane and Harris's Sookie Stackhouse appear to fit expectations for ideal femininity – both are pretty, Barbie-esque, bikini-wearing and sun-worshipping Southern blondes, but each is aware of an otherness within her. Although Mac is not aware of her *sidhe*-seer or fae-hunter abilities as a girl, she feels an internal difference that she knows she must suppress: "Back in high school, I began to suspect that I was bipolar. There were times when, for no good reason at all, I felt downright, well …homicidal was the only word for it"; "Duality is me" (Moning, 2011, pp. 49–50). Sookie knows from a young age that her ability to hear others' thoughts sets her apart; she experiences her paranormal power as a "disability" that she must conceal from a community that labels her as "crazy" (Harris, 2001, p. 2). Jane True and Cat Crawfield are isolated in their respective communities because they "reek of power and otherness" even though they work to conceal their internal differences (Peeler, 2009, p. 79), including Jane's paranormal affinity with water and Cat's "abilities other children didn't have" – abilities that, if revealed, would result in "an extended stay in a padded cell" (Frost*,* 2007, pp. 1–3).

The timing and means of each heroine's discovery of her supernatural heritage significantly impacts how she comprehends her capacity for violence in relation to her already-developed identity as a female human. Harris's Sookie does not learn of her fae heritage until the eighth of thirteen novels in the series, by which point she has repeatedly endured and executed extreme violence, all while still thinking of herself as just a human waitress (albeit one with telepathic ability and, occasionally, borrowed power from ingested vampire blood). By contrast, Frost's Cat learns that she is half vampire six years before her series opens, on her sixteenth birthday, a moment that she recalls on her way to bury her sixteenth vampire kill. At the same time that her mother revealed Cat's vampire heritage, she told Cat that vampires, including her rapist vampire father, are demonic monsters, and Cat "promised her I'd kill every vampire I found to make up for it" (Frost*,* 2007, p. 15). Because Cat's killing is initially bound to her belief that the vampire part of her is inherently evil, her struggle to accept and incorporate her vampire half also involves the revaluation and integration of her already-demonstrated capacity for violence. Like Sookie, both Moning's Mac and Peeler's Jane learn of the supernatural world shortly after their respective series open, and each wrestles with the apparent incompatibility of her existing identity with

the violence that survival in that new world demands; like Cat, Mac and Jane learn of their supernatural heritage at about the same time, and thus already know that they are more than "just" human women as they begin to actively participate in violence.

Despite the differences between them, there is remarkable congruity in the ways that the four hybrid heroines negotiate the human/supernatural and female/violent aspects of their being. In each series, the external violence that attends the heroine's initiation into the supernatural world causes her to draw upon her suppressed abilities; she then feels herself to be internally divided, or more than one self. The fact that an attractive supernatural male tries to assure each heroine that her abilities are a valuable gift does not bind or subordinate her developmental arc to a romantic plot, but rather signals the tensions that she must negotiate between her hetero-femininity and her aggressive power. For each heroine, the journey towards reconciling her "halves" or "selves" is long, if ever completed, but each eventually comes to revalue her internal otherness, particularly her capacity for violence, as a source of individual and communal strength rather than debilitating alienation.

In the opening chapter of Harris's *Dead Until Dark*, Sookie charges into her first fight after telepathically "overhearing" humans who are planning to drain the first vampire she has met, and she instinctively uses the weapons at hand, a chain and then a knife, to rescue vampire Bill Compton and defend herself. Although Sookie expresses doubt when Bill tells her that what makes her "different from other humans" is "a gift" (Harris, 2001, pp. 52–53), this inciting incident's conjoining of her ability to read minds, her capacity to fight and survive, and her attractiveness to a man who affirms her difference sets Sookie on a path towards reconciling her paranormal otherness and instinctive violence with her hetero-femininity. That path turns out to be series-long, winding across all thirteen novels, and never reaches full resolution. Early in the series, Sookie feels herself torn between the promptings of a deep-seated, "crazy hostility" and the internalized, monitoring voice of her grandmother (Harris, 2001, p. 176), and she initially feels paralysed by her "warring impulses": "I wanted to pitch myself on her and beat the shit out of her, but I hadn't been brought up to brawl in barrooms" (Harris, 2001, p. 219). At the end of the first book, Sookie is surprised to find herself willing to kill to survive – "I didn't know I had it in me" (Harris, 2001, p. 278); in the second, she begins to feel that she "was not a wholly civilized person" (Harris, 2002, p. 140); and by the third, after killing the vampire Lorena as Sookie again rescues Bill, she proudly declares, "I killed *her* ass"

(Harris, 2003, p. 207) – though she later feels some horror at having felt "pure pleasure" in the kill (Harris, 2003, p. 274).

Across the series, Sookie fears losing her humanity to the instinctive violence within her, but she also comes to see critically – and ultimately to reject – certain anti-violence messages internalized through her acculturation as a Christian woman. When she cannot reconcile the fact that she must fight and sometimes kill in order to survive, with the learned precept that a Christian woman does not engage in violence, she first decides, "I was a terrible Christian and a decent survivalist" (Harris, 2008, p. 78), but later tells her friend, Kennedy Keyes, "I don't think God would ever want you to let yourself be beaten to death" (Harris, 2011, p. 61). While the humans of Bon Temps generally fear and shun Kennedy (a perfectly made-up and coiffed Beauty Pageant Queen who served time for killing her abusive boyfriend), Sookie stands up for her, because "some people just beg to be killed, don't they? After all I'd been through, I was forced to simply admit to myself that I felt that way" (Harris, 2010, p. 114). Sookie later reflects that it's not violence as justice that scares her, but rather that she has "come to accept it as just the way you do things if you're two-natured," – which is how she describes weres, but is also how she thinks about her own dual identity (Harris, 2010, p. 275). She comes to accept the part of her capable of violence but recognizes that it can never be fully reconciled with her female, human identity; at the end of the eleventh book in the series, on the morning that Sookie hosts Tara's baby shower, "doing what I was supposed to be doing, in the community," she muses, "I might not even be that same person who'd participated in a slaughter the night before" (Harris, 2011, p. 308).

Moning's Mac Lane also feels herself to be more than one person, both internally and temporally: she thinks of herself not only as divided along the same line as is Sookie, between "Glam-girl Mac" and "Savage Mac," but also as successive (yet sometimes coexisting) selves, from "Mac 1.0" to "Mac 5.0." Glam-girl Mac and Mac 1.0 are the products of her acculturation as a Southern woman, while Savage Mac and Mac 2.0+ are fundamental, instinctive parts of her, revealed as she faces external threats and begins to "shed *years* of polished southern civilities" (Moning, 2008, p. 15). The Mac raised in the South on fairy tales of princes rescuing princesses wears a "killer outfit of pink linen" into Dublin's fae-ridden streets, an unwitting and easy prey, while Mac 2.0 "wore black jeans and a black t-shirt: the better for potentially being bled upon," and she carries a foot-long spearhead for killing fae (Moning, 2006, p. 300). As the dark, brooding, and supernaturally-endowed Jericho Barrons teaches Mac how to kill and as her *sidhe*-seer

fighting instincts kick in, Mac's sense of internal division deepens: "Inside me was a Mac I'd never met before," and "she was a bloodthirsty, primitive little savage" (Moning, 2007, p. 69). Mac comes to think of herself as "the one who tries to mediate between the two," the "glam-girl" and "Savage Mac" (Moning, 2007, p. 95). Each "Mac" needs the other: "Pink Mac had needed a good dose of savagery. It was a savage world out there" (Moning, 2009, p. 68), and although in her darkest, most violent moments, "Pink Mac" goes completely "black," in the end she keeps some pink in her life "to counter all the ugliness in it," to retain her humanity (Moning, 2007, p. 331).

Just as Sookie comes to accept that she is "not a wholly civilized person," that she has "a savagery […] coming from inside me" (Harris, 2003, p. 237), Mac thinks of her acculturated femininity as "polished civilities" that can be shed, while her "savage" capacity for rage and violence is something instinctive, something already within her at a genetic level. Sookie's and Mac's femininity is associated with learned "civilities," while their violence is a fundamental part of their biological makeup, something long suppressed but inseparable from them. Harris and Moning's heroines thus invert dominant cultural assumptions about women and violence. As Hilary Neroni (2012) has argued, popular representations of the violent woman tend either to render her symbolically masculine or to separate the violence that she performs from her inherent femininity: violence is "split from her and seen not as something that *comes from her* but rather something randomly *attached to her*" (p. 141), usually because of a job, such as soldier or detective, or an external calling, such as "slayer" or "chosen one."[3] Such splitting "functions as a mechanism of defense" that "allows for the complementarity of masculinity and femininity to continue"; "therefore society can still believe that her violence in no way disrupts the definitions of masculinity and femininity" (Neroni, 2012, pp. 138–139). The vast majority of the texts that Neroni (2012) has analysed maintain heteronormative gender categories by representing a woman's violence as a supplement, as something fundamentally *not her*; by contrast, the four urban fantasy series that I examine here represent their heroines' capacity for violence as something always already a part of them, as something that cannot be split from them.

The double signification of hybridity in these urban fantasy series is particularly important here: it is the biological hybridity that associates the heroines' violence with a genetic inheritance that cannot be separated from them, and it is the cultural hybridity through which the heroines negotiate a transgressive gender identity that refuses a splitting of women and violence. If the heroines' hybridity was only biological, their supernatural genes could

be read as the supplement that naturalizes violence in these otherwise human women – thereby leaving human gender categories intact and potentially reinforcing the popular belief that evolutionary genetics dictate gender behaviour.[4] However, while the supernatural heritage of each hybrid heroine gives her the beyond-human power necessary to execute violence against some beyond-human beings, her capacity for aggression and her willingness to fight is as much or more associated with her human "side" as it is with the supernatural; her entrance into the supernatural world simply creates the need and opportunity for her to realize her aptitude for violence. The cultural hybridity demanded by the urban fantasy heroines' dual citizenship in human and supernatural worlds gives her access to subject positions and agency not afforded by the heteronormative structures of human society, but also does not allow her simply to transcend or escape those structures in an alternative world. The hybrid settings of these urban fantasy series thus force the negotiation of human gender categories with other possibilities for identity and culture.

While the urban fantasy heroines' violence is generally accepted and even celebrated in supernatural society, some heteronormative gender expectations tend to persist even in the supernatural world. Although the vampire Eric Northman applauds Sookie's killing of Lorena, he and Bill still carry with them some heteronormative expectations for women from their respective human lives (in Viking society and the Confederate South, respectively), and Eric's approval of Sookie's violence smacks of paternalistic condescension: "He was as proud as if he'd heard his first born reciting Shakespeare" (Harris, 2003, p. 228). Nevertheless, Sookie's participation in supernatural and human societies allows her to identify as both an aggressive fighter and a human woman and to embrace both her capacity for violence and her hetero-femininity, even if they cannot be fully reconciled in the human world that she still calls home. Moning's heroine, Mac, feels her diverse selves to be reconciled in the end, as she declares, "I'm no longer bipolar" (Moning, 2011, p. 560). Mac becomes a fighter and survivor as well as romantic partner to Barrons, a man who values her strength, and who "never decked me out in convenient labels and tried to stuff me in a box" (Moning, 2011, p. 519). Neither Mac's identity nor her relationship with Barrons simply reverses or transcends normative gender expectations, which would keep those "boxes" intact; Mac ultimately keeps the "peacock feathers" of the "Rainbow Girl" even after she grows "killing claws" (Moning, 2011, p. 540), and Barrons maintains his alpha male role as Mac's protector even after he resigns his paternalistic role as her trainer.

Although the fact that Mac Lane, Jane True, and Cat Crawfield are all trained to fight by men who eventually become their romantic partners might seem to re-consign their gender identities to the normative structures of hetero-romantic resolution, the gradual renegotiation of power within the heroines and between the heroines and heroes allows the women to be both wielders of violence and romantic partners to strong men. Again, this hybridity challenges dominant cultural representations of women, violence, and heterosexual romance. Neroni (2012) has noted that "one commonality among many of the films featuring violent women is that, unlike in the traditional Hollywood film, violent women do not end up in a romance at the film's end," and that if a film does "unite the violent woman and the male hero romantically," it usually does so by completely reversing their gender roles, by splitting the woman's violence from her femininity, and/or by invoking "a fantastical context" (p. 113). In each of the urban fantasy series that I examine here, the heroine's biological and cultural hybridity allows for the romantic union of an innately violent woman who is not symbolically masculine with a decidedly masculine hero who celebrates her strength, and each series remains in a context that is both fantastical and human/urban – and thus not a magical green world that exists completely apart from the expectations of patriarchal heteronormativity.

In the third Jane True novel, Jane realizes that "power and mastery" in themselves "weren't tied up with gender for the supes as they were for humans," but "'Cause the minute a female is vulnerable" in that world she is at risk of male violence, Jane concludes that "maybe supernatural society isn't so different from human" (Peeler, 2011a, pp. 214–215). When Jane enters supernatural society in the first novel, she has not yet learned to use her power, even in self-defence, and so she is doubly vulnerable to attacks from creatures like the naga Jimmu, who tries to kill her because of her "halfling" heritage. After learning that she is half selkie, Jane "wasn't sure what I was anymore" (Peeler, 2009, p. 113), and her relationship with the domineering vampire Ryu further alienates her from herself: his insistence that "this is how your life should be," that "you should be dressed in satin… pampered… loved" makes her feel that "I'm really not me. I'm the other Jane" (Peeler, 2009, pp. 211, 246). The "other Jane" defined by her heteronormative romance with Ryu is a vulnerable victim when Jimmu attacks, and she has to be rescued by the barghest Anyan.[5] Jane's supernatural heritage in itself does not make her capable of wielding the power necessary to protect herself and others; indeed, her initial conception of her "seal" half reinforces Ryu's assertion that she is built for passive pleasures rather than offensive violence.

By the end of the first novel, after she has had to depend upon a male rescuer for her survival, Jane realizes that she must shed the heteronormative passivity that is "really not me," and she is thrilled by "the thought of being able to use the power I could—even now—feel pulsing under my skin" (Peeler, 2009, p. 343). As the second novel opens, weeks into her training to use her power, she declares, "I'd finally discovered the Jane True I'd always been meant to be. I still had a lot to learn, but I was really, really excited to grow into the woman I glimpsed on the horizon. She is pretty fucking fierce" (Peeler, 2010, p. 6). Despite Jane's excitement to become the authentic "Jane True," the road to integrating into her identity the "surprisingly aggressive magic at my disposal," to getting "comfortable with the idea of Jane True: Offensive Hybrid," is a long and difficult one, as suggested by the incongruous image she uses to describe that future self at the beginning of the third novel: a "seal who clubs back" (Peeler, 2011a, p. 8).

Jane's reimagining of her identity to incorporate her capacity for violence requires a corresponding restructuring of her sexual and romantic relations with men. Jane's first use of offensive power occurs early in the second novel, when Ryu assumes that she is weak and helpless: "I poured my strength and ire into four big-ass mage lights," and "one clipped Ryu's ear" as she declares to him, "'If you ever treat me as less than an equal again, Ryu Baobhan Sith, you can find yourself another bedmate'" (Peeler, 2010, p. 116). Even after Jane demonstrates her capacity to protect herself by sending Conleth, the ifrit halfling who attempts to rape her, "smashing against the wall" (Peeler, 2010, p. 299), both Ryu and Anyan underestimate her; when they assume that she is too vulnerable to accompany them on a mission to rescue kidnapped halfling women, she declares, "I'm not that girl any longer," and she unleashes her "thuggishly brutal elemental force" to "flatten Ryu" and to drill Anyan into the ground, "hard enough to create an Anyan-shaped crater" (Peeler, 2011, pp. 59–60). Ryu looks shocked, "*like he's never seen me before*," while Anyan looks overjoyed and tells her, "'I figured you'd be stronger than me. But you beat all my expectations. And I'm glad, Jane. I hated seeing you vulnerable'" (Peeler, 2011a, pp. 62–63).

Both Peeler's Jane and Frost's Cat are sexually attracted to the supernatural men who value their aggressive power and train them to use it, the barghest Anyan and the vampire Bones, respectively. Each hybrid heroine's developmental arc is not dependent upon the sexual and romantic relationship that develops between her and her trainer/eventual partner, as demonstrated by her continuing growth and success as a warrior in the extended period that she is separated from the hero (through almost the entirety of the fourth Jane

True novel and for the four years that pass between the events of the first and second novels in the Night Huntress series, respectively). However, her ability to sustain both her transgressive gender identity and a heterosexual romantic relationship depends on that relationship itself being non-normative. Alpha-males Anyan and Bones are initially in positions of power and authority over their younger female trainees. In each series, that power dynamic changes, not through a simple reversal of gender roles or a transfer of power from the hero to the heroine, but rather through the heroine independently realizing the potential already within her, a power that eventually surpasses that of the hero. In the final three of the six *Jane True* novels, Jane is *the* "Champion" against forces of global destruction in an epic supernatural war, while by the start of the second book in the *Night Huntress Series*, Cat is the leader of a secret unit of elite soldiers that brings in or takes down supernatural threats, and she has so many vampire kills to her name that she is widely known as the "Red Reaper." Anyan and Bones fight alongside and serve under the leadership of Jane and Cat, respectively, as the heroines become legendary figures in the supernatural world. The heroes are thus also gender hybrids, though to a lesser extent than are the heroines: each alpha male is emotionally supportive of his partner and is not threatened by her superior position; in fact, each hero publically acknowledges and celebrates her strength even as he asserts a playful, non-compensatory dominance in their sexual relationship.

In the *Jane True* novels and in the *Night Huntress Series*, the hero encourages the heroine to accept and maintain her hybridity, to embrace her capacity for violence without losing her humanity, without giving herself wholly over to the drive for vengeance and power. Like Anyan in relation to Jane, Bones accepts both of Cat's "halves," and urges her to figure out who she is and not apologize for it (Frost, 2007, pp. 259, 262). Anyan and Bones subject the heroines to rigorous training that helps them to recognize and wield their power as weapons, which Jane and Cat use on their first missions, to save kidnapped, missing girls (in the third *Jane True* novel and in the first *Night Huntress* novel, respectively). Each heroine feels deep satisfaction that her power enables her to protect others, particularly vulnerable females: mid-mission, Jane is proud that she "made a man gulp with fear" and she declares, "I am wicked hard core" (Peeler, 2011a, p. 294), while Cat is filled with "unholy exultation" and gives "a howl of victorious slaughter" (Frost, 2007, p. 307). After each heroine learns of extreme violence executed against women (in the third Jane True novel and in the sixth Night Huntress novel, respectively), she is in danger of being fully consumed by her desire for violent revenge. Anyan warns Jane

not to become a cold, unfeeling "extreme Jane," as the vulnerability of feeling is "the only thing that keeps us human" (Peeler, 2011a, p. 186), while Bones warns Cat not to lose her relationships, and thereby herself, to the drive for vengeance (Frost, 2011b, p. 169). Each hero demonstrates and encourages in the heroine an emotional vulnerability even as he trains her to the point that she is far less physically vulnerable because she wields power greater even than his. Jane and Cat, like Sookie and Mac, work to lose certain aspects of their acculturated femininity, passivity and extreme physical vulnerability, without losing the capacity for emotional attachment that is culturally associated with femininity but is in fact essential to the humanity of both the heroes and the heroines. As Butler (2004) has asserted, social vulnerability – the capacity for feeling and the resulting risk of loss and violence – inscribes a body as a human subject: "each of us is constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of our bodies," even as "loss and vulnerability seem to follow from our being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure" (p. 20).

Of course the relationship between vulnerability, violence, and subjectivity is highly gendered in Western culture; as Laura J. Shepherd (2013) has argued, "Instances of violence are one of the sites at which gender identities are reproduced. Thus, gendered violence is the violent reproduction of gender" (p. 17). Shepherd further notes that "While we may be able to make sense of gender-blending and hybridity," a duality of gender tends to be re-produced even in critical popular artefacts, largely because "the socio-political conditions that sustain gender violence are pervasive and deeply internalized" (p. 17). That internalization happens in large part through the retelling of the central legends and myths of Western culture, like the traditional fairy tales that Moning's Mac heard as a child, of which "gender and violence are core thematic concerns," as they "are (re)productive of culturally intelligible subjects and modes of behavior" (Shepherd, 2013, p. 7). In the Prologue to the third novel in the Fever series, which captures Mac's interior monologue as the Unseelie Princes gang-rape her and she loses her sense of who and what she is, she thinks, "Most of what I believed about myself, and life, I derived from modern media, without any questioning of it," and wonders,

> How could I have been such a fool to believe that at the critical moment, when my world fell apart, some knight in shining armor was going to come thundering in on a white stallion […] and rescue me? What was I raised on—fairy tales? Not this kind. These are the fairy tales that we were *supposed* to be teaching our daughters. (Moning, 2009, p. 6)

After Barrons helps Mac to recover her sense of self and once she is ready to inspire and lead her fellow women *sidhe*-seers into battle against the Unseelie fae, she knows that the stories that need to be told are those of women warriors confronting and defeating violent threats, not the kind that she—and presumably most of the series' readers—were raised on, stories that keep women inside and "afraid of their own shadows" (Moning, 2009, p. 183). Third-wave feminist Megan Seely (2007) has explored why the stories that play out over and over in Western culture are of women who are subject to brutal violence, particularly sexual violence, rather than of women who fight back:

> Why don't we learn the history of women warriors? Perhaps, if they knew these stories, more girls and women would know their strength, believe in their worth, and not internalize fear-based assumptions about their ability and safety. And maybe more men would learn to appreciate and respect women's strength. (p. 186)

Such an alternative mythos is only disruptive of binary gender structures to the extent that, as Halberstam (1993) has argued, it "transforms the symbolic function of the feminine within popular narratives and it simultaneously challenges the hegemonic insistence upon the linking of might and right under the sign of masculinity" (p. 191). To remain transgressive, a story must integrate the paranormal, that which cannot be accounted for within accepted paradigms, such as women's violence, with the normal, the recognized, such as hetero-femininity, so that the paranormal element cannot simply be explained away as an external supplement to, or fantastic reversal of, the normal—explanations that, as Neroni (2012) has suggested, leave dominant cultural norms, such as binary gender categories, intact (pp. 138–139).

While the four urban fantasy series that I examine here run the risk of reinforcing the separation of violence from the feminine by associating the heroines' non-normative power with the paranormal, the texts circumvent such a recuperation of disruptive difference by also associating the heroines' capacity for power and violence with their human heritage. Both Jane and Cat are compared to the legendary human warrior, Joan of Arc: in the fifth *Jane True* novel, as Jane works to unite and lead a diverse supernatural force into an epic battle, she realizes "what it meant to be Joan of Arc" (Peeler, 2012, p. 146), while in the fifth *Night Huntress* novel, as a species war looms, Cat learns that she is the first half-human/half-vampire being since Joan of Arc (Frost, 2011a, p. 75). Joan of Arc, as a human and saint believed to have been inspired by God, and as a woman warrior who rode into battle wearing men's clothing, is an important precursor for urban fantasy's hybrid

heroines. Jane and Cat also become legendary warriors, but with important differences: their capacity to lead and fight is always already within them, they do not have to take on a masculine disguise, and they do not have to become martyrs – as Jane wryly hopes, she can "be some sort of Joan of Arc figure," but "minus the horribly painful death by burning" (Peeler, 2012, p. 9). And, crucially, as Jane discovers in the final book of her series, the capacity for violence and rage, for might and right, is already within each of us, supernatural and/or human, male and/or female (the original supernatural beings are androgynous): all supernatural and human beings "come from the same sources—these building blocks of genetics that you supernaturals understand as elements—it means we have all of the same things inside us" (Peeler, 2013, pp. 55–56).

The genetic and gender hybridity of Jane, Cat, Sookie, and Mac allows them to realize and incorporate into their sense of self the capacity for violence that is already within all human girls and women but is deemed alien to female identity by the central stories and defining myths of Western culture. The emerging alternative mythos to which these urban fantasy series contribute is comprised of stories of women warriors, real and imagined, stories that, as Seely (2007) has suggested, help girls and women "to know their strength, believe in their worth, and not internalize fear-based assumptions about their safety" (p. 186). Sookie makes this feminist message explicit by wearing a "Fight Like a Girl" tee shirt (Harris, 2011, p. 34), while Mac and a fellow fae-hunter make up a song that begins "*We're taking back the night!*" as they fight their way through Dublin's dark streets, and the song later becomes an anthem of *sidhe*-seers around the world (Moning, 2009, p. 132). Such stories, slogans, and songs are what Mac asserts "we were supposed to be teaching our daughters," not the fairy tales that had made her and her fellow women *sidhe*-seers "afraid of their own shadows" and unable to realize or trust in their innate abilities. It's important that in the *Fever Series*, it's a group of humans successfully fighting against the Unseelie that finally shames and inspires the *sidhe*-seers into action, and that in Harris's novels, Sookie generally has to rely on her human abilities in a fight. The use of the supernatural in these series to naturalize women's violence does not place the capacity to fight and to survive beyond human women's reach, but rather can inspire its hope; as Mac learns, "The single greatest advantage anyone can take into any battle is hope" (Moning, 2006, p. 216). In the end, each hybrid heroine becomes both a woman warrior and partner to a man who respects her strength. That is ultimately what these alternative fairy tales have to offer their readers: recognition of their capacity to fight and to

survive, and the hope of doing so without loss of aspects of the self associated with the feminine, including romantic relationships.

NOTES

[1] An early version of this claim appeared in the concluding section of an article on rape myths and rape revenge narratives in paranormal romance and urban fantasy fiction (Deffenbacher, 2014).

[2] Meadows (2013) has effectively summarized and responded to the gendered argument that there are essential differences between "real" science fiction and science fiction that has been "tainted" by romance.

[3] In Joss Whedon's television series, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003), Buffy's character unites violence and normative femininity and does so in a paranormal-infused contemporary urban setting. But because Buffy's violence is bound to her calling as "slayer" – a job that comes with mystical powers that originated from the heart of a demon and are not genetically inherited – her non-normative capacity for "might and right" can be read as a supplement that can and will be separated from her when it passes to the next "chosen one." Of course such a conservative reading of the potential for Buffy's power and violence to disrupt normative gender roles runs counter to the views of many fans and critics who celebrate Buffy as a transgressive feminist icon, a woman who can fight and have her femininity too. Indeed, the power learned and then embodied by Buffy's friend Willow and the martial training and activation of all female "Potentials" in the final episodes of the Buffy series suggest that the potential for power and violence already lies within all human girls and women. Buffy is thus an important forerunner of urban fantasy's hybrid heroines.

[4] Heather Schell (2007) has argued that popular paranormal narratives in fiction and on screen tend to reinforce the popular concept that evolutionary genetics determine masculine behavior, an unscientific theory that "explains aggressive characteristics associated with men, such as vengeance, competitiveness, murder, jealousy, and rape, as prehistoric adaptations preserved in the genetic inheritance of every male" (p. 110).

[5] In Peeler's Jane True novels, the barghest, Anyan, is an ancient and powerful supernatural being who shifts between human and canine forms; he is a ruggedly-attractive artist and a belly-rub-loving dog, decidedly not the goblin-like harbinger of death that figures in most barghest legends.

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4. MEN THAT SUCK

Gender Anxieties and the Evolution of Vampire Men

> We make up horrors to help us cope with the real ones.
>
> (Stephen King, 1981)

American vampire culture has grown to new heights of popularity with a dominating presence in film, television, and books. Scholar Nina Auerbach (1995) noted that every generation creates its own vampires, meaning that each re-invention of the undead reflects the dominant fears of its creators and consumers. An analysis of vampire men and their interactions with women, past and present, offers an ideal site for examining cultural tensions. As inhuman fiends, vampires serve to reflect social fears and offer a space to reveal cultural preoccupations with gender and sex. Instead of the grotesque animated corpses of the past, recent representations of vampire men portray them as physically young, heterosexual, attractive, seductive, romantic, and outcasts for their love of humans. Yet despite this change in outward appearance, anxiety about vampire men and the white female body remains a consistent theme.

Gothic horror, broadly defined as a horror-based tale with a romance, rose to popularity in Europe during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Gothic literature used monsters as "others" to transgress social boundaries and create a response of horror from the audience (Bruin-Molé, 2010). The monster served as a foil to the hero, violating society's sacred rules and forcing the audience to face their darkest fears (Santilli, 2007). Gothic horror produced one of the most enduring stories ever written, Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula,* which has never gone out of print (Senf, 1979). Stoker's Count Dracula is the epitome of the monstrous transgressor, who as a representative "other" expresses cultural anxieties. He is the foreigner that embodies Victorian England's xenophobia, the hyper-masculine male who sexually desires white women, and his eternal life allows him the ability to amass great wealth, making him a capitalist with no lifespan to curtail his accumulation (Pikula, 2012).

A. Hobson & U. M. Anyiwo (Eds.), Gender in the Vampire Narrative, 45–59.

As one of the earliest written depictions of a male vampire, Stoker's *Dracula* set the stage for the cultural images of vampire men that exist to this day. Modern readers cannot help but notice the themes of masculinity and power in *Dracula*, and scholars often focus on Count Dracula's "irresistible" sexuality, which he uses to lure young, white, innocent women willingly to his side (Demetrakopoulos, 1977; Pikula, 2012; Stevenson, 1988). The growth of capitalism and influx of immigrants into England produced fears that white women might willingly choose a powerful, wealthy, and exotic (non-white) sexual partner thereby polluting pure Anglo bloodlines (Winnubst, 2003; Hollinger, 1997). This anxiety is a central theme of Count Dracula, as the male vampire emerges as a sexual competitor to the Victorian white male with his ability to seduce white women (May, 1998). Thus, the slaying of Dracula becomes not just about killing a monster but about restoring the social order by re-establishing white male supremacy and the secure sexual access to white women that it ensured.

Stoker introduces Dracula through solicitor Jonathan Harker's diary, which narrates his first encounter with the Count in his castle "in the midst of the Carpathian mountains; one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe" (Stoker, 1897, p. 1). Upon meeting Dracula, Harker notes that the Count has "hairs in the centre of the palm," and that his hands possess long nails "cut to a sharp point" (Stoker, 1897, p. 9). He also describes the Count's pointy ears, extreme "pallor," and his "rather cruel looking" mouth full of "sharp white teeth" from which his rank breath emits (Stoker, 1897, p. 9). Through this imagery, the Count appears animalistic, sinister, and unhygienic. Additionally, the ensuing conversations between the solicitor and his client over purchasing property in England often take a disconcerting turn with Harker noting his discomfort in Dracula's presence, such as when the Count offers him a "malignant and saturnine" smile (Stoker, 1897, p. 12).

Despite his ominous appearance and menacing mannerisms, Stoker never allows the reader to forget that Dracula also possesses a raw sexual and masculine power. This is proven early in the novel by the Count's control of the three vampire women in his castle and later with his ability to seduce the white Englishwomen Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker. At the start of the novel, Jonathan Harker, as a white Englishman, lacks male sexual power especially in comparison with Dracula. Stoker explicitly contrasts the masculine authority of the two characters when Harker meets three female vampires, also known as the Brides of Dracula. This encounter results in a gender reversal where Harker becomes a powerless sexual submissive:

> The girl went on her knees, and bent over me, simply gloating… Lower and lower went her head as the lips went below the range of my mouth and chin and seemed to fasten on my throat. Then she paused, and I could hear the churning sound of her tongue as it licked her teeth and lips, and I could feel the hot breath on my neck. Then the skin of my throat began to tingle as one's flesh does when the hand that is to tickle it approaches nearer, nearer. (Stoker, 1897, p. 20)

Dracula then bursts into the room and asserts his control, violently throwing one of the vampires across the room. Harker writes, "With a fierce sweep of his arm, he hurled the woman from him, and then motioned to the others, as though he were beating them back." The Count then verbally assaults the women: "How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me!" (Stoker, 1897, p. 21). Dracula quickly and forcefully reasserts his masculine control over the females within his household, inhuman or not, and in having Dracula rescue Harker from the woman's seductive embrace, Stoker creates horror in the Victorian reader by reducing the English solicitor to a feminine object in need of saving. The novel ends with Dracula's death by a band of white men where Harker contributes the fatal blow. With his manhood re-established, the novel's epilogue narrates the birth of Harker's son, ending the Gothic horror tale of the undead Count with white patriarchy both restored and ensured by the establishment of a male heir.

In *Dracula*, the raw masculinity of the Count, who exposes the Englishmen's inability to protect their white women from the threatening "other," is contrasted with the erudite hero, Professor Abraham Van Helsing, "MD, DPh, D.Lit, ETC, ETC" (Stoker, 1897, p. 58). In addition to his intellectual pursuits, Van Helsing possesses the admirable masculine traits of having an "indomitable resolution, self-command, and toleration exalted from virtues to blessings" as well as the "kindliest and truest heart that beats." His research further reflects his nobility as he attempts to better all of humanity and his "views are as wide as his all-embracing sympathy" (Stoker, 1897, p. 58). He is the opposite of Dracula in nearly every way, from the explicit heartbeat he possesses to his overwhelming desire to help and cure while Dracula seeks to control and destroy. His quest to heal Lucy and Mina of the contagion Dracula has inflicted upon their bodies is an outgrowth of his personal virtue. In order to banish the vampire menace, Van Helsing gathers a group of Englishmen together to track down and ultimately prevail

over Dracula, demonstrating the triumph of English protective masculinity over the foreign danger of the Count.

In the twentieth century, when vampires came to life on film, their appearance and mannerisms were no longer left to the reader's imagination. As Peter Day observes, "vampires have proved to be incredibly adaptive survivors, flourishing in the media and thriving in the popular imagination of modern societies" (Day, 2006, p. ix). Since 1930, over thirty films have focused on telling a version of the tale of Count Dracula (Ebert, 1999). One of most iconic versions of the Count is the 1931 film *Dracula*, which was widely seen and embraced by the American public. Hollywood cast the Hungarian actor Bela Lugosi as the Count, and Lugosi, his eyes enhanced by makeup, looked directly into the camera, his gaze penetrating viewers. This perspective, combined with Lugosi's "overpowering masculinity and foreign sexuality," overexcited moviegoers and resulted in theatres advertising that nurses would be present during viewings to revive audience members (Gölz, 2009, p. 5). This suggestion of the monster's masculine presence overwhelming viewers is striking in that it parallels the same fears of foreign sexuality found decades previously in Stoker's novel. Indeed, Americans conflated the actor Lugosi with his film persona; he was typecast with his major roles limited to playing a monster (Hakola, 2007). In 1931, the Great Depression, rapid immigration, and declining economic opportunities led to anxiety over foreigners in America. The connection viewers fashioned between the exotic masculinity of Lugosi and that of the fiendish transgressor reflected American audiences' fears of the foreign "other."

As the prevalent anxieties of a society evolve, so do the appearance, mannerisms, and ideologies of vampire men. One major cultural shift in the male vampire's depiction occurred with Anne Rice's popular book series *The Vampire Chronicles*, which made vampires into what one scholar termed a "cult of glamour" (Haggerty, 1998, p. 5). Rice does not see vampires as foreign outsiders; instead, she focuses on attractive white urbane vampires who threaten society from within its social structure. Rice's first book in the series, *Interview with the Vampire*, published in 1976 and made into a feature film in 1994, contained vampire men who were portrayed as attractive, sexually desirable, and overwhelmingly European. Louis de Pointe du Lac, the vampire narrator, is physically striking with skin "utterly white and smooth, as if he were sculpted from bleached bone" with "two brilliant green eyes" and a head full of wavy black hair (Rice, 1976, pp. 1–2). Lestat de Lioncourt, his maker, is a contrast to the dark Louis with his grey eyes and "mass of blond hair" (Rice, 1976, p. 9). These vampire men and their

physical desirability was furthered when Brad Pitt, a young actor seen as a "sex symbol" was cast as Louis, and Tom Cruise, who was the current Hollywood "hunk," portrayed Lestat.

Although Rice's handsome male vampires offered an alternative to the animalistic and exotic appearance of Dracula, these vampire men did not exclusively seek to possess or seduce white women. Many of the vampire men in Rice's novels participate in homosexual relationships. In *Interview with the Vampire,* Louis has a relationship with another male vampire, Armand, and they live together in Paris and New York. Louis and Lestat also have a tense relationship that involves sharing blood, which Louis describes as similar to "the pleasure of passion" (Rice, 1976, p. 14). Despite their sexual fluidity, these vampire men are physically dominant, as seen in this description of Louis feeding on a mortal man in *Interview with the Vampire*:

> He was pressing the length of his body against me now, and I felt the hard strength of his sex beneath his clothes pressing against my leg. A wretched gasp escaped my lips, but he bent close, his lips on what must have been so cold, so lifeless for him; and I sank my teeth into his skin, my body rigid, that hard sex driving against me, and I lifted him in passion off the floor. Wave after wave of his beating heart passed into me as, weightless, I rocked with him, devouring him, his ecstasy, his conscious pleasure. (Rice, 1976, p. 176)

As film reviewer Roger Ebert noted in his discussion of vampires, even though the victim is often seduced into surrender, the act of drinking blood is similar to rape, in that the feeding is ultimately about power (Ebert, 1999). By consuming a human's lifeblood, Louis has complete control of his victim.

The ability to take the life of a subordinate, human or otherwise, is the ultimate power of unchallenged patriarchy (Morris, 2012). The violent attack on the vampire women in Dracula's castle reveal to the reader the Count's bestial nature. The cause of this violence is the threat to his patriarchal power, which Dracula forcefully reasserts over his subordinates. Rice's vampires, as white males, engage in pursuits similar to Dracula, utilizing the authority white male patriarchy grants them to exploit those beneath them in the social hierarchy. Recently turned vampire Louis accuses Lestat of being "Vengeful and delighting in taking human life even when you have no need" (Rice, 1976, p. 62). Lestat agrees, and lectures Louis on vampire nature, "Vampires are killers…Predators," who he notes lack any emotional connection to humans. He continues discussing how vampires "all-seeing eyes were meant to give them detachment" and allow them "to see a

human life in its entirety, not with any mawkish sorrow but with a thrilling satisfaction in being the end of that life" (Rice, 1976, p. 64).

Whereas Count Dracula had a foreign and unnatural appearance and mannerisms that foreshadowed his monstrous nature, Rice's attractive vampire men appear outwardly human; it is their actions that expose their ruthless natures. Lestat enjoys killing, and Rice spends pages describing his methods of torture and narrating the obvious enjoyment such cruelty brings him. These descriptions of brutal violence are necessary in order to reveal to the reader the monster that lurks beneath the beautiful human face. Lestat, Louis narrates, "killed humans every night" and regularly tortured and killed human women (Rice, 1976, p. 61). In one scene, he murders a woman and then uses her lifeless body to torment another woman. After killing both, he props their "lovely corpses at the table" and proceeds to walk around the room "lighting all the candles until it blazed as if for a wedding" (Rice, 1976, p. 61). He then places various cuts on the dead women to drain their blood into a wine glass, which he drinks while talking with Louis. The acts of violence Rice's vampires commit, especially against women, overtly connect white masculinity and power to previous incarnations of vampire men.

Contemporary vampire men combine Count Dracula's violent nature and masculine power with the conventional attractiveness of Rice's vampires. In addition, they engage in romantic heterosexual relationships with human women. Currently numerous vampire themed books, TV shows, and movies populate our culture. Three sets of books and their screen adaptations offer a foundation for examining mainstream cultural representations of vampire men and their relationships. These sources are the book series *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* by Charlaine Harris and the HBO *True Blood* television show based on the series; Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight Saga* and its subsequent movies; and L. J. Smith's book series *The Vampire Diaries* and The CW Network's hit television show of the same name.

Bill Compton is the leading vampire male in both the *Southern Vampire Mysteries* books and its adaptation, HBO's *True Blood*. Vampire Bill, a Civil War solider, has returned to his ancestral small town home of Bon Temps, Louisiana. Sookie Stackhouse, the female narrator and protagonist, describes his appearance at their first meeting in *Dead until Dark*, "his lips were lovely, sharply sculpted, and he had arched dark brows. His nose swooped down right out of that arch, like a prince's in a Byzantine mosaic" (Harris, 2001, p. 2). The spunky and telepathic Sookie, a cocktail waitress, represents herself as "blond and blue-eyed and twenty-five" with "strong legs" and a "substantial bosom" (Harris, 2001, p. 1).

The *Twilight Saga*, which includes the novels *Twilight* (2005), *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse* (2007), *Breaking Dawn* (2008) and their corresponding film adaptations, feature Edward Cullen as the male lead. Edward is a ninety-year old vampire in a seventeen-year-old body. He lives in the small town of Forks, in Washington State, and his love interest is Bella Swan, a socially isolated, telepathically resistant, high school girl. Upon seeing Edward for the first time, Bella describes him as a "beautiful boy," with his "perfect lips barely opening." Throughout the series, she often recalls his "perfect face" (Meyer, *Twilight*, 2005, pp. 20, 54). In contrast, Bella is characterized by her physical actions, such as her "crippling clumsiness" (Meyer, *Twilight*, 2005, p. 55). Author Stephenie Meyer explained that she "left out a detailed description of Bella in the book so that the reader could more easily step into her shoes" (Meyer, FAQ Bella).

In *The Vampire Diaries* books and television series, Stefan Salvatore is a one hundred and sixty-five-year-old vampire in the body of a seventeen-year-old, living in the small town of Mystic Falls, Virginia. His love interest is high school student Elena Gilbert, who is recovering from her parents' deaths in a car accident. Elena, upon seeing Stefan, describes the "dark curly hair" that frames his features "so fine they might have been taken from an old Roman coin…high cheekbones, classical straight nose…and a mouth to keep you awake at night. The upper lip was so beautifully sculpted, a little sensitive, a whole lot sensual" (Smith, *The Awakening*, 2009, p. 19). In contrast, Elena describes herself as "cool and blonde and slender, the fashion trendsetter, the high school senior, the girl every boy wanted and every girl wanted to be" (Smith, *The Awakening*, 2009, p. 6).

The physical descriptions of these male vampires contrast sharply with Stoker's Count Dracula, the "old man" who welcomes Harker to his castle (Stoker, 1897, p. 8). Instead, the portrayal of current vampire men echoes that of Anne Rice's European undead. Bill is compared to a Byzantine emperor and Stefan to a visage on a Roman coin, resonating with Rice's French nobleman-turned-vampire Lestat. Yet, these attractive vampire protagonists do not enjoy torturing and killing humans, and instead seek to live peacefully within society, denying their desire for human blood. This shift away from the male vampire lead as danger to society is necessary in order for them to be a suitable love interests for human women.

These narratives now relocate the familiar image of the hedonistic vampire, such as Lestat, as foils to the protagonist. "Evil" vampires, as seen in the characters of Eric Northman in *True Blood,* Stefan's brother Damon in *The Vampire Diaries,* and Aro in the *Twilight Saga,* relish their

lives as vampires. They gleefully feed on humans and unrepentantly engage in repeated bloodshed. Eric Northman is introduced to the audience as a pleasure-seeking and brutal vampire. In one *True Blood* episode, he attacks the human Royce Williams with his bare hands, pulling his heart out of his chest, ripping apart his limbs, and then feeding on him (Woo, 2009). Fellow self-indulgent vampire Damon Salvatore shares these attributes, especially concerning violence, noting, "I don't side with anyone. You piss me off, I want you dead" (Williamson & Plec, 2009). Aro, the leader of the Volturi in the *Twilight Saga*, displays his own love of power and disposition towards cruelty when he tortures Edward and seeks to turn Bella into a vampire for his own gain.

Regardless of their intentions, modern vampires' possess inhuman powers similar to their predecessors. Stoker's Dracula was immortal, strong, immune to most forms of physical attack, had the ability to see in the dark, create mists, and shapeshift into a wolf or bat (Stoker, 1897, pp. 120–121). These abilities remained typical until Anne Rice's books, which differentiated powers among vampires. While all vampires in Rice's world are immortal and have superhuman strength, speed, eyesight, and hearing; only some vampires can develop the abilities to fly, start fires, and control minds (*The Vampire Chronicles*, n.d). Currently, modern vampires possess the same preternatural senses, super strength, and immortality as their cultural predecessors. These enhanced senses become a point of conflict in their interactions with human women. In the beginning of each relationship, the female love interests must confront their male vampires' inhuman abilities, which initially results in fear for their safety. In *True Blood,* Sookie admits to her Gran that "He [Bill] scares me" and later reiterates that she does not think that she will "ever feel safe again" (Ball, 2008). Elena in *The Awakening* feels "genuine fear, raising the hair on my arms" during an early encounter with Stefan (Smith, *The Awakening*, 2009, p. 37). In *Twilight*, Bella confesses that she is often "frightened of the hostility" Edward radiates and later admits, "He was dangerous. He'd been trying to tell me that all along" (Meyer, *Twilight*, 2005, pp. 27, 93).

Unlike earlier incarnations of vampire men, "good" vampire males invoke a new social role for themselves. They seek to engage in a core tenant of old-world masculinity by protecting their human lovers. Stefan narrates his feelings in *The Awakening,* noting, "He wanted to hold her forever, to protect her from all harm. He wanted to defend her from any evil that threatened her" (Smith, *The Awakening*, 2009, p. 125). In *True Blood* Bill notes, "I am here for you, to protect you" (Buckner, *Plaisir d'Amour*, 2008). In *Twilight*

Edward reassures Bella, "Don't worry…I'll protect you" (Meyer, *Twilight*, 2005, p. 316). As each vampire vows to safeguard his ladylove, they take upon themselves a role previously allowed only for the human hero of vampire narratives. Unfortunately, the soulless vampire male perverts his vow to protect white womanhood by engaging in cold-blooded violence. While the vampire males draw on the idealized language of patriarchy to defend the women in their care, they are unable to control their inhuman natures. In particular, they continue use extreme brutality, which serves to demonstrate to the audience that despite their romantic overtures, they remain transgressive and monstrous "others."

The supernatural powers of vampire men confer upon give them the capacity for great harm, a danger compounded by the knowledge that these creatures are not beholden to human laws or morality. When Sookie confides to Bill that her uncle sexually abused her as a child, Bill's reaction is to find him, assault him, suck his blood, and drop his body into a nearby ravine. In Harris's book *Dead until Dark* this violence happens off-page, but in the corresponding *True Blood* episode, the wheelchair bound Uncle Bartlett is stalked, confronted, and attacked (Offut, 2008). Sookie finds out about Bill's murder and attempts to break up with him, horrified by his ability to kill without remorse. Appalled, she recognizes the moral differences between them:

> Oh my god. Is it that easy for you to kill? Does human life mean so little, you can just kill on command? Toss someone in the water? I can't have people dyin' every time I confide in you…It still haunts me and now you've made me feel like I killed another person. I feel sick…I always thought as different as we are, somehow we can still be together. And now I don't know. I don't know anything… (Woo, 2009)

As their fight escalates, Bill cannot understand why she is upset. He claims that his actions were a manifestation of his feelings, "I love you. And for that I shall NEVER feel sorry" (Woo, 2009). As the "other," the inhuman vampire abuses the privileges he commands as a white male and justifies his actions as acceptable for their impulse, not their outcome. Thus, he demonstrates the ruthlessness that lurks, even for the romantic vampire protagonist, just beneath the surface.

The acts of brutal violence these vampire men commit function to reveal, much like their cultural predecessors, the monster behind the human mask. The cliché of "all men are beasts" is unequivocally true for these characters. In *Twilight*, when a vampire named James approaches Bella, Edward "bared

his teeth, crouching in defen[c]e, a feral snarl ripping from his throat" (Meyer, *Twilight*, 2005, p. 378). Such conduct reminds the audience that vampire men are wearing the mask of an attractive, romantic, young human, a façade that hides their bestial, dominant, and powerful nature. In the first season of *The Vampire Diaries*, Stefan attempts to poison his brother by drugging the human girl he feeds upon (Kreisberg, 2009) and later gives into his bloodlust and returns to the habit of drinking from humans. In *True Blood*, Bill commits horrific violence against his maker, Lorena who he throws across the room, bites, and then twists her head sadistically away from him as he sexually penetrates her (Woo, 2010). These acts of extreme violence by vampire men demonstrate to the viewer that these are not justifiable or protective acts, but rather gratuitous brutality in accordance with their inhuman nature.

Peter Spierenburg noted that historical notions of masculine protection were reciprocal, in that women were expected to submit to male dictates in return for their continued safety (Spierenburg, 1998). When vampire men invoke the historical notion of protective patriarchy, the audience can easily track the repercussions for the women involved. Each of the young women becomes increasingly passive, giving in to their vampire lover's demands. The female protagonist who most vigorously objects to this ideology is Sookie, who initially chafes against Bill's attempts to control her. She argues, "What if I don't need to be protected? What if wanting to be protected makes me feel like the helpless little girl I used to be all over again?" (Buckner, *Plaisir d'Amour*, 2008). Sookie's role, however, is clearly defined when Bill publically claims her to the leader of his vampire district, Eric Northman, noting, "She is mine!" (Buckner, *Escape from Dragon House*, 2008). Sookie, her autonomy compromised by Eric's demands, later confronts Bill claiming, "He cannot check me out like a library book!" Bill explains that indeed, Eric can and he does not "need to ask your permission" (Woo, 2008). Bill clarifies that since Sookie belongs to him, she is in essence Eric's as well.

These vampire men's social identity and power depends on maintaining control over their inferiors, and this masculine power hierarchy has reduced Sookie to property; she is simply a valuable tool to be used when needed. When Bill seeks to reassure Sookie about this arrangement, he makes an overt connection between his protection and his authority, "You do know I'm not going to let anything happen to you…So why don't you go to sleep and let me be the one to worry about it" (Buckner, *Plaisir d'Amour*, 2008). With those words, the vampire male assumes the historic role of protector in exchange for her subservience. This dialogue highlights the evolution

of sexual control by male vampires. While Count Dracula's sexuality was dangerous to both white men and white women, Bill and Sookie's sexual relationship is what grants her security and protection, albeit requiring deference in return.

The dangers of historical patriarchy for women, as invoked by these vampire males, are clearly visible in the disintegration of female autonomy within these narratives. When introduced to the audience, each woman professes to have an independent streak, yet their identities are quickly subsumed in their relationships with vampire men. Their self-reliance becomes problematic; it puts these women or those they care about in peril and often serves as a plot device that requires their vampire lover to rescue them. In the first seasons of *True Blood,* it feels as if almost every episode required Sookie to shriek in peril, a fact not lost on the media; *Entertainment Tonight* coined her "Screaming Sookie" (Tucker, 2009). This would seem to be quite the reversal from the start of their relationship. The audience is introduced to Sookie as a strong, fearless, and bold young woman. In the opening scenes of the pilot episode of *True Blood* and in first pages of *Dead until Dark*, Sookie appears to save Bill from those who want to harvest his blood. For this noble effort, she endures a brutal beating at the hands of the human traffickers. Badly injured, Bill heals her with his vampire blood. In *True Blood*, this initial act of independence and bravery is corrupted when Eric reveals to Sookie that Bill allowed her to be badly injured so that he could feed her his blood and bind her to him, as he was ordered to do by the vampire Queen of Louisiana (Ball, 2010). Thus, Sookie's heroic actions are subverted; instead of rescuing Bill, she merely became a prize to be possessed.

As each woman becomes dependent versions of their earlier selves, they face the consequences of vampire male's unchecked power in their lives. They often suffer from emotional and physical harm at the hands of their vampire wardens. Elena, who began the novel as the girl everyone admired in *The Awakening,* expresses doubts about her value, noting, "I want – oh, this is going to sound completely stupid, but I want to be worthy of Stefan… I want him to love me as much as I love him" (Smith, *The Awakening*, 2009, p. 119). After having sex with Bill, Sookie expresses fears of inadequacy, asking Bill "Please tell me if I'm doing something wrong." Although Bill tells her the sex was fine, she persists, "But if you could change something…" (Woo, 2008). Bella, however, is the most troubling of the female characters; she constantly debases herself to please Edward, persistently takes the blame for other's actions, and belittles herself as less

attractive than other women. Edward often responds to Bella's overtures with scathing criticism, "Bella, it's not my fault if you are exceptionally unobservant" (Meyer, *Twilight*, 2005, p. 81). Despite this treatment, Bella notes "There was no way around it; I couldn't resist him in anything" (Meyer, *Twilight*, 2005, p. 284). Her lack of resistance likely shelters her from the extremes of Edward's violence, for he often physically restrains Bella, such as when "his long hands formed manacles around my wrists as he spoke" (Meyer, *Twilight*, 2005, p. 302). Later in the book series, Edward hurts Bella. In *New Moon,* he throws her through a glass table, and in *Breaking Dawn* he leaves bruises on her arms. Edward and Bella's romance meets almost every criteria of an abusive relationship; she fears him, he makes all the decisions, he controls the people she can have contact with, he threatens to kill himself without her, he isolates her from others, and he is violent when angry (McMillian, 2009).

While these characters might raise concerns that the cultural images of controlling and brutal men could be normalized and romanticized by female audiences, the fallout of these relationships suggests otherwise (Boyer, 2011). Indeed, the romances that begin each series are unable to continue in the same manner in which they started. Based on deceit and compounded by brutality and violence, Sookie and Bill's relationship ends. In the television show *The Vampire Diaries*, Elena breaks up with Stefan and sleeps with his evil vampire brother Damon. In the *Twilight* series, Bella and Edward marry and have a family, but in order to do so Bella must give up every aspect of herself in order to be with him, including her humanity. After Bella and Edward marry and have sex, she becomes pregnant, but upon announcing her condition, Bella loses her narrative power. The perspective of the story changes to Jacob until after she gives birth to a daughter (Rocha, 2014). During the birth, the damage the half vampire child does to Bella is described in a detailed but rather unemotional way, dwelling on her body as a violent spectacle, focusing on the agony, blood, and pain that ultimately kill the human Bella. Edward, gazing upon her comatose figure, is spurred to turn her into a vampire, exerting his complete control over her body.

The fears that the undead invoke in our culture do not preclude viewers from being fascinated with the monsters, and while many fan sites discuss the appeal of these dominant men (and their physical attributes), it is clear that vampire lovers do not have the qualities desired for a long-term, "real life" relationship. The message, on both the page and the screen is similar; despite their romantic makeovers, vampire men are monsters. These dominant men

in their attractive packaging remind the audience of the danger of relying on outward appearances. The tinted Ferrari that Damon Salvatore drives serves not just as a luxurious mode of transportation but as a warning to the reader that the most attractive creatures can be the most terrifying (Smith, *The Return: Nightfall*, 2009). These vampire narratives offer viewers a safe way to face the fears of, and reject, a patriarchal, aggressive, and possessive version of masculinity.

Stoker's *Dracula* set the stage for the depiction of vampire males whose evolution reflects each generation's prevalent anxieties. Indeed, from the current cultural view, Bram Stoker's vampire may appear to be little more than a creepy old man seeking out nubile young women to satisfy both his sexual appetites and his bloodlust (Stevenson, 1988). This old, bad breath, hairy-palmed Dracula is far removed from the young, handsome, and sexually desirable characters portrayed today. Yet vampire men remain a distinct danger, for they can perpetually threaten all that a culture defines as normal, including a society's economic, social, and gender roles. Dracula, as the foreign outsider, desired to conquer white women as a way to exert his own masculinity, and while current vampire males are no longer represented as foreign outsiders, the central connection between masculinity, power, and the female body remains. Just as Dracula did, *True Blood, Twilight*, and *The Vampire Diaries* exist to confront patriarchal fears. These modern male vampires demonstrate the dangers of the same historical patriarchy that Stoker's *Dracula* celebrated and restored.

The vampire monster narrative offers a space in which to represent collective fears. As such, it tells society what is right, normal, and acceptable while addressing underlying social anxieties about "otherness." Examining the shifting representations of male vampires reveals our current gendered concerns about relationships. The patriarchal, controlling, and violent male of the past is revealed as a monstrous "other," and the female lead who loses her power and autonomy is problematic, as the love affair cannot persist if they wish to keep their most precious asset – their life. Thus, the stories of modern vampire men serve the same functions as they have for those of generations past: they are, at their core, monster stories. Even with the evolution of contemporary vampire men into tortured heroes who seek redemption and attempt to be "good," they ultimately share the same attributes as their predecessors: they are violent, powerful, and dangerous inhuman fiends, regardless of whether they are seducing English ladies in 1897 or romancing high school girls in 2014.

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AMANDA FIRESTONE

5. "THERE WILL NEVER BE MORE THAN TWO OF US"[1]

The Twilight Saga's *Monstrous Mothers*

INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, vampires don't have children; depending on the fictive universe, they are makers, sires, and progenitors, but they do not, as a general rule, reproduce in the same ways as biological human beings. For the female vampires in Stephenie Meyer's *The Twilight Saga*, this truth causes a great deal of grief and longing. Through the narrative, Bella Swan, the human heroine, hears a number of perspectives about what it means to live an undead life with an unchanging body that will never create a child. For several of the vampire women in the saga, loss of motherhood is a steep price to pay for their eternal youth, beauty, and intelligence. I argue that the Cullen women, as well as other vampire women from Meyer's universe, are representations of an incomplete femininity where these characters have failed the prime directive of womanhood: being a biological mother. This work speaks to a longstanding Western cultural assumption that motherhood is both the natural and desired primary identity for a woman and those who do not pursue motherhood are abnormal.

I begin by theoretically grounding this chapter in the work of Barbara Creed and Julia Kristeva. Creed, drawing from Kristeva's theories about abjection, examines what she titles the "monstrous-feminine" (1999/2003, p. 251). The vampire women in *The Twilight Saga* become abject mothers in their own rights through their individual coping strategies that mitigate their inability to produce their own children. These narratives of lost motherhood and motherhood through substitution are symptomatic of a culture that continues to value women through their enforced reproductive capacity.

Next, I analyse the narrative stories of Rosalie Hale, Esme Cullen, Sasha Denali, and Bella Swan, as a means of examining the individual circumstances that these characters are rendered monstrous mothers. Each woman copes with her frozen, vampiric identity in a different way, and only

A. Hobson & U. M. Anyiwo (Eds.), Gender in the Vampire Narrative, 61–78.

Bella has the opportunity to reconcile what it means to become undead and still have a biological child. In each of their personal narratives, discussions about biological children are prominent, often working to solidify their specifically gendered identities and their desires to perform femininity or womanhood properly. Their stories are arranged in accordance with their representations as pre-phallic, phallic, archaic and phallic, and authentic archaic motherhood.

I conclude this chapter by drawing distinct parallels between the literature and the theoretical constructs I will outline. Additionally, I offer some discussion about the potential rhetorical repercussions for continuing to teach such a narrow and inflexible definition of womanhood. My positionality in this work is as a white, able-bodied, married, middle-class woman in my early 30s. I also count myself as what Henry Jenkins dubs an "aca-fan" (2010); I am someone who has a fan investment in the series and its community, as well as someone who academically approaches the literature through a critical lens. Perhaps most importantly in this context, I am a woman who has individually and with my spouse decided that children are not necessary to form a completed picture of adult life. Therefore, I've (we've) chosen to remain childfree with the exception of our two dogs. That said, this work seeks to inspect the problematic of normalizing and limiting definitions of womanhood to producing and raising biological children where there are, in fact, many options available to women, which must also be respected and accepted.

ABJECT MOTHERHOOD

This opening section provides the brief explanation for the theoretical underpinnings of this analysis. Julia Kristeva's text, *Powers of Horror: Essays on Abjection* (1982), is one of the first to tackle the subjects of the abject and abjection thoroughly. Creed uses Kristeva's work to provide the structure for her essay "Horror and the Monstrous-Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection," which specifically examines abject motherhood in the *Alien* movie series.[2] Creed's essay ties to other scholarship written around the same time period concerning women's bodies in other film genres like horror, pornography, and melodrama.[3]

Creed explains that, "All human societies have a conception of the monstrous-feminine, of what it is about woman that is shocking, terrifying, horrific, abject" (1999/2003, p. 251). Whether stemming from castration anxiety, an Oedipal complex, or commingled disgust and pleasure from the

sight of women's genitals, there's a consistent and pervasive recognition that there's a distinct *difference* that marks women as monstrous (Creed, 1999/2003, author's emphasis). In effect, to be a woman is to be a monster. And to be a monster is to be that which is abject and lives in spaces of abjection.

Kristeva loosely defines the abject as that which "disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (1982, p. 4). The abject is nothing short of a paradox. Even as it is recognized as repulsive it is also simultaneously seductive. "All abjection is in fact recognition of the *want* on which any being, meaning, language, or desire is founded" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 5, author's emphasis). When Bella expresses her recognition that she knows Edward wants to kill her and drink her blood yet can't help but love him anyway, she articulates the very essence of abjection (Meyer, 2006). She realizes the very real danger present in Edward and his bloodlust, but her attraction to him outstrips the decidedly rational choice to stay away from him. It's that push-pull between being disgusted or terrified yet enamoured and drawn that encompasses the abject.

Spaces of abjection are those of liminality, where there is no Truth with a capital 'T.' It's not a physical place, rather one where it becomes difficult to define a state of being, an identity, or where meanings collapse. Abjection is a site for rupturing subjectivity, objectivity, and identity. It's the borderland that is rife with change, where things are made and unmade to the possibilities of what they might become.

Monsters are inherently abject and exist in spaces of abjection. Vampires are perfect examples as their corporeal bodies are neither alive nor dead, indicating an abject state of being. They are arguably cadavers, yet they do not fester and decay. Kristeva identifies the corpse as something with the ability to violently upset the individual who comes into contact with it, as something that reveals how inevitably all living things die, rot, and cross the borderland to abjection (1982). Creed significantly points out that those things that cross or threaten to cross the border are abject (1999/2003). The vampire, in its dead yet living as-though-still-alive state (walking, talking, thinking, and existing communally and quietly amongst humanity) is an abject being. And, most disturbingly, the vampire survives on the consumption of living blood; the vampire body disturbingly transgresses the border of death and life in a way that logically, scientifically, and religiously makes no sense.

It is a body and state of being predicated on anachronism and dichotomy. As immortal beings, Meyer's vampires have the possibility of becoming

suspended from time and culture. For example: to Bella, Edward appears old-fashioned in his desire for them to marry so young and his resistance to beginning a sexual relationship (Meyer, 2007/2009). Edward describes it thusly: "My *self*, also, had frozen as it was—my personality, my likes and my dislikes, my moods and my desires; all were fixed in place" (Meyer, 2008c, p. 109, author's emphasis). In some ways, Meyer's vampires become out of touch and out of place to the human world because they live for such a long time, and the Cullens maintain their general sense of morality based on the context of their human lives.

For the vampire women in *The Twilight Saga*, they are in some ways doubly abject because their monstrosity "is produced at that which separates those who take up their proper gender roles from those who do not" (Creed, 1999/2003, p. 253). After the transformation, a vampire woman's body remains in a fixed state. This means that the biological mechanisms for pregnancy—a menstrual cycle and a changing womb environment—are effectively frozen in time (Meyer, 2008b). For this reason, a number of the vampire women appear to need to find ways to cope with this perceived loss because they cannot "take up their proper gender roles." Through these coping strategies, they take on aspects of abject mothers described by Creed, the phallic mother and the archaic mother (1999/2003).

The phallic mother[4] is one who effectively refuses to release her child to become an independent individual. More so, it is a mother who *lives* through her offspring, asserting agency and activeness by her will and ability to control the child (Creed, 1999/2003). The woman recognizes her subjectivity through her role as a mother and holds tightly to that identity in a bid to maintain those boundaries. The archaic mother is "the image of the mother in her generative function—the mother as the origin of all life" (Creed, 1999/2003, p. 258). This is a mother that actively produces life but, in that process, becomes embodied liminality. Archaic mothers are those who produce life from within, although they do not necessarily gestate their offspring inside the body; the transference of bodily fluids, eggs, or embryos to a host is also indicative of the archaic mother. Often, the archaic and phallic mothers are one in the same, combining different aspects of each in a single body.

The monstrous-feminine is, at its heart, the recognition that women are monsters and, therefore, abject. Women's bodies do not look, let alone function, as men's bodies, and so that *difference* becomes the point of contention and oppression. The ability to produce children in the patriarchal system is an expression of monstrosity, yet it is also an

understood expectation. This places women in a "damned if you do, and damned if you don't" double-bind. Meyer's vampire women do their best to meet the expectations for their gender, but ultimately it's an inauthentic and incomplete version of motherhood. Only Bella can perform authentic motherhood because she births her own offspring. It is this need on the part of these women to play out some expression of motherhood that ultimately constructs them as the abject monstrous-feminine.

THE MONSTROUS MOTHER

In this section, I offer details of the human and vampire lives of Rosalie, Esme, Sasha, and Bella to provide evidence of their representations as abject mothers. Their stories provide a spectrum of motherhoods: the pre-phallic, phallic, combined archaic and phallic, and the authentic archaic. Each woman struggles to reconcile her perceived loss of biological reproduction with the positive attributes and potentials in being a vampire. In an effort to make peace with this state of being, each of these women finds different coping mechanisms, which offer them some sense of motherhood.

The Pre-Phallic Mother, Rosalie Hale

Rosalie was born in Rochester, New York, as the only daughter of rich social climbing parents in 1915 (Meyer, 2011, pp. 110–113). By 1933, her beauty received a great deal of attention, including the interest of Royce King II, who came from the richest family in town. Rosalie had only one jealousy in her life and that was for her close friend, Vera, who married young and promptly produced a son. When Royce proposed scarcely two months after meeting, she imagined a future with a doting husband and a baby of her own (Meyer, 2007/2009).

A week before the wedding, Rosalie spent an evening with Vera. Without an escort to walk her home, she tried to hurry past a group of men who were obviously drunk. Royce was among them and called her by name, insisting she come over and speak with them. He and his cronies raped her, leaving her for dead on the street (Meyer, 2011). Carlisle found her and transformed her to save her life. After awakening as a vampire, Rosalie enacted vengeance on her attackers, murdering each one in gruesome ways—without drinking their blood, as she didn't want to sully her body. But, eventually she began to blame her beauty for what had happened. She speculated that if she had been "normal" then she might've married a man who truly loved her and had a family (Meyer, 2007/2009).

Rosalie is a pre-phallic mother. As the phallic mother maintains close bonds with her children as a means of stabilizing her subjectivity, Rosalie fixates on the children she might have had. Her deep-rooted unhappiness about being childless and bodily frozen manifests as anger and resentment toward Bella (Meyer, 2007/2009). She lashes out at Bella who has the ability to produce children but is resolved in choosing a future without them (Meyer, 2007/2009). "You already have *everything* … And you're going to *throw it away*. … You have the choice that I didn't have, and you're choosing *wrong*!" (Meyer, 2007/2009, p. 166, author's emphasis). Bella reminds her that she had a happy ending with her marriage to Emmett,[5] but Rosalie clarifies that it's only half a happy ending. "But there will never be more than two of us. And I'll never sit on a porch somewhere, with him gray-haired [sic] by my side, surrounded by our grandchildren" (Meyer, 2007/2009, p. 167). Rosalie continues by telling Bella that she can't know what she'll want in ten or fifteen years, and becoming a vampire isn't something she can take back, inferring that she'll face the same grief and anger without children of her own.

As a pre-phallic mother, she is the reiteration that women who cannot have children—for whatever reasons—are to be pitied for they will always be incomplete. Stacy Holman Jones, a Communication scholar who works with how women's identities are constructed and negotiated, recounts her struggle with infertility and eventual decision to adopt. She describes how a social worker requests that she write down that she has accepted the loss of biological fertility and is prepared for other alternatives (2006). She does so, but privately feels that this testimony "doesn't prove that [she's] accepted loss. It doesn't promise that [she is] ready to love a child who was never, not once, a part of [her]" (Holman Jones, 2006, p. 118). Holman Jones articulates the loss and resignation attached to her infertility while also recognizing that acceptance, in that moment, is farfetched and perhaps impossible. Rosalie, like Holman Jones, is resigned to her infertility, but her desire for a child makes her bitter and angry, which suggests that even a substitute child would not begin to fill that void.

That is until Bella unexpectedly becomes pregnant on her honeymoon. Initially, Rosalie acts as a bodyguard, preventing Carlisle and Edward from getting too close to Bella in fear they will take steps to induce miscarriage (Meyer, 2008b). Edward laments to Jacob Black that Rosalie's constant presence is a reflection of her mania to protect the unborn child and not Bella. His observation reveals new heights concerning Rosalie's abject monstrosity. Jacob agrees that her actions are focused toward the growing foetus rather

than Bella's health. Rosalie zealously encourages Bella to drink a cup full of human blood as means of nourishing the foetus when traditional foods are rejected (Meyer, 2008b). She's focused on feeding the foetus instead of Bella. While Bella readily agrees, it's Rosalie who continues to offer encouragement and persuades her to drink as much blood as she can. Even Carlisle, who has the greatest knowledge of human and vampire physiology in the family, has reservations because the potential for Bella's human body to have an adverse reaction is significant.

When Bella's placenta detaches, triggering the need for an emergency caesarean section, it's Rosalie who wields the scalpel that cuts open Bella's abdomen (Meyer, 2008b). Her mania is at its peak, as is her thirst as the smell of Bella's blood fills the air. She's literally kicked out the room but returns once she's controlled, demanding Edward to hand her the barely birthed newborn (Meyer, 2008b, p. 354). Jacob observes Rosalie's instant attachment as he watches her coo and nuzzle the baby against her face. In this moment, she embodies an adoptive mother, waiting to take *her* child for the first time. Holman Jones describes a similar occurrence in her article, noting that "[adoptive mothers] are not selfless, saintly, good. They are greedy, impatient. Only flesh and bone—molecular miracles their own bodies cannot sustain—will satiate such longing" (2006, p. 114). Rosalie never voices what undoubtedly is her deepest desire: that Bella will die, Edward will make good on his promise of suicide, and she'll finally have the child she's so desperately craved for nearly a century.

Unfortunately for Rosalie, Bella survives her ordeal and reclaims her child so she and Edward can be a complete nuclear family. Her feelings of loss connected with her inability to produce children are acute. While there is sense in her assertion that Bella is young and perhaps will want children when she is older, Rosalie's continued persecution of Bella denies her agency and right to make the best reproductive choices for her. For Rosalie, the only understandable and correct course for womanhood includes children. In telling Bella she's throwing her life away by becoming a vampire, she reaffirms that there's something inherently wrong with not choosing biological motherhood. And, when Bella does produce a child, Rosalie is vindicated in that Bella agrees that Renesmee is the best thing to happen to her (Meyer, 2008b).

The Abject/Phallic Mother: Esme Cullen

Born in 1895, Esme grew up in Columbus, Ohio (Meyer, 2011, pp. 105–108). When she was sixteen, she fell from a tree and broke her leg, which was set

by a travelling doctor, Carlisle Cullen. Several years later, she was pressured by her father to marry Charles Evenson, who physically abused her after they wed. Evenson, unfortunately, returned from World War I in 1919, and Esme became pregnant in 1921. Fearing for the life of her unborn child, she fled to Wisconsin, posed as a war widow, and became a schoolteacher. Sadly, her infant died just two days after birth; consumed with grief, Esme attempted suicide by jumping from a cliff. Her body was recovered and taken directly to the local morgue where Carlisle was working and detected a faint heartbeat inside of her body. He decided to induce the vampiric transformation as a means to save her life (Meyer, 2005/2006).

Much of Esme's adult human life is shaded by the repeated violence at the hands of her husband, and it's safe to assume that her child was a product of marital rape. With no other known romantic attachments in her history, she has little firsthand knowledge of how a positive, healthy relationship functions. When she becomes pregnant, she not only pins all of her future hope on the would-be child but also begins to act in its best interest rather than solely her own. The baby becomes her motivation for escape from her husband's abuse (Meyer, 2011).

Although she successfully flees her husband and builds a solvent life for herself, the death of her infant precipitates her depression and subsequent suicide. Eluding death, she becomes the second of Carlisle's companions, next to Edward who was turned in 1918. She remembers Carlisle from her fuzzy human memories and the relationship changes easily to romance and marriage (Meyer, 2011). Of course she and Carlisle cannot produce biological children so Esme quickly slips into the role of matriarch of the family, playing mother to Edward and the other family members as they are added.

In an early conversation with Bella, Esme candidly reveals that her human child died. Bella notes that her tone is matter-of-fact as she reveals the detail about jumping off the cliff[6] (Meyer, 2005/2006). This information contextualizes Esme's role in the family as she insists, "I do think of them as my children in most ways. I never could get over my mothering instincts … Edward was the first of my new sons. I've always thought of him that way…" (Meyer, 2005/2006, p. 368). Here, Esme offers a glimpse of her positionality as abject mother, the phallic mother who cannot let go of her children.

Most of the Cullens were transformed in their late teens or early twenties, and in their lifetimes they would have been well within the limits of what was considered a functioning adult. Yet, Esme persists in performing the

role of mother. She acts as referee to prevent them from cheating during family games like baseball (Meyer, 2005/2006). She acts as cheerleader and emotional support when Edward is conflicted about dating Bella (Meyer, 2008c). She cleans up Bella's blood with bleach, despite the fact that the scent of human blood is antagonizing to her vampiric senses (Meyer, 2006/2008a).

For Kristeva, the mother and child relationship is fraught with struggle where the child perceives a desire for autonomy while the mother reinforces her bonds to keep the child close (1982). The Cullen "siblings" endlessly pose as high school or college students, meaning that Esme's public face is that of doting stay at home mum. But as the reader sees, her performance remains firmly in place in their private home. This is most evident in her interactions with Edward, who in many ways epitomizes the child grappling with the "clumsy breaking away, with the constant risk of falling back under the sway of a power as securing as it is stifling" (Kristeva, 1982, p. 13). At a physical age of 17, Edward is the youngest member of the family and the only one without a partner until Bella comes into the picture. With the exception of the majority of the 1920s, he's never been away from the protection of Carlisle and Esme's home (Meyer, 2011). He thinks of the couple as his parents, though he has some memories of his biological ones, and occasionally refers to Esme as Mom (Meyer, 2008c).

After Edward and Bella marry, Esme builds them a cottage on the Cullen property to offer them respite from the shared family home. As newlyweds, there's no discussion about where they might live or what they'd like to do with their future. In building their home, Esme solidifies that Edward and by extension Bella will remain close to her. The ability to keep her perceived children in near proximity authenticates her as both woman and mother (Kristeva, 1982). Creed insists that the continued need for validation and authentication on the part of the mother, especially when received through the actions of the child, is what allows her to maintain a stable subjective identity (1999/2003).

The continued desire for the mother to maintain her hold over her child so that she effectively knows how to recognize herself through her maternal role is what makes her abject. Esme represents the phallic mother in this way, consistently performing the labour of motherhood regardless of the fact that her "children" are adult people who are self-sufficient and indestructible vampires who are in little need of mothering. Her relationship with Edward further establishes her as abject because his desire and need to become a fully formed, independent adult is consistently hampered by his perpetual

reliance on the security of his relationship with Esme. Even when he finds a suitable partner and produces a family unit of his own, she is unable to allow him to "leave the nest" and builds him a house to keep him close to her, maintaining her hold over him.

Sasha Denali, the Archaic/Phallic Mother

Sasha's history is the least complete of these narratives. Estimated at being alive during the 1st century C.E, she was born in what was Slovakia (Meyer, 2011, p. 201). After becoming a vampire, she wanted companionship and transformed her biological great-niece, Tanya. Within a century, she added Kate and Irina to their coven, and by all accounts the women formed tight familial bonds with Tanya, Kate, and Irina regarding Sasha as their mother (Meyer, 2008b).

Although the details are vague, at some point Sasha made the decision to turn a three-year-old boy, Vasili, into a vampire, thus creating what was called an Immortal Child (Meyer, 2011). The ruling vampires known as the Volturi had outlawed the making of Immortal Children in 750 A.D. after nearly three hundred years of eradicating these children and the covens that so fiercely protected them. By Carlisle's account the children were very beautiful, and the urge to protect them was nearly instantaneous (Meyer, 2008b). However, like all vampires, the children were frozen in their toddler bodies as well as their stages of cognitive development. Without a capacity to learn or grow, the Immortal Children indiscriminately killed humans, and this behaviour was contradictory to the primary law among vampires: keep their existence a secret (Meyer, 2011). Sasha's punishment for making Vasili a vampire was death for both of them.

While Sasha's reasoning for creating an Immortal Child is unknown, it squarely places her as an abject mother. Indeed, she becomes the conflation of archaic mother and phallic mother. Creed states that "it is difficult to separate out the figure of the archaic mother … from other aspects of the maternal figure" (1999/2003, p. 260). While Sasha does not bodily birth Vasili, she would have bitten him and injected her venom into his body to begin the transformation (Meyer, 2011). This makes her the "oral/sadistic mother" (Creed, 1999/2003, p. 258), effectively castrating the boy to ensure he will remain a toddler for eternity. Through her bite, she becomes the archaic mother, creating a new life in her own image through the transmission of her venom, bonding them together through bodily fluids. This form of creation also makes Sasha the "parthenogenic, archaic mother," where no father is necessary in order for her to produce offspring (Creed, 1999/2003, p. 258).

Christopher Craft makes a keen observation about the vampire's mouth when he describes it as being the combination of masculine and feminine traits (1984). The oral cavity is red, soft, warm, and moist, evoking imagery of the vulva and vaginal opening. The teeth contrast completely as they are white, hard, and sharp, penetrating through the skin of a victim in a phallic manner. In Craft's words: "Luring at first with an inviting orifice, a promise of red softness, but delivering instead a piercing bone, the vampire mouth fuses and confuses … the gender-based categories of the penetrating and the receptive" (1984, p. 109). While Sasha does not create Vasili from within, she is no less generative in her ability to transform the boy from human to vampire, thereby creating a venom-tied child forever.

Craft's assertions solidify the vampire as abject; his definitions of the vampire's mouth mean that it embodies all genders at once, providing that contrast and confusion that is indicative of the abject. In repetition of Creed, rigid boundaries make for understood, stable, and comfortable ways of thinking and being, and to remove or meld boundaries is to fear losing one's identity as a whole (1999/2003). Craft points out that "this mouth, bespeaking the subversion of the stable and lucid distinctions of gender, is the mouth of all vampires, male and female" (1984, p. 109). In this way, all vampires that "sire" others are simultaneously mothers and fathers, yet this perceived need for *children* appears unique to the vampire women.[7]

Sasha already has three "daughters," but they are somehow not enough. And, while she might've chosen another family member of a similar stature, she instead transforms a toddler. The child's human history is unknown; she might have seen him as an orphan and taken pity on him. She might have stolen him away from his family home in a moment of his own mother's inattention. Whatever the history, her desire for a toddler, rather than one who is school-aged or a teenager, suggests that there was something appealing about having someone who would eternally rely on her completely for this relationship bond. Sasha undoubtedly knew the law about Immortal Children and the consequences of creating one, but in her need flouted the law and became both the archaic and phallic mother who would die for creating her child.

Bella Swan Cullen, the authentic archaic mother

Bella Swan was born in Forks, Washington, in 1987. An only child, her parents divorced when she was two, and she grew up in Phoenix with her mother, Renée, visiting her father, Charlie, during summers. She moved back to Forks in January 2005 after her mother remarried. On her first day at

school, she met Edward Cullen, and though their initial interactions were fraught with the difficulty of his bloodlust, they quickly fell in love. Their relationship endured and strengthened through hardships such as Bella being stalked and attacked by nomad vampires, the intrusion of Jacob Black as a potential suitor, and the wrath of the Volturi. Ultimately the couple married on August 13, 2006 (Meyer, 2011, pp. 135–139).

On their honeymoon, they consummated their relationship for the first time, and Bella immediately and quite unexpectedly became pregnant. Edward initially made plans for them to return to Forks so Carlisle could perform an abortion. Upon returning, Bella ran to the custody of Rosalie who acted as a bodyguard, while Bella adamantly insisted she would carry the foetus to term. A mere twelve days later, after her body had undergone gruesome changes, she was given an emergency caesarean section and produced their hybrid child, Renesmee. Because the damage to her body was so catastrophic, she had to undergo the vampiric transformation[8] to survive. When she woke, she discovered she felt an indelible connection to the child she had carried. Subsequently, she also discovered that the child grew at an almost exponential rate, had full cognitive reasoning faculties, a vampire gift, and slept through the night (Meyer, 2008b).

Childfree by choice. Initially, Bella is clear in that she doesn't want biological children, and she doesn't consider her future inability to have them as a loss. In the early stages of her relationship, she shares with Edward that she's always taken care of her parents. Bella jokes that she was born middle-aged and that she more often than not played parent to her mother, indicating that even at seventeen, she had her share of caretaking when she ought to have had a childhood (Meyer, 2005/2006). Her caretaking responsibilities shift to her dad when she moves in with him, taking over all the cooking and general cleaning duties. For these reasons, Bella insists that she's happy to forego children as a matter of course in being with Edward and becoming a vampire.

But at every turn, she's reminded about giving up potential children. Rosalie is the most vocal, but even Jacob talks about how normal their life could be if Bella would choose him instead of Edward. She could remain human, keep ties with her parents, have children, and live normally (Meyer, 2007/2009). Jacob implies that by choosing Edward—choosing vampirism—she can't somehow maintain an authentic self because those options at that time appear to become void after her transformation. Without maintaining ties to her blood parents and the opportunity to produce children of her own,

she's at risk for being unable to identify her positionality in the symbolic, subjective order (Creed 1999/2003). More simply, "It's assumed that if you are a woman, you are meant to be a mother. Period" (Notkin, 2011).

When Edward and Bella go to Charlie to tell him about their engagement, his instinctive assumption is that she's pregnant (Meyer, 2008b). Bella understands that this is the conclusion most people will come to when a teenage couple becomes engaged. Edward later admits to her that he wishes Charlie had been right, that he hates tying her to a future of infertility. When Bella rebukes him by declaring she knows what she wants, he counters by telling her the sacrifice is more demanding than she thinks (Meyer, 2008b, p. 28). From his standpoint, he's taking away her ability to have children, forcing her to sacrifice that for him.

Effectively, Edward disregards and dishonours Bella's decision in this process; for most of the story, she's had to plead her case for becoming a vampire over and over—to Edward, to Jacob, to the other Cullens—because her word isn't good enough for them. Her rational approach to the transformation and her frozen reproductive cycle are time and again met with assumptive questions and comments that she's not yet old enough or experienced enough to definitively know what she wants for her future. Melanie Notkin in her article titled "Unnatural Women: Childless in America" states: "Women are also made to feel that their bodies exist only as vessels for childbirth" (2011). And, Rosemary Gillespie further explains how the women she interviewed often met outright disbelief, disregard, and were cast as deviants because they had chosen to remain childfree. By Western cultural standards, "motherhood is fixed, unchanging, natural, fulfilling and in particular, central to feminine identity" (Gillespie, 2000), and for a woman to choose to remain childless, she is the blatant opposite of those expectations.

"Instinctual" motherhood. Up until her honeymoon, remaining childfree is Bella's constructed identity. She consciously chooses an alternative path away from motherhood, satisfied that she's going to spend eternity with Edward, which is much better than one human lifetime. Then, just seventeen days into the honeymoon, she discovers she's pregnant, and quickly feels a nudge from inside her body confirming the presence of a life (Meyer, 2008b). Edward is understandably frantic, frightened, and uneasy about what could be happening to Bella, but she is wondering why he seems to think there is something wrong. After all, he wanted the possibility of children for them (Meyer, 2008b, p. 131). From that first nudge, she is resolute in carrying

the foetus to term, to produce their child. “I wanted [Edward’s child] like I wanted air to breathe. Not a choice—a necessity” (Meyer, 2008b, p. 132).

Without question, this makes Bella the authentic archaic mother. She generates her child in the traditional sense, but unlike normal human pregnancy, she’s turned into a grotesque monster. Jacob describes her thusly when he sees her for the first time:

> Bella’s body was swollen, her torso ballooning out in a strange, sick way. It strained against the faded gray [sic] sweatshirt that was way too big for her shoulders and arms. The rest of her seemed thinner, like the big bulge had grown out of what it had sucked from her. It took me a second to realize what the deformed part was—I didn’t understand until she folded her hands tenderly around her bloated stomach, one above and one below. Like she was cradling it. (Meyer, 2008b, p. 174)

Bella is so deformed that the sight of her body makes Jacob swallow down vomit (Meyer, 2008b, p. 174). Her body functions as a sign of abjection, in a similar way to blood, pus, and vomit, which fills the spectator “with disgust and loathing,” identifying her as something improper and fragmented (Creed, 1999/2003, p. 256). And as the days pass it just gets worse. Her skin is so ashen it’s only when she starts drinking donated human blood that some of her colour returns. In drinking the blood, the general hope is that it will nourish the foetus and subsequently make Bella healthier, too. As per the intention, the foetus gets stronger but begins breaking her ribs as it grows. At just eighteen, pregnancy has turned her into a monstrous host, robbing her of her independence, mobility, and ultimately her human life.

The birth of the child is much as Creed describes: “Her body is transformed into the ‘gaping wound’” (1999/2003, p. 256). Bella vomits “a fountain of blood” as her placenta detaches, and she’s rushed to the makeshift operating room for the emergency caesarean section (Meyer, 2008b, p. 247). Rosalie uses a scalpel to slice open the skin of Bella’s abdomen, and she is further mutilated by Edward’s teeth as he chews the vampire-skin-like womb open to retrieve the infant. In an unexpected moment of lucidity, Bella croaks for Edward to hand her the newly birthed infant, Renesmee. Adding to her injuries, the child bites her seeking blood to drink.

It is impossible to deny Bella’s bodily difference in these last chapters of her human life. She’s grotesquely transformed into the authentic archaic mother, her body destroyed by the foetus as it gestates. Ultimately she ends up being “slashed and mutilated” by her husband through the birth, which Creed insists operates as signification for her castrated state and as

Edward's hopeful deterrent for a similar fate, "transforming her entire body into the bleeding wound" (Creed, 1999/2003, pp. 256–257). As the authentic archaic mother, she is the only one who is able to maintain a stable subjective identity bound to motherhood because she has biologically produced her child. Though Bella first insists that motherhood is not for her, the unexpected transformation to archaic mother in her generative, gestative purpose swiftly changes her mind. Now, as a mother, Bella has a purpose to her life that goes beyond the almost selfish nature of her relationship with Edward. From that moment on her life is about protecting her child, thus solidifying her identity and affirming that the only correct version of womanhood is bound to biological motherhood.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I argue that Rosalie (pre-phallic), Esme (phallic), and Sasha (archaic and phallic) are representations of an incomplete femininity where these characters have failed the prime directive of womanhood: being a biological mother. The desire to be a mother is presented as instinctual for the women of *The Twilight Saga*. Rosalie, Esme, and Sasha cope as best they can, but it is Bella who gets to fulfil her destiny. When she does become pregnant, in that moment she reflects that perhaps she was previously "unable to see that I would want a baby until after one was already coming" (Meyer, 2008b, p. 132). In spite of the shock of it, that she had never imagined herself as a mother or wanted that, she somehow knows that having the baby is "Not a choice—a necessity" (Meyer, 200b, p. 132).

Early in *Twilight*, Edward tries to explain to Bella why the Cullen family abstains from drinking human blood: "But you see, just because we've been…dealt a certain hand…it doesn't mean that we can't choose to rise above—to conquer the boundaries of a destiny that none of us wanted. To try to retain whatever essential humanity we can" (Meyer, 2005/2006, p. 307). Although this is in relation to their diet, it speaks volumes about how Rosalie, Esme, and Sasha make motherhood a focal part of their lives and their individual coping mechanisms that allow them to feel as though they in part can maintain stable subjective identities. The correct performance of womanhood is to become a mother. Try as they might as the pre-phallic, phallic, and archaic and phallic abject mothers, they can never be authentic in their performances of motherhood. Creed maintains that those things that threaten to cross the border are abject, and these women try to conquer the boundaries of their abject frozen bodies by becoming mothers in any way possible.

Of course Bella crosses the divide a dozen times over through her pregnancy in the gross transformation of her body from healthy, human teenage girl to swollen, sickly host to indestructible vampire. But, what is most disturbing about this journey is that right after Bella concludes that she is pregnant, the story's narration shifts to Jacob's perspective. While individual characters have harped at her that giving up her ability to become pregnant is too great a price, when she is pregnant she is somehow unfit to tell that part of the story. Everyone has made motherhood out to be something longed for and fantastic, but practical talk of what it means to be pregnant is totally ignored. When she becomes pregnant, she's no longer a reliable narrator because her sole focus is on the foetus inside of her. She isn't able to provide a detailed embodied experience of what it means to actually be *growing* this child, to vomit continuously, to drink blood, to have ribs broken. No, that would be too close to home. Because a pregnant woman's body is both abject and the space of abjection. So readers watch these things happen to Bella from Jacob's perspective as a way of simultaneously buffering the intensity of the experience and marking it as something truly monstrous.

Creed's conclusion perhaps offers the clearest and most worrisome insights for this chapter. She says: "But the feminine is not *per se* a monstrous sign; rather, it is constructed as such within a patriarchal discourse which reveals a great deal about male desires and fears but tells us nothing about feminine desire in relation to the horrific" (1999/2003, p. 265, author's emphasis). Patriarchal oppressive discourses and ideologies are repeated and reaffirmed by many members of the system, so that means both men and women continue to assert notions that motherhood is something that all women should aspire to. For women who are unable to biologically produce children, there's a sense that they are to be pitied, that they are somehow disabled in that they may become mothers through adoption, marriage, or surrogacy, but it will never be an authentic motherhood because they did not *grow* those children. Women who willingly choose to be childfree are puzzling abominations of sorts. Gillespie asserts "Experts and opinion formers constitute powerful elites who have been able to privilege their accounts of the natural inevitability of a desire for motherhood in women; of motherhood as women's principle social role; and crucially, the centrality of motherhood to understandings of feminine identity" (2000, p. 225).

Bella's experience, as the only authentic birth mother in the Cullen family, reifies this idea that through her daughter she is validated as a person, but more so as a woman. Her abrupt mental shift in wanting to be a mother as much as she needs to breathe reaffirms that her earlier position of not wanting

children was indeed short-sighted and naïve. Her focal point, in some ways understandably, shifts from Edward to Renesmee and the last book ends with the nuclear family intact to return to their little cabin on the larger Cullen family property. And that's all. Bella ostensibly gets her happy ending, but would her ending have been any less happy or fulfilling if things had gone according to plan? Would Bella have, in twenty years or so, gone down that dark path that Rosalie surmises when she realized what she had indeed given up in becoming a vampire? More likely she would have gone on without a second thought, basking in the joy and freedom of a childfree eternity with her soulmate by her side and nothing but time.

NOTES

[1] From *Eclipse* (p. 167), by Stephenie Meyer, 2007, New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company.

[2] Creed takes into account Ridley Scott's 1979 film *Alien* and James Cameron's 1986 sequel *Aliens*. When her article was initially printed in *Screen* in 1986, the subsequent sequels, *Alien 3* (1992, director David Fincher) and *Alien: Resurrection* (1997, director Jean-Pierre Jeunet) had not yet been made.

[3] Here I refer to Linda Williams's article "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess" from 1991 and Carol J. Clover's book *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* from 1992.

[4] Creed's definitions for the phallic mother are specifically tied to Freud's theories concerning the male child's reaction to seeing the mother's genitals; her distinct lack of a penis confirms that castration is not only possible but potentially inevitable and so the child sees her as both terrifying and as a fetish object. (Creed, 1999/2003)

[5] In 1935, Rosalie discovers Emmett being mauled by a bear in the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee. His curly black hair and dimples remind her of Vera's son, and she carries him more than a hundred miles back to Carlisle so he can put Emmett through the transformation. (Meyer, 2011, pp. 115–118)

[6] In *New Moon*, Bella repeats Esme's actions by jumping from a cliff located in the La Push Reservation as a means of evoking a hallucination of Edward's voice. Jacob Black, her best friend and the third angle in the love triangle with Bella and Edward, pulls her from the water and saves her life. (Meyer, 2006/2008a)

[7] Carlisle transforms most of the family members. When he turns Edward, he's seeking companionship after spending the majority of his vampire life as a lone nomad. As subsequent members are added—Esme, Rosalie, and Emmett—they adjust their public persona to fit their circumstances. It's only after Alice and Jasper join them that they begin playing nuclear family with Carlisle and Esme as "parents" while the others pose as "children." While Carlisle absolutely claims them all as family, he doesn't refer to them as his children nor does he infantalize them as Esme sometimes does. She, however, blatantly says she thinks of them as her children.

[8] In a *Pulp Fiction*-esque moment, Edward stabs Bella in the heart with a syringe filled with his venom, the bodily fluid responsible for the change, in an effort to more swiftly start the transformation.

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BENITA BLESSING

6. SEX, BLOOD, AND DEATH

Vampires and Child-Rearing

A friend of mine from graduate school – today a successful writer in his 40s – sleeps with his sheet up to his chin; a leftover habit of childhood, when a movie or book about Count Dracula terrified him so much that he feared falling asleep. His mother had assured him that keeping his neck covered would keep any would-be bloodsuckers at bay. The story, both amusing and bittersweet, addresses a number of issues about vampire tales that fill the pages of both popular and scholarly treatments of the topic. In the world of children, their parents, and vampires, sometimes, especially at bedtime, a vampire is just a vampire.

That statement is at once a gross simplification and a telling description about how parents and children interact via tropes about monsters. A vampire, even at his or her most animated moments, has always been a metaphor – of unfinished business, of Original Sin, of colonial hegemony, of the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases, of our darker selves, or even of states' violent political mechanisms or economy-draining business practices – such as that of National Socialist (Nazi) Germany.[1] But vampires are also monsters, a term with multiple meanings. From the Latin *mōnstrum*, to warn, a monster is, in one definition, a portent, a creature with a message that, if heeded, can tell us about our lives and our mistakes. Pathologically, in a second definition, a monster connotes an abnormal foetal or neonate whose defects will either prevent it from maturing at all, or will consign it to the grotesque in medical and popular literature (Lachmann, McNabb, Furmanski, & Karp, 1980, pp. 195–200). Finally, a monster is any creature that inspires disgust, revulsion, and also interest – the world of freak shows thrives on such morbid curiosity.

In this chapter, I suggest that an analysis of these definitions for a vampire-monster help explain the persistent role of vampire figures in historical and contemporary media that are both accessible to and targeted at children, young adults and their parents. For whether we consider the vampires of medieval periods or the latest cinema hit, vampires are always

A. Hobson & U. M. Anyiwo (Eds.), Gender in the Vampire Narrative, 79–91.

about parents' fears for their children: sexual violation and premature death, a fear present at the moment of birth that only gradually fades as the child reaches adulthood and resurfaces in the event of the child's sexual maturity. Vampires stories, whether in folklore or in recent publications or television shows, are also all about sex and death and blood not because they extol the decadent, but rather because they are conservative, cautionary tales. They tell us that, when parents do their job, ideally supported by their communities, Dracula does not run off with their daughter; teenage girls do not risk their immortal souls by kissing vampires; and no one comes back from the grave to complain.

I begin with a brief discussion of vampire tropes and their history, beginning in Antiquity. Then I explore vampire tales involving children and their parents' fears, each centring on one aspect of definitions of a monster from different historical and cultural contexts. The first, "Die weinende Mutter" ("The Crying Mother," 1916), is a traditional early twentieth-century folk tale based in medieval lore about a daughter's death; the second focuses on the abnormal, pathological aspects of vampires that influence their morality, reminiscent of the sixteenth-century medical doctor and writer Rabelais and his monstrous character of Gargantua.[2] The third is an example of the two-sided coin of the grotesque, looking at examples from the nineteenth-century Irish author J. Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1871), and the late twentieth-century television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003). Finally, I look at a combination of these vampire-as-monster definitions in a light-hearted television adaptation of a children's book, *The Little Vampire* (1979), starring a child vampire and his human friend. I finish with remarks about contemporary vampire stories making references to both written and print media.

The perception that vampires are suddenly everywhere is illusory. Vampire tales have narrated society's hopes, fears, and dreams about life, death, and the afterlife for as long as people have told stories; the idea of the danger of vampires and vampire-related creatures has become a readily understandable means of describing life-threatening, immoral behaviour. Folklorists have identified evidence of a fear of vampires, or revenants—another form of humans returning from the dead – as far back as ancient Greek burial rites (Barber, 1988, p. 61). The Greeks also told stories of vampire-females who feasted on new mothers and their young, an example of the gynophobia that often accompany tales of vampires (Felton, 2010). Indeed, so prevalent were images of vampires and other monsters in Antiquity that contemporaries began to make fun of artists' and philosophers' obsession with the

topic. By the Middle Ages, "a period haunted by astounding numbers of revenants," these spectres took on a more concrete appearance in society as Aline Hornaday (2002) has argued, "foreigners" who carried messages to the living that necessitated interlocutors (p. 71).[3] By the Early Modern Period, medieval writers such as Montaigne turned their attention to the larger medical and political meanings of children and parents as monsters capable of destruction of themselves and others (Williams, 2011). In the eighteenth century, a number of vampire accounts swept through central and eastern Europe, making blood-sucking creatures a subject of scholarly and theological debate; or rather, increased travel and transmission of knowledge made what appeared to be a vampire scare part of intellectual discourse in western Europe (Melton, 1994, pp. 630–631). By the nineteenth century, vampires had become so commonplace that they inspired penny dreadful series like *Varney the Vampire* (1845–1847), outshined—especially in its continued popularity—by Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). That is to say, histories and historiographies of vampire scholarship—whether by Occultists or academics—and vampire stories demonstrate few meaningful spikes in vampire publications or productions. Put in a different context, the apparent "all-vampires, all-the time" phenomenon surrounding current discussions of vampires bears remarkable resemblance to the "hysteria" found amongst seventeenth-century citizens and church officials regarding the proper burial of a potential revenant – disputes often broken up by military force (Barber, 1987, p. 20). Still, it is the case that new genres attract new audiences, with box-office hits and bestsellers appearing to herald new trends. In perhaps the most obvious example of the importance of audiences, a general consensus appeared with the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*[4] that it was finally "official. It [was] now safe for smart people to watch TV" (Weigel, 2003, p. 18). Clearly, Weigel and other critics believed that any earlier incarnations of vampires in television shows, such as *Dark Shadows* (1966–1971), were at best a guilty and secret pleasure for those audience members who characterized themselves as "smart"—thus casting other vampire series as appealing only to unintelligent audiences.

It simply cannot be said that a fear about the effects of scary stories on young people is new. Parents and educators worried about the unwholesome effects on young people by publications and media productions featuring scary monsters can take heart: these worries have been at the centre of discussions about vampire fiction long before Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*[5] or *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* made their debuts. In 1947, a British child psychiatrist asked children about potentially long-lasting, undesirable effects

of scary movies on their behaviour, such as whether they had dreamed about a movie, and whether the dream was "frightening or unpleasant in any way" (Staples, 1997, pp. 141–142). The answers were disappointing: children who watched frightening movies did not seem to have been psychologically scarred. In the United States, in an example of the established metaphor of the vampire as guilty of crimes against morality, the nineteenth-century New York Society for the Suppression of Vice complained about "a criminal indifference and recklessness" amongst writers and publishers to ignore the "results [that] flow[ed] from the dissemination of their leprous products," which the author referred to as "vampire literature;" that is, literature that acted like a vampire upon the reading public and not literature about vampires (Comstock, 1891, p. 161). Indeed, the question of whether vampire, or vampire-like tales, led to delinquent behaviour amongst children and adolescents has accompanied the trope of vampire stories even before the Gothic period. Whether in book or media form, adults and educators have long concerned themselves with the fear that some material is not suitable for children's delicate sensibilities. Children, young people, and adults, however, in over a thousand years of vampire tales, seem not to have gotten enough of the stuff.

A related question as to where adults' fears come from is the commonly asked, "Where did vampires come from?" This certainty that vampires have some sort of ancestry borders on evolutionary-esque assumptions about phylogeny. Some authors of vampire tales, speaking through their characters, suggest that vampires have evolved as a new branch on the evolutionary tree, perhaps aided by genetic selection or even manipulation, such as inducing pigment to vampires' sun-sensitive skin.[6] In the BBC series *Being Human*, the vampire Mitchell argues with his terminally-ill friend to accept his gift of eternal life, claiming that the ability to never die is "evolution," and not, as she claims, the interruption of the natural cycle of life (Basgallop, 2010). Others look to scientific explanations that cast vampirism as a contagious disease or disability: viruses, or perhaps allergies, as in the 1973 *Blade* comic book figure or the 1998 film adaptations, with their overtones of HIV and AIDS contagion. Such answers are unsatisfactory to many audiences, and often to children, who want an official "origin" story. Where are the Adam and Eve of the vampire world? Was Vlad the Impaler imitating vampiric rituals, or was he in fact a vampire? How can we identify vampires in history? Who, in other words, was the first vampire? Though vampire origin stories exist in various folkloric and mythological sources, there is little popular knowledge about these stories, which are often used and twisted in fictional

tales of the vampire. Children frequently want answers to questions about the origin of the vampires in their stories, and most parents simply cannot provide them with the answers. These questions form the heart of parents' fears about their children and monsters, resulting in the needed reassurance of origin tales.

Although I cannot offer a simple answer to these queries, such questions and their countless answers are instructive in terms of the roles that vampires play in society and in child-parent constellations. As evidenced by the centuries of debate about the origin of humans, scientists and the public alike want to know the purpose of life, which many philosophers connect to the origins of life, from Aristotle to Stephen Jay Gould.[7] Whether vampires are part of our actual evolutionary path, or whether they are representations of parts of our lives, it is hardly surprising that the desire to know about the first vampire nears the passion with which humans discuss evolutionary theories. Discussions about the apparent increase in vampire literature and other media focus to a large degree on the relationship of these vampires to humans, including a clear demarcation of taboos around human-vampire romantic and sexual dalliances. By understanding vampires' origins, we can better understand the degree to which their moral code either parallels or dismisses our own, allowing parents to educate their children in cultural values and social mores.

The first tale I will discuss here falls under the category of vampires, or revenants, as indicators of proper moral behaviour for parents. One common trope involves the death of a young child and the mother's subsequent emotional state. "Die weinende Mutter" ("The Crying Mother"), a northern German story about a mother who loses her young daughter, is typical of this genre (Müllenhoff & Lund, 1916). The mother cannot stop crying over the death of her child, even waiting for days to bury her. One morning, while milking the cow, the mother observes a young girl in white, the ghost of her daughter, just out of reach of the mother, but always present. The girl collects the mother's tears in her hands and sadly kisses them away. In that moment, the mother realizes that her selfish grieving has not allowed her daughter to rest in peace, and she stops crying. The girl disappears, and the mother feels at peace with herself. There could be no clearer lesson here for parents – the horror of a child dying must not interfere with the departed's journey into the next world. The story is a reminder of the role of death in life, and of a need to attend to the process of burial, mourning, and letting go in order for the dead to depart this world. The girl-revenant here is a reminder to the mother of appropriate moral and maternal behaviour. In this

admonition to the mother to move on, to participate in Christian rituals of burial, death, and a belief in an afterlife for which the living, the daughter insists that the living are responsible for arranging and participating in appropriate burial rituals. That is, sometimes revenants come back for the living in order to be sent away permanently. In this story, the audience did not need to be cautioned of what would happen had the mother refused the revenant's pleas: the presence of the cow signals a potential problem of the destruction caused by an unhappy revenant. The daughter materializes at a specific time: While the mother is milking the cow. To some degree, the daughter is reminding her mother to continue her everyday duties. But the presence of an animal and a revenant could also bode danger for the animal. As peaceful as the daughter appears, she is nonetheless a revenant, and as much as we miss our departed loved ones, we do not literally want them to return from the dead. If the mother will not learn her lesson gently, there is no reason to believe that her daughter – who is actually now a monster – would not turn on her and, for instance, kill the cow in anger or as revenge for being trapped between two worlds. Indeed, tales of cattle and other livestock dying in the presence of a monster was a frightening reminder that the dead needed to find their peace safely underground, or else they might pose a danger to the family's livelihood (Beam, 2008).[8] Moreover, such tales remind us that, parental fears aside, children are not always innocent, in life or in death.

As the anthropologist Agnes Murgoci suggested in 1926, vampire folklore is an important means of understandings local populations' understandings about their and their children's souls. The second example of vampires as pathological monsters thus grows out of medieval and early modern beliefs in the possibility of a pregnant mother's improper behaviour influencing the birth and life of her child. In many eastern European societies, for instance, children born with cauls (that is, still in the intact amniotic sac) were likely, even predestined, to become vampires "within six weeks" of birth (Murgoci, pp. 329–330). In some cases, the caul represented the pregnant mother's sexual encounters with demons, and little could be done for the child or the mother upon whom the young vampire would certainly exact vengeance (Barber, 1998, pp. 30–31). Whatever misfortune befell them, and surely some misfortune would come their way, would be the mother's fault and the community had no moral reason to interfere or offer assistance. In other instances, the midwife could thwart destiny, removing the caul so that the child would not ingest its evil essence. She would then perform a ceremony in which she announced

to the village that this "wolf's" intention was to remain good, so as to keep the child from becoming an evil vampire. Here Murgoci presented a new kind of vampire, one whose evil had been neutralized. As she put it, "For vampires who are no longer vampires bring luck" (Murgoci, p. 330). Still, they remained former vessels of potential evil: good wolves, but still wolves. Murgoci does not speculate on the reference to wolves, but it is likely that the community would never forget the baby's imagined father, a demon. But its offspring, a demon-child who desired to do good, would no longer pay for the sins of its mother. The fact that the mother in both cases features as the key figure in the child-monster's life suggests that women carry a greater burden of responsibility in the making of vampires and the letting-go of revenants than fathers. It was not Louis de Pointe du Lac of Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* who introduced the idea of a vampire tortured by its humanity, or even humanity concerned with an encroachment of vampires into civilized society.

In this third example of the attraction of the grotesque, I would like to use Sigmund Freud's definition of the "uncanny" (*unheimlich*) to explain the pull of vampire lore on humans. Freud, and, with him all manner of horror scholars, from Oscar Wilde to Alfred Hitchcock, believed that humour and horror were two sides of the same coin. Both reactions are rooted in surprise, often combined with shock at the absurd or the grotesque; and, finally, with repeated exposure to the object, an increasing comfort level at its sight or evocation. Thus, the uncanny strikes a chord of familiarity: The object is not so foreign as to not evoke recognition, even empathy or sympathy. Gothic literature abounds with the uncanny with its typical narrative of a beautiful, frail, aristocratic young woman seduced by the evil, dark, dishonourable, and troubled man. She is generally coded as being innocent, a child, who will ultimately either fall victim to the mysteriously evil man or will be saved by an attractive but sexually unthreatening hero. And there's the rub – the asexual boy-next-door is remarkably unlike most people we know and difficult to portray as an attractive mate to a young girl or even a readership. It is instead the tortured, sexually active male who represents our own frailties and those of the suitors of our children and loved ones who will prevail. There is the possibility of redemption in saving that poor soul – if indeed he has one. Nonetheless, the nice-guy hero finishes last because there is no heavenly or earthly reward for his beloved in loving him. He is already saved. And if we turn to the natural and social science scholarship on mating rituals, "nice" males are not even the best choice for females choosing mates, whether in lizard communities or college dormitories.[9] And to be sure, in these tales,

much to parents' chagrin, the females do choose their partners, even at the risk of their own downfall.

The idea of a complicit victim in vampire tales took on new dimensions in the modern era. With the rise in the standard of living in the French Revolution, the family bed gradually gave way to separate beds, and bedrooms, for children. In the opening scene of the writer-sociologist Émile Zola's 1877 *L'assomoir*, the washer-woman Gervaise waits in vain for her lover Lantier to return to their one-room flat, crowded with the children's bed that takes up most of the room. When she later marries Coupeau, one of their major achievements was to save enough to afford a larger flat, one with a small room that functioned as a separate bedroom for her children. Yet, a separate room for children meant that the children's nocturnal activities could not be monitored. If parents could not keep an eye on their children, the likelihood that something might happen was easily imaginable. Worse, parents feared their children's complicity in their sexual misconduct, resulting in a large number of books and torturous devices for preventing "nocturnal emissions," or "self-pollution" (Stengers & van Neck, 2001). Masturbation could only signal a moral and physical weakness that predetermined the individual's likelihood of following the spell of those who would harm the child, even of calling upon the would-be assailant.

In Gothic vampire novels, it is this detail of a separate bedroom for a child that presaged the possibility of sexual violation by a stranger. In the 1872 vampire novel *Carmilla*, for instance, it is only when adults allow Carmilla—unbeknownst to them a vampire—to spend the night in her friend Laura's bed with no supervision that Laura faces danger. In these nights, Carmilla whispers her plans to seduce Laura, frightening and enticing her. Carmilla is successful in her seduction and implicit violation of Laura, who gradually and inexplicably becomes sick and weak. It is the doctor who suspects that Laura is not safe in her own bed and orders a constant vigil over the girl, forcing Carmilla out of Laura's bed. Laura suffers greatly without her friend, both tormented by strange nightmares about her and fearful of what her desire for Carmilla might mean.

Indeed, the Gothic vampire novel explicitly assigned the female victim a longing for the return of her seducer. Although initially repulsive to her virgin and innocent nature, the dark vampire character eventually becomes a desirable figure—both to her, and to the reader. It is a trope that came to dominate literature and, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, film and television series. That is, a Gothic sensibility has persisted in archetypical vampire tales even in modern-day retellings. Few modern vampire shows

have made this point more evident than the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* series. More so than Angel, it was the evil character of Spike, a vampire with no soul, who exerted the greatest sexual tension over Buffy and the show's fans. In a twenty-first century variation of a young woman's bedroom, Buffy could decide to put herself in danger by developing a sexual relationship with Spike, without fear of any guardian-figures finding out—she lives only with her younger sister and two friends. But this seemingly adult position obscures the coding of Buffy as a Laura-like figure who is both drawn to and repulsed by her vampire lovers. Buffy is indecisive and acts immaturely, sneaking around with a vampire whom she constantly berates, Spike, for his disgusting nature. She has, in essence, attempted to take over her own protection while keeping her interest in him a secret from her friends and Giles, her mentor and father-figure. In the ultimate example of fears about vampires, Spike attempted to rape Buffy (DeKnight & Gershman, 2002).[10] The episode was one of the show's least popular, not because of the rape scene itself, but because of the outrage that the show's fans expressed at Spike seeming to have acted out of character. In order for the grotesque to remain appealing, it must remain familiar, and Spike had long ceased in his audience's minds to torment anyone but himself. Spike, who had his soul returned to him, seemed to take over the tortured victim role (Fury & Contner, 2002). The web chatter about Buffy and Spike took Buffy to task repeatedly for having been the oppressor, with many fans suggesting that the gender power dynamics had changed to put Buffy in the role of abuser, unfairly draining Spike of the love he freely offered her.[11] Sometimes it is difficult to decide who is the real vampire.

Finally, I want to close with a delightful contemporary example in vampire literature of parental fears in child rearing with the book and various television, radio, and movie adaptations of Angela Sommer-Bodenburg's 1979 *The Little Vampire* (*Der kleine Vampir*). Written, according to the German author, as an experiment in soothing children's fears of things that go bump in the night, the story quickly reached worldwide cult status among children and adults alike. In the premier of the 1985 German television series, which I focus on here, the great aunt and uncle vampires discuss their worries about their three vampire nieces and nephews.[12] The youngest, Rüdiger, has just spoken out of turn to them and stormed off, and the aunt worries that they should never have left Transylvania, where the children would have had a proper castle to grow up in and plenty of normal (vampire) friends. During the argument, the other son, "Lumpi," opens his coffin briefly, only to decide to go back to sleep – even teenage vampires are ruled

by inner sleep demons, it would seem. Anna, the youngest, is both a source of great concern to her guardians and an object of disgust for her brothers; she has not yet "chosen" her vampire age and has thus not yet developed the fangs necessary for drinking blood. Instead, she drinks milk, a habit that makes Rüdiger sick to even think about. The grotesque is clearly in the eye of the beholder.

After his tantrum, Rüdiger flies over the city, alighting briefly at the window of a gymnasium where the human boy Anton is unsuccessfully practicing cartwheels. Anton's mother picks him up, informing him that she and his father are going out for the evening for a business dinner. We soon find out that they are fibbing to their son, going out entirely for pleasure. Anton, in a telling premonition, complains that he hates gymnastics and wants to learn karate in order to defend himself when his parents are gone in the evening. His mother blames his night-time fears on all the horror stories he reads, including Bram Stoker's *Dracula*; little does she guess that a young vampire will visit Anton that very night and threaten to suck his blood. No harms comes to Anton, and he and Rüdiger spend an evening discussing vampire myths and realities. Later, Rüdiger's uncle is upset with him when the boy explains that he "borrowed" the book *Dracula* from Anton (an important example of the intertexuality so necessary for vampire literature traditions to remain intact); Rüdiger quickly regains his uncle's affection when he corrects himself, stating that he "stole" the book – the only appropriate and moral action for a vampire. Ultimately, Rüdiger and Anton become close friends, with Anton often saving the vampire family from a Dr. Van Helsing-like graveyard inspector.

The television series, like the book and its adaptations, was a critical success. I would suggest here that it found the correct balance of typical vampire tropes that address parental fears about their children, providing first a well-worn storyline of misbehaving parents (who should know better than to leave their son alone); then a compelling twist on moral codes for vampires (they put themselves in ethical and physical danger by consorting with humans); and finally, an inversion of the uncanny, so that both Rüdiger and Anton encounter a number of grotesque situations that are familiar enough to keep their attention, while strange enough to be of curiosity. The similarities of the vampire family with "normal" people ultimately humanize them, moving them from the uncanny to the familiar and even to creatures for whom we express affection. They could, of course, kill their friend Anton. The point is that they did not and will not, offering children a chance to be scared just enough of vampire tales for the story to not be terrifying and

providing parents with a means of articulating their fears of leaving their children alone while comforting themselves that nothing bad will happen. Vampires, after all, do not exist.

Whether parents, educators, or children, humans or vampires, we recognize the lessons in this series, just as we recognize it in other vampire tropes: there are moral codes to be learned from monsters. These are not the so-called "dark" or "poison pedagogy" lessons that authors of the 1970s such as Alice Miller claimed were intended to scare young people straight but, instead, merely scared them to death.[13] They are, instead, conservative tales of caution. Vampires, as it turns out, are not just a reflection of our darker selves; they are us, and we are they. With our very human tendency to muddle our most important traditions terribly; our desire to understand the monstrously grotesque through rational explanations and, thereby, make it part of our lives; and our willingness to walk the tightrope between disgust and attractions, we are destined, it would seem, to watch our actions—in child-rearing, in this example—come back to haunt us. Let us therefore hope that our interest in vampires will hold a little longer, since it would seem we still have much to learn about our attitudes towards children and our fears about the precariousness of their innocence turning to guilt.

NOTES

1 See for instance, Paul Barber, *Vampires, Burial, and Death: Folklore and Reality* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988); Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Tomislav Z. Longinovic, *Vampire Nation: Violence as Cultural Imaginary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011; Günter Reimann, *The Vampire Economy* (New York, NY: Vanguard, 1939).

2 Français Rabelais *La Vie de Gargantua et de Pantagruel* 1532 and 1534; Available at Project Gutenberg http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1200/1200-h/1200-h.htm (last accessed 10 October 2014); Charles Baudelaire, Yvonne V. Rollins, "Baudelaire et le grotesque," *French Review* 50:2 (1976): 270–277.

3 In addition to Hornaday, see also Karl Steel, "Centaurs, Satyrs and Cynocephali: Medieval Scholarly Teratology and the Question of the Human," in *The Ashgate Research Companion*, eds. Asa Simon Mittman and Peter Dendle, 257–274.

4 From creator and producer, Joss Whedon, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* premiered in March 1997 and ended its seven seasons in May 2003.

5 The first of Meyer's novels in the series, *Twilight*, appeared in 2005 and the final novel, *Breaking Dawn,* appeared in 2008. Movie adaptations appeared in 2009 and 2010.

6 In Octavia Butler's *Fledgling* (New York, NY: Grand Central, 2007), the vampire communities successfully alters the genetic make-up of one of its young so that she develops pigment, allowing her to survive in sunlight.

[7] For more information, see the following sources: Albert Vandel, *La Genèse du Vivant*. (Paris: Masson, 1968), Peter J. Bowler, 1983. *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (Berkeley: University of California Press); Guillaume Lecointre 2003; David L. Hull, *An Evolutionary Account of the Social and Conceptual Development of Science* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); Stephen Jay Gould, 2002. *The Structure of Evolutionary Theory* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press).

[8] The Latin American *chupacabra* vampire, which first appeared in the 1970s to kill off livestock, especially goats, is a recent manifestation of the connection between vampires and their threat to a family's primary means of income. For more on the Chupacabra, see Marc Herman, "The History of El Chupacabra," www.animal.discovery.com/tv/lost-tapes/chupacabra/history/

[9] For more on the topic of preferential dating and mating, see Edward Herold and Robin R. Milhausen, (1992) "Dating Preferences of University Women: An Analysis of the Nice-Guy Stereotype" in *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy* 25, 333–343; and Richard Dawkings, (1976/2006) *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[10] See also Gwyn Symonds, (2004), "'Solving Problems with Sharp Objects:' Female Empowerment, Sex and Violence in 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer,'" *Slayage-Online*, Retrieved from http://slayageonline.com/essays/slayage11_12/Symonds.htm; and Gwyn Symonds, (2003), "Bollocks: Spike Fans and Reception of Buffy the Vampire Slayer," *The Refractory: a Journal of Entertainment,* Retrieved from http://www.sfca.unimelb.edu.au/refractory/journalissues/vol2/gwynsymonds.htm

[11] See for instance, Laura [no surname], "It's all About Power: Gender Dynamics in 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer,'" February 2003 http://www.allaboutspike.com/gender.html (last accessed 10 October 2014).

[12] The TV series is now on DVD: *Der kleine Vampir: Alle Abenteuer*, (EuroVideo, 1992). The first episode aired on German television in 1985.

[13] Alice Miller's *For Your Own Good* was initially published in German as *Am Anfang war Erziehung* in 1980, and the first English edition appeared in 1983.

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7. BEAUTIFULLY BROKEN

True Blood's *Tara Thornton as the Black Best Friend*

> I always call Tara the flower that grew through the concrete, because she was incredibly insecure and vulnerable, but also fierce and strong and defensive, all of that mixed together. She was an incredibly complex individual. But if you remember her, I would hope you look back at her strengths, her laugh, her smile.
>
> (Rutina Wesley, 2014)

Primetime television typically creates worlds in which race is either absent or is defined in narrow stereotyped ways. In today's world, female characters of African descent are most often reduced to the Black Best Friend (BBF), an updated combination of the overtly sexual Jezebel and the know-it-all, undesirable Mammy. This appeared to be the case at the start of HBO's series *True Blood*, which ran for seven seasons from 2007–2014. BBF, Tara Thornton (Rutina Wesley), appeared to reflect every narrow racist stereotype of black femininity seen throughout popular culture since the 1800s, from her single-parent alcoholic mother, to her "natural" criminal tendencies, her inability to hold down a job because of her issues with uncontrollable rage, or her "over-sensitivity" to the racism that surrounds her. But the magic of television is that a good show can take the time to develop its characters beyond narrow archetypes, and Tara's character arguably had the most complex journey on the show (while having the most banal ending). This chapter explores the meanings coded into her characteristics and behaviour to illustrate the ways her character retains and expands existing concepts of blackness and black sexuality. Does this beautifully broken supporting heroine offer us a different version of black womanhood thus suggesting the existence of a post-racial world? Perhaps not, but she certainly entertained us as she stumbled her way to redemption.

A. Hobson & U. M. Anyiwo (Eds.), Gender in the Vampire Narrative, 93–108.

THE BLACK BEST FRIEND AND THE LIMITS OF REPRESENTATION

> First things first, for those of you who aren't familiar with the term, a BBF is a one-dimensional archetype that exists solely to offer emotional support, provide counsel or serve the white lead in whatever fashion they need. A BBF is loyal, undeniably cool and confident beyond belief. A BBF is typically more honest than his or her white counterparts. A BBF isn't afraid to dish out tough love or call you on your bullshit. But BBFs don't do those things because they're mean; BBFs do those [things] because they love you. And because they have no life outside of you. Oh, and they're wise. Very, very wise. (Sadie Gennis, 2014)

Television provides a wealth of evidence to explore the evolution (or lack thereof) of the ways African American femininity is envisioned in the twenty-first century. Interestingly, the internalization of stereotypes has become so complete that producers appear largely unaware of the connotations of the limiting caricatures they incidentally perpetuate, and viewers, though increasingly sophisticated, accept these fictional images as normalized reality. Contemporary television thus has great potential for the iteration and/or reiteration of dominant ideologies and the perhaps accidental transmission of those ideologies. Moreover, *True Blood*, a show created by gay writer/producer Allan Ball and nominally about the marginalized, is an excellent example since it provides a cultural text that reflects a normalizing gaze under the disguise of political correctness. Some theorists might argue that television reflects reality but, as *True Blood* demonstrates, this reality is one filtered through a lens guided by prevailing ideologies. Consequently, T.V. shows reveal a great deal about the society and historical period in which they were produced.

Since the vast majority of shows are produced by white men; the normalizing gaze *is* the white male gaze. Annette Kuhn (1992) writes, "It is true (if somewhat reductive) to say that in a patriarchal culture most representations of women [and minorities] are readable as connoting 'otherness' or difference – difference from the norm of patriarchy, that is" (p. 19). Consequently the Other represents nothing more than long-held beliefs, stereotypes, and reductive imagery. This normative strategy becomes obvious when we realize that network shows are made predominantly for the pleasure of the male audience and/or, as Laura Mulvey suggests, for the entertainment of white spectatorship (Diawara, 2009, p. 829). Consequently the Western male creation of the Other has become a prerequisite for the

development of hierarchies that consistently place black women on the bottom rungs. The necessity to articulate difference (whether real or imagined), to create a subject/object relationship, allows the subject to dominate, exploit, gaze, and define its own privileges based on inclusion and exclusion. In this way, the subject (whites) defines its place based solely on its limited vision of the object (non-whites). One may thus conclude that mainstream television functions as one simplistic cultural plane used to solidify and perpetuate existing prejudices.

Television, and popular culture itself, relies on simplified archetypes or stereotypes, providing easy pathways for an audience to enter a story. Thus we recognize the hard-boiled detective or the cheerleader and understand how such a character might behave in the context of a piece. It is not, therefore, the existence of stereotypes themselves that prove problematic; our desire to group people into visual categories is a particularly normal human response. However, what is an issue is the intent behind an archetype and the limited stereotypes available to marginalized groups. Thus Asian men are pretty consistently presented *only* as math/computer geeks, Italian men are *always* hyper-masculine with violent tendencies; and Gay men are *always* presented as flamboyant and in touch with fashion. But if we were to list the ways that white heterosexual men are stereotyped we would be here all day, which is of course the point. Since they control their own image, there are an inexhaustible range of stereotypes of white, heterosexual men and the variety of ways they are seen reflects the multiple ways they are allowed to be. Thus when a white male character is a serial killer one does not extrapolate and believe that all white men are potential murderers. In contrast, for marginalized groups, and in this case women of colour, control over their own image has proven illusory. Representations of race in popular culture have consistently functioned to make the predominantly white audience feel more comfortable while ignoring inequality and the illusory progress of race relations. Primarily because of the limited knowledge or understanding of the interior lives of peoples of colour, representations of race focus on, and thus reinforce, limited racist stereotypes.

In our politically correct and "post-racial" world, we might assume that long outdated racist/sexist stereotypes and prejudices no longer exist. Yet a critical analysis of mainstream T.V. reveals a contemporary "pantheon of black gods and goddesses." Their presence is covert, hidden within the modern rhetoric of colour-blindness and racial harmony typified by the fact that they exist at all. Yet, this only reveals one side of an incredibly complex discourse. It is no longer enough to claim that producers are intentional

purveyors of intolerant imagery. In fact, a cursory look at modern T.V. suggests that modern shows, whilst littered with negative images of race, are indeed representations of a modern 'race-blind' industry, or at least one that thinks it is. Indeed, black audiences rabidly consume shows that academic critics label as overtly racist. For example, in the 2014/2015 season the two top new dramas (Fox's *Empire* and ABC's *How to Get Away With Murder*), the top new comedy (ABC's *black-ish*) and the highest-rated returning drama (ABC's *Scandal*), all featured either predominantly black casts, or a core black female protagonist, and a veritable pantheon of black stereotypes (The Nielsen Company Ratings). Consequently, as cultural critics we find ourselves in a strange universe where negative stereotypes appear as overt examples of white supremacist hegemony yet are ignored or accepted by the rest of population as the only ways African Americans can be.

The Black Best Friend (BBF) is a fairly new archetype that blends multiple historical attitudes about blackness and wraps them up in "colour-blind" veneer. Thus the image functions to prove that even in a largely white world, the protagonist is enlightened enough to cross the racial divide. While the trend to have a black best friend has existed as long as the buddy-genre, this new archetype lacks the obvious racism of past stock characters, like the Mammy or the Coon. Instead the BBF functions cleverly to illustrate the end of individual prejudice, and that African-Americans are superficially no different to their white counterparts (hence the friendship). Dionne Davenport (Stacey Dash) in *Clueless* (1995) is perhaps the first example of the BBF in contemporary popular culture. Indeed, her role was apparently so archetypal that she forms the physical template for almost every BBF that followed. If you were to place all of the BBFs from the last twenty years next to each other, you would be hard pressed to note either physical or structural differences.[1]

Tara superficially follows the template of the BBF from her Eurocentric features, height, hair, even skin colour (black but not too black), highlighting Eric Deggans (2011) point that "Their skin color [sic] seems a bit like window dressing, employed to make shows that still reflect an entirely Caucasian worldview look diverse." Although the viewer encounters a number of non-white characters over the course of the show, Tara is arguably one of only two characters (Lafayette (Nelson Ellis) her cousin is the other) to be developed beyond caricature or plot device to become active participants in the narrative. Though as Bill King suggests, even "though she's a bit of a hothead and doesn't exactly help her own cause, no one has really had it worse that Tara, in terms of bad things happening without really doing

anything to deserve them" (2015). Nevertheless, since black stereotypes continuously illustrate and thus prove the natural inferiority of blackness in ways that suggest any issues with race are the problems of the oppressed and not the oppressor, the presentation of Tara functions within that trope and those "bad things" reflect the limited power of blackness and the limited importance of black lives constantly painted as inferior.

But a television show, unfolding over a span of years, has the potential to build from an initial narrow archetype to potentially create a human being in all its complexities both good and bad and hopefully create/present something that rises above its early limits. *True Blood*, as a grand soap opera that evolved over seven seasons, certainly appeared to offer the potential for character growth evidenced by the fact that it became a show with multiple storylines and multiple points of entry despite seemingly having one core protagonist in the form of Sookie Stackhouse. In this sense Tara, as a core secondary character, had the potential to become something other than the simplified Black Best Friend. Certainly a great deal happens to Tara, but stuff happening does not necessarily equal growth.

The existence of yet one more show with troubled black characters does not create diversity, instead it ensures that the consciences of the writers and white viewers are appeased, while continuing to prove that black lives are there to serve as adjuncts to white desires.

WHITE SUCCESS/BLACK FAILURE: TARA AND SOOKIE

> Contemporary series are not to promote national ideals…but instead critique society and try to reflect reality instead of performing an educative role. (Jolanda Lutz, 2012, p. 56)

As BBF, Tara's purpose (like all of the secondary characters) is to provide a juxtaposition that helps its audience understand the protagonist, in this case Sookie Stackhouse. Yet if Lutz is correct and contemporary shows are intended to critique and educate by reflecting reality, then Tara provides a set of strong, explicit lessons about the intrinsic weakness of blackness. She represents a range of opposites to Sookie, the blonde-haired, virginal, Southern archetype, and, in the context of racial representations, Tara's differences highlight her unalterable blackness and reflect typical white attitudes toward the causes of black failure, from family structure and attitudes toward work to religious beliefs. With each statement, the writers underscore "natural" sociological differences between the races, justifying the unequal outcomes both for the non-white characters and society in general.

The most obvious starting point is the family structures of the Stackhouses and Thorntons. Both Sookie and Tara come from broken homes, yet Sookie's is the result of unforeseeable tragedy through the murder of her parents by vampire/fairy hybrid Macklyn Warlow (Ben Flynn) ensuring the audience is sympathetic to her tragic start in life. In contrast, Tara's upbringing is the result of the typically presented "black-broken home" scenario; an absent abusive father. In this sense, the audience can recognize Tara's familial circumstances as normalized black decision-making, and her problematic origins are the result of normative black failure. Moreover, Lettie Mae's (Adina Porter) alcoholism is equally contrasted with Adele's (Lois Smith) steadfast goodness and morality, explaining the adult characters of Sookie and Tara.

Sookie is hamstrung by her "affliction," (telepathy) which made it hard for her to succeed in school or develop sexual relationships. Tara's issues are the result of the "angry black woman" syndrome, making it appear as though Sookie is marginalized through no fault of her own while Tara is doomed by her matriarchal blackness. Rutina Wesley attempted to explain this difference in a 2014 interview when she said, "I think it came from having to take care of her mother and having to grow up fast. Because of the abuse from her mother, Tara had to become a fighter. She had to learn how to fight early on. She's just carried that with her throughout her life" (N. Abrams). Yet such a comment ignores the historical structural racism that presents all black women as fundamentally flawed, not because society is unfair, but because of their intrinsically flawed natures. Sookie's issues are no fault of her own or indeed of society; Tara's are again the result of normative black behaviour consistently painted as problematic.

There is no greater example of this than in the attitudes toward employment expressed by the two families. Despite her affliction, Sookie is able to hold down a job at Merlotte's Bar and Grill for the length of the show. The first time we see Tara, she is being fired from yet another job because of her uncontrollable rage at her white customers. Thus Tara is repeatedly fired or quits because of her natural lack of responsibility. This is no surprise of course when we explore their upbringing. We never see either Adele Stackhouse or Lettie Mae Daniels née Thornton engaged in traditional labour. Instead, Adele spends her time running her household, raising orphaned children, and helping her community. In contrast, Lettie Mae essentially drinks herself through much of the series proving to be a terrible (yet typically black) parental role model for her daughter, who

spends a significant portion of her time on the show engaging in the same self-destructive alcohol-fuelled behaviour. Adele's working class attitude (always working to pay your own way, not asking for assistance) results in Sookie and Jason working no matter what. Despite Jason's romanticised irresponsibility, we consistently see him working in a range of occupations culminating in work as a police officer (a role he bribed his way into and was wholly unqualified for, illustrating historical white male privilege.) Tara and her cousin Lafayette have typically natural criminal tendencies with Lafayette supplementing his income as a line cook with drug sales, bribery, and theft. Even when Sam gives Tara a job at Merlotte's out of sympathy, she spends most of her time drinking the stock without paying and insulting the customers. In contrast, Sookie's frequent absences from work are the result of life's emergencies that are out of her hands, as opposed to any "natural" poor planning.

Finally, both Sookie and Tara experience failed relationships, but even then Ball cannot help but contrast the purity and acceptability of white femininity with unworthy blackness. Thus Sookie gets to fall in and out of love with a cast of "men" driven to desire and protect her. From vampires Bill Compton (Stephen Moyer) and Eric Northman (Alexander Skarsgård) to werewolf Alcide Herveaux (Joe Manganiello) and shifter Sam Merlotte (Sam Trammell), we are constantly reminded of Sookie's desirability, and she ends the series with a fulfilment of patriarchal heterosexual desires; pregnant with a family of her own. Tara experiences the humiliating unrequited love of Jason, a failed relationship with Sam (who only wants Sookie), is forced to kill her boyfriend Eggs, is kidnapped and brutalized by vampire Franklin Mott, and dies before a lesbian relationship with vampire Pam Swynford De Beaufort (Kristin Bauer van Straten) has a chance to develop. Thus everything about Tara fulfils those negative stereotypes of blackness we have become so used to seeing that audiences are oblivious, unconcerned, or believe such images effectively reflect reality. Because there are a range of white characters on the show, it is easy to believe whiteness represents a range of possibilities. Yet, because there is only one type of black character presented—flawed with criminal tendencies—it is difficult to believe peoples of colour can be anything else. Finally, the presentation of Tara's character as intrinsically deviant absolves any guilt the audience might feel about the behaviour of white characters on the show, and reminds them that it is not the fault of society that African-Americans fail to succeed; rather it is their own natural insurmountable deviance.

UNFETTERED BLACK SEXUALITY: TARA AND FRANKLIN MOTT

> The uniqueness of the African-American female's situation is that she stands at the crossroads of two of the most well-developed ideologies in America, that regarding women and that of the Negro…The black woman's position at the nexus of America's sex and race mythology has made it most difficult for her to escape the mythology. (Deborah Gray White, 1999, pp. 24–25)

Televised portrayals of black sexuality have become highly political and central to the articulation of dominant group ideologies, anxieties, and desires. Imprisoned within competing denigrations that paint them as unfeminine, overtly sexual, emasculating matriarchs, black women have historically been denied the "normal" protections afforded women by suggesting that they neither need nor deserve them. This idea has been so reproduced in every element of American culture that it has become a pseudo-biological fact. In popular discourse, from television to the news, black women are consistently portrayed as either matriarchs or out of control Jezebels, who are a danger to "normal" society. These ideas are illustrated in both explicit and implicit ways through the body of Tara—the catchall figure for the show's troubled Otherness. Tara, as BBF, is consistently portrayed as unworthy of sexual relationships and deserving of her fate because of those tendencies that make it impossible to see her as someone worth saving. While the show functions around the typical tropes of saving the innocent girl in peril and enforcing patriarchal normality, Tara is denied any form of long-term relationship, and when she is in danger, she cannot hope that the cast of vampires, werewolves, shifters, fairies, and humans will care enough to even notice she needs saving. Thus like the endless "accidental" social commentary infused in the show, while suggesting a complexity in the images of the marginalized, Tara's positioning as consistent guilty victim re-inscribes unresolved attitudes towards black female sexuality.

The infamous hyper-sexualised icon of black womanhood, the Jezebel, serves as the perfect example of these complexities consistently appearing on screen without any disguise. Her sexualisation is so deeply entrenched in the public consciousness that we, the viewers, see her as reflecting reality rather than as a demeaning stereotype with real world implications for black women. On the one hand, this demonstrates that female sexuality has been so heavily exploited and objectified in the mass media that we no longer equate it with anything negative. On the other hand, after years of bombardment, the viewer is so completely convinced that black women are inherently

hypersexual that such images generate no special comment. Either way, with the BBF combining black hypersexuality with emasculating aggression, this "new" archetype modernizes the Jezebel by extending its problematic nature, thus proving that black sexuality remains a threat to society and must be contained and punished.

In a show ostensibly about the marginalized, *True Blood* still manages to make Tara the central illustration of the Other. As Stuart Hall (1992) writes, "The Other is to our own sense of identity, how even the dominant, colonizing, imperializing power only knows who and what it is and can only experience the pleasure of its own power of domination through the construction of the Other" (pp. 14–15). Thus Tara's un-expressed bisexuality (she is gay or straight depending on the needs of the story arc) is consistently contrasted with Sookie's heterosexuality. The parallels highlight the differences between not only the two characters but white and black women at large. Thus in contrast to Sookie, Tara is never allowed a "normal" or conventional relationship due to her unalterable blackness; an irony in a show about Outsiders, where the central marginalized body is a petite, virginal, blonde, blue-eyed white girl. Tara's relationships take horrific and ridiculous turns depending on the needs of the story, crossing social boundaries of murder, lesbianism, kidnapping, and rape. If it could happen to a black body on this show it does, because the black body is the site of contestation for white, rather than black, desires. These ideas find their best expression in Season 3, when Tara meets the psychotic vampire Franklin Mott.

Tara's relationships, and particularly that with Franklin, both contradict and support the BBF archetype in ways that articulate the complexities Ball strives to infuse into the show. Historically, from the Hottentot Venus to the video vixen, distortions of black female desires and sexuality have been used to deprive all women of their sexual rights. Moreover, envisioned exclusively from a Eurocentric/phallocentric point of view, there is no room for the concept of black purity or even black beauty. In other words, in a white patriarchal society, black women are coded as abnormal, immoral, ugly, and ultimately black. In this way, Ball expounds the views that strong black women remain a threat to social order and must always be punished for their presumptions to happiness. Despite using the narrative of *True Blood* to ostensibly highlight oppressive differences, his internalized patriarchal beliefs, despite his sexuality, ensure that sympathetic portrayals are reserved for those marginalized bodies who are white enough to still conform. Both Sookie and Tara represent women who have been violently discriminated against in Southern tradition, and two characters that have

traditionally served in roles of mistress/servant. Their inclusion is the heart of this narrative, and the fact that they are best friends, indicates that this is a post-racial world in which race/sexuality are no longer central issues in the community. Yet Tara is characterized as a dangerous woman who refuses to give ground; any fate that awaits her is richly deserved.

Illustrating the uneven presentation of their rights as sexual beings, Sookie's relationships are consistently painted in terms of passionate romance; where the object of desire is pursued by a heroic flawed alpha male. Each relationship Sookie is allowed helps explain her burgeoning agency as a woman and her ultimate acceptance of her place in an uber-patriarchal rural Southern society. In contract, Tara's relationships are consistently presented as poor decision-making destined to end badly. Sookie is confidently seeking her Happily Ever After and is eventually rewarded with it. Tara is rewarded only with repeated heartbreak, humiliation, and death.

Her "relationship" with the British vampire Franklin Mott contrasts starkly with Sookie's vampiric romances, teaching a multitude of explicit and implicit lessons. In contrast to Sookie's first romantic and stylized meeting with Bill Compton, Tara's first meeting with Franklin reflects attitudes of black sexuality and its corresponding punishment. At Merlotte's, a typically drunk Tara strikes up a conversation with clearly dangerous vampire Mott, which develops into a binge drinking session and ultimately the beating up of two racist thugs. Then the alcohol-fuelled violence leads to some HBO-style cross-species sex. Thus, unlike the innocent Sookie who begins her affair with Compton with violence followed by a kiss, the rampant and abnormal sexuality of Tara is highlighted as yet more evidence of her dangerously flawed decision making. As a good BBF, Tara attempts to end her connection to Mott as soon as she discovers he works for Sookie's enemy, putting the needs of her friend over that of her own desires (something Sookie never reciprocates). In addition, Tara is already damaged by the recent death of her first real love Eggs, ultimately caused by Sookie.

In some ways, Ball makes an obvious comment about the historical myth of the loose slave girl who seduces her Master. Mott is clearly the slave Master in this scenario. The scenes between the two predominantly take place in an antebellum mansion in Mississippi with everything from the décor to Mott's language intended to take even the most ignorant viewer back in time. But Tara, like the slave girls she evokes in this scene, is not a willing participant, but a victim of Mott's sexually deviant delusions. He kidnaps her and threatens to drain her if she does not consent to becoming his vampire bride. Thus, like the thousands of black girls before her, her choice is violence and

rape, or consent to her own degradation in the hope of temporary survival. On one level, Ball reminds the audience of the historical sexual exploitation of black women and reminds us that such behaviour is still part of our racial fabric. Their exchange evokes the de-romanticized version of miscegenation with its implicit coercion painted as consent. In this sense, we might conclude that Ball demonstrates that interracial relationships can never be freed from their unequal nature because black women are always the defamed Other, regardless of the context from which the relationship stems.

Left alone, Ball appears to be making a strong statement about oppression by attempting to undo historically distorted visions of black sexuality. However, the Tara/Franklin storyline does not happen in a vacuum, and when examined more closely, it becomes clear the show reinforces those stereotypes through seeming contradiction. Firstly, Mott is British, immediately absolving the American audience in these scenes and a reminder that this evokes a long-dead past. But more importantly for this argument is the positioning of Tara's behaviour, thus making her a suspect victim. Indeed, the circumstances of her kidnapping subtly underscore the response to imagined unfettered black sexuality. Tara had consensual rough sex with Mott, indeed she initiates it, evoking the oft-repeated image of white men who are the victims of unrestrained aggressive black women whose loss of control (getting drunk, beating up three men) is reflective of their animalistic, yet enticing natures. The type of consensual sex that Tara has with a blood-soaked stranger highlights the seemingly corrupting power of unfettered sexuality that black womanhood represents in the contemporary mind and is viewed in this context to subtly justify the singular sexual appetites of white men when unleashed by hot blooded black women. Simultaneously, the spectator is reminded of the illicit nature of the scene, framed by images of Tara's shattered psyche, encouraging reminders of historically forbidden interracial desire. The very notion of forbidden pleasure suggests that pleasure is found, both for the object and the viewer, in the sinfulness, the loss of control, that such sexual contact provides. Despite its veneer, *True Blood* constantly reminds us that interracial relationships are forbidden by their consistently doomed nature. Tara never engages in a human heterosexual mixed relationship. Each time she crosses the racial barrier, it is with others coded as abnormal—shifter Sam, vampires Franklin and Pam, and lesbians Pam and Naomi. Acceptability, *True Blood* reminds us, cannot by its very nature provide sexual excitement, clearly the more forbidden the object the more enticing it becomes. Tara's behaviour thus illustrates the historical myth "that all black women were eager for sexual exploits, voluntarily

'loose' in their morals and, therefore, deserved none of the consideration and respect granted to white women. Every black woman, by definition, was a 'slut'" (Gerda Lerner, 1997, p. ii). Tara, and thus all black women, could be justifiably "seduced."

Unpacking the scenes that precede Tara's abduction changes the nature of the implicit lessons being taught. What appears at first to be a subverting of racist myth becomes an unconscious reflection of the same attitudes. Tara's abduction becomes more evidence of the desires for imagined unfettered black sexuality and the simultaneously compelling need to control it. Mott becomes the manifestation of white male fantasies of uninhibited sexuality released from the confines of social norms. The fact that it is ultimately the white male saviour Jason Stackhouse who dispatches Mott, restores both male sexual fantasies of interracial desire and black female sexuality to their appropriate spaces. In addition, at first glance we might celebrate the fact that ultimately Tara is forced to save herself. We are constantly reminded of Sookie's purity and vulnerability, necessitating every man in the show to feel compelled to rescue/save her. As Pam once beautifully exclaimed, "I am so over Sookie and her precious fairy vagina and her unbelievably stupid name" (R. Turner, 2011). Tara's job, as BBF, is to save not be saved. In this season, both characters are kidnapped but Sookie is immediately missed and surrounded by men wanting to save her, even when it is against their own best interests. In contrast, no one even notices Tara is missing or seems to feel anything more than slight annoyance when they find out. Tara must thus seduce her kidnapper and stake him in a gruesome parody of a wedding night. The carnality and animalistic violence of the scene is both titillating and cathartic as (once again) *True Blood* marries violent sex that straddles a shaky line of consent and ends in a bloodbath. Tara's ability to save herself is reflective of the multiple differences between white and black female agency. The white girl is always supposed to be vulnerable enough to deserve saving. Indeed, much of romance is predicated on rescuing the girl-in-peril, in this case, "Screaming Sookie." *True Blood* somehow both celebrates and critiques this trope by allowing Tara to use her hard-won street smarts (convincing Mott of her submission by willingly drinking his blood for its strength, and contacting Sookie telepathically) to save herself. Yet despite saving both herself and Sookie, she is rewarded only with anger for stopping a ravenous Compton from draining Sookie dry. Thus the nature of the BBF requires her actions to be overshadowed by the protagonist. Finally, if it seemed as though Tara saved herself from the clutches of the evil vampire, remember that ultimately even that victory is stolen from her

as it is Jason who shoots the resurrected Mott with the wooden bullets that permanently destroy him.

Ultimately, the complexity of Tara's story arc highlights Boyer's (2004) argument about the show that "instead of being liberatory and counter-hegemonic, these attempts at carving out and problematizing notions of difference and otherness are lost within a sense of reductionist representation that falls flat for many audience members and likely reinforces and re-inscribes stereotypes surrounding race and sexuality instead of troubling them" (p. 38). The presentation of back sexuality as fundamentally flawed remains yet one more aspect of show that unsteadies any claims to its post-racial inclusive nature.

A BANAL ENDING?

> To ban all black characters from being sassy, all Latina characters from being maids or all gay characters from being flamboyant is to say that these identities aren't worth exploring and that their stories aren't worth telling. There is nothing wrong with being an opinionated woman who also happens to be black or a flamboyant man who also happens to be gay. The problem is an entertainment industry that tells minorities that these stereotypes are all they are or can ever be. And to completely avoid racial stereotypes out of fear of being called racist plays into the idea that these people aren't people at all — they're tropes who are ultimately defined by a singular trait. (Sadie Gennis)

As the catchall configuration of Otherness on *True Blood*, Tara's journey meandered in directions that served the narrative arc and Sookie's story rather than her own. In this way, just as with other televised BBFs, she exemplified a contemporary version of the faithful maid with no real desires of her own beyond serving her mistress. Thus, following her kidnapping and brutalization, Tara eventually escapes Bon Temps for New Orleans where she finally finds a modicum of happiness as an MMF fighter and a relationship with fellow fighter Naomi. Yet the moment Sookie returns from Fairyland, she gives everything up to return to the hell that is her life with her best friend. Inevitably, Tara gives her life for Sookie, taking a bullet to the head fulfilling her role as sacrificial black servant. That could have been it for the troubled character. But, because black lives do not belong to them, in a world where peoples of African descent are denied even the freedom of death, Tara is brought back as a vampire; the one creature she truly despises. In the *True Blood* Special Feature "Tara's Learning Vamp," Welsey argues that it

was the "Best thing to happen to her to become the thing that she hates" (2014). Arguably that belief reflects the concept that Tara exists in a cultural vacuum disconnected from the archetypes that inform her characterization. Since both Tara's sexuality and her status as human are essentially fluid, there only to serve the needs of her best friend, her life becomes a series of stylized stereotyped examples of black irresponsibility and failure. Unlike every other character transformed into a vampire, Tara's transformation is typified by insanity and extreme uncontrolled violence. Alan Ball argues that "We worked really hard to give the idea that because Tara was so injured when she was turned, it took a while for all of her brain to regenerate. So there's a 24-hour period where she's like a feral beast" (2015). That would be fine in a cultural vacuum but when contrasted with the other transformations it becomes an explicit reflection of white attitudes towards blackness.

Ultimately, Tara represents a strong woman not because she wishes to be a man, but because her physical and emotional strength are the only things that ensure her survival. Raised in an abusive home, it is made clear through flashbacks, that there was never anyone from her own community to protect her. But, as is so common, it is the god-fearing white female who provides her with a safe haven, thus reinforcing the idea that blackness can only be "saved" through white intervention. Without positive black role models, it is no wonder that Tara is unable to function normally in relationships even in a town filled with the abnormal. Yet, in many ways, as an insider, Tara is respected for her strength and independence because of her positioning as minority/minority, allowing the other characters to tolerate her fractious (deviant/demonized) personality. Yet there is a world of difference between tolerance and acceptance as evidenced by the meanings that surround the treatment and decisions of this lone young black woman. Her treatment as BBF fails to elevate her beyond the narrow archetype of the flawed black woman in ways that provide a rather depressing conclusion to a show that had the potential to develop all of its characters.

Does the presentation of one woman on one show really matter? Remembering that no character exists in a cultural vacuum and that the writers of a show exist in the same world as their audience, every characterization of blackness becomes important. Because black women are given so few variations of their real characters, because they are usually the lone female character of race, and because there is so little difference between one character and another, each image adds to the overall understanding of who black women are allowed to be. *True Blood* does an excellent job of proving that it does not matter who controls the production, blackness

will always be seen as abnormal and thus inferior. As Eric Deggans (2011) concludes;

> The title BBF may sound demeaning, as a flip dismissal of a hardworking actor. But it's really a cry of frustration, expressing a burning disappointment in the lack of truly well-developed roles for nonwhite characters that has smoldered so long that it has become a bitter humor.

Until black women can control their own images detached from cultural norms, they will continue to be forced to perform the archetype seen throughout popular culture that limits their potential to be whomever they choose.

NOTE

[1] See for example: *Alias* (ABC 2001–2006) Merrin Dungey (Francie Calfo), *My Boys* (TBS 2006–2010) Kellee Stewart (Stephanie Layne), *Private Practice's* (ABC 2007–2013) Naomi Bennett (Audra Ann McDonald), or The *Vampire Diaries* (CW 2009–) Bonnie Bennett (Kat Graham).

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8. A FEMINIST BLOODLETTING

Reading Suicide in Florence Marryat and Angela Carter

INTRODUCTION

Let's face it: being a female vampire within the world of Victorian fiction sucks, both literally and figuratively. In almost all of her depictions throughout the nineteenth century, the female vampire is seen in two states: either feeding from the necks of her victims or on the hunt to do so, in the quest to satiate her voracious appetite. Typically, she seeks her prey under the cover of night and therefore her desire for human flesh becomes doubly coded, signalling both her physical hunger and her sexual wantonness. Furthermore, because these qualities represent monstrous violations of the natural world and the strict norms that regulated femininity and female sexuality in the Victorian era, she rarely survives beyond the end of the story. Thus, while her perpetual un-life presages her eventual death, as it does with all vampires, the female vampire also represents a specifically sexual threat that must be contained and subsequently exorcised by authoritative male figures, in what becomes a violent act of ritual cleansing that restores a properly gendered order and helps bring the narrative to a satisfying close.

Not surprisingly, this depiction of vampiric femininity has largely been featured in writings by men. Within these male-authored texts, of which Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1871) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) are the most prominent examples, female vampires catalyse a number of patriarchal anxieties about female power and the notable shifts that were taking place in gender norms at the fin de siècle. Furthermore, since these central texts typically mark the female vampire as a foreign "Other" or, in the case of Stoker's Lucy Westenra, as tainted by this vampiric "Otherness," she also functions as an important locus for intertwining cultural anxieties about gender and sexuality with concurrent concerns about national and racial "purity."

While this essay begins by exploring this male-determined script and focuses on the female vampires presented in *Dracula* and *Carmilla*, it

A. Hobson & U. M. Anyiwo (Eds.), Gender in the Vampire Narrative, 109–123.

ultimately analyses how women writers have responded to this broader literary legacy. To do so, it examines the female vampires in Florence Marryat's 1897 novella, *The Blood of the Vampire*, published in the same year as Stoker's *Dracula,* and Angela Carter's 1979 short story, "The Lady of the House of Love." Despite the historical distance that separates these texts, both offer incisive and strikingly similar challenges to this male-dominated tradition and use their protagonists' struggles with their vampiric condition to call attention to the oppressive structures of patriarchy itself.

Furthermore, although Marryat and Carter in many ways extend the problematic twinning of dissident sexuality and foreign "Otherness"—in the way that Helen Brandt's vampirism in Marryat is tied to her status as a mixed-race "quadroon" and in the way that Carter's Countess survives by luring men into her Transylvanian castle on the eve of World War I—they also show how these characters come to recognise their feeding as complicit with the imperialism and militarism carried out by their monstrous forefathers. When Harriet and the Countess commit suicide at the end of their narratives, Marryat and Carter frame these acts of self-destruction as adamant refusals to perpetuate longstanding patterns of patriarchal violence. As such, their suicides recuperate a space for female agency that is admittedly vexed, but also not wholly contained by the expression of masculinist power.

EXORCISING THE FEMALE DEMON IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN

Since Dracula gets title billing in Stoker's text, it is easy to forget that his female kin outnumber him in the world of the novel. From the three female vampires that inhabit his castle—known more popularly as the Brides—to the fearsome transformation of Lucy Westenra, these female figures' malevolent acts feature just as prominently as Dracula's and, more crucially, lay the groundwork for the Count's nefarious plans. As early as the third chapter, when Jonathan Harker wanders the castle at night against Dracula's warnings, readers get their first full glimpse of the horrific threat that the vampire presents, when he meets the Brides for the first time. While there are small details scattered across the opening chapters that signal Dracula's monstrosity, including his pointed ears, pale skin, and lack of a reflection, it is only when Harker comes into contact with the Brides—with their "piercing eyes" and their "brilliant white teeth"—that the vampire's violent potential becomes abundantly clear (p. 45).

After the three women debate who will take the first bite, the "fair girl'" comes toward Harker "on her knees, and bent over," exhibiting a feline

ferocity (p. 45). As she approaches, Harker stares transfixed, while he catalogues her body parts in a way that connects his erotic titillation with a growing sense of danger:

> There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the white sharp teeth. (pp. 45–46)

Later, when the Bride's teeth hover over the 'supersensitive skin' of Harker's throat, he closes his eyes in a 'languorous ecstasy and wait[s]—wait[s] with beating heart' (p. 46). And though her fangs never puncture his skin—since an enraged Dracula interrupts and stops her from feeding—her encounter with Harker nevertheless shows the important role that the Brides play in the novel's more general inversion of normative, heterosexual penetration.[1]

Certainly the female vampire is not the first or only creature to present this kind of threat to patriarchal hierarchies. While she has become an integral part of the tradition of vampire fictions that was developed in the Romantic texts of Lord Byron and John Polidori and in the 1840s serial novel *Varney the Vampire*, the female vampire also bears a number of crucial similarities to other folkloric figures like the succubus and the lamia—who sustain their life by feeding on men and children and whose rejection of marriage and maternity characterises their monstrous femininity. In this way, the female vampire narrative is part of a long line of myths that organise misogynist fantasies about female power. Furthermore, as Nina Auerbach (1982; 1995) and Bram Dijkstra (1986) have both argued, these tales of "demonic" women gained a particular salience in the Victorian period—especially in their contrast with the idealised version of femininity presented by the "Angel in the House." As the century wore on and as women began to resist this domestic image more vigorously, in what would grow to become the first wave feminist movement, these archetypes of female "perversity" proliferated and helped to organise the gendered anxieties provoked by the resulting changes.

Published in 1871, Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* provides an important example of this male Victorian interest in containing the feminine, especially in the way it marked the increase in the representations of female vampirism at the end of the century and in the way it helped codify many of the narrative conventions for its depiction in later texts, including *Dracula*.[2] Perhaps most significantly, Le Fanu's novella characterises Carmilla's monstrosity as a threat to her victims' sexual purity as well as to their lives. When Carmilla

stalks her victims across the Austrian forestland and when she becomes fixated most particularly on Laura, the novella's figure of girlish innocence, the narrative marks how her "deviant" lesbian desires and her vampirism mutually constitute one another.

The erotic danger that Carmilla poses to the characters in Le Fanu's text finds its clearest expression within Stoker's novel in Lucy Westenra, who, as the initially pure and beautiful woman, is transformed by Dracula's bite. While the novel does not use same-sex desire to signal Lucy's devolution into the "perversion" of vampirism, as Le Fanu does in *Carmilla*, *Dracula* nevertheless records her transformation in emphatically sexual terms. After rising from her death in vampiric form, Lucy becomes more physically attractive and her body is hyperbolically eroticised, with her "sweetness […] turned to adamantine, heartless cruelty" and her "purity" transformed into "voluptuous wantonness" (p. 225). Furthermore, like Carmilla, Lucy's deviation from Victorian gender norms is expressed in her quite-literal taste for children. Holding a "fair-haired child" in the scene of her revelation, which she later casts aside, Lucy flashes lips that are "crimson with fresh blood" and stares out with eyes that are "unclean and full of hell-fire"—all acts and bodily distortions that signal her now-fallen state (p. 225).

Critics have placed this sexualised portrayal of Lucy's vampirism within a number of historical contexts, which, when combined, help to illuminate the many different anxieties that she would have invoked for late-Victorian readers. In her analysis of *Dracula*, Carol A. Senf (1982) argues that Lucy functions as an avatar of the New Woman, whose drive for sexual and political independence at the turn of the century radically rebuffed Victorian gender norms. As a form of femininity that rejected domesticity and valued independence, the New Woman lingers for Senf behind Lucy's bold refusals (and indeed, reversals) of normative female sexuality in her scenes as a vampire, especially when contrasted with the redeemed and eventually married figure of Mina (p. 34). Framing these gender transgressions in a different, but related, context—that is, in light of the novel's concerns about foreign invasion and national purity—Stephen Arata (1996) argues that Lucy's role in the novel is crucial to understanding the sexual dimensions of Dracula's project of "reverse colonization." As Arata asserts, "if in this novel blood stands for race, then women quite literally become the vehicles of racial propagation" (p. 119). Since Dracula plans to infect the men of England through its women, Lucy is the crucial first vector within the Count's larger agenda of invasion. Considering the novel in light of these two readings sheds important light on the multiple transgressions marked by Lucy and,

by extension, the Brides, who represent a number of the overlapping social "ills" that concerned late-Victorians. Indeed, when placed alongside one another, Senf and Arata's insights provide an important cultural context for understanding why these narratives press towards the female vampire's destruction with such violent force.

Here again, the narrative template provided by Le Fanu's *Carmilla* proves to be an important one, for *Dracula* and beyond, in the way that it stages Carmilla's death as a gruesome ritual carried out by the novel's male characters. At the end of the novella, Camilla's body is raised by a group of men and staked in the heart, before her "head was struck off and a torrent of blood flows from the severed neck" (p. 316). Thrown afterward on a pile of wood, her remains are "reduced to ashes" and then "thrown upon the river and then borne away" (p. 316). This macabre excess is replicated in the scene of Lucy's slaying in *Dracula*, which similarly relishes in the mutilation of her body. After Van Helsing leads her three suitors to her tomb, her heart is similarly punctured, with the stake hammered in repeatedly by her fiancé, Arthur. Notably, as this action unfolds in Dr. Seward's descriptions, Lucy is reduced to being called "the Thing," when she writhes and lets out a "hideous, blood-curdling screech […] from [her] opened red lips" (p. 230). While her mouth continues to chomp and become smeared with "crimson foam," Arthur relentlessly hammers the stake into her heart until she is dead. Later, when Van Helsing destroys the Brides in a scene that is just as violent, his acts are bluntly described as "butcher work" (p. 394). While Van Helsing is initially seduced by the Brides' beauty, he is also repulsed by the effects of his "butchery," by their "horrid screeching," and by "the plunging of [their] writhing forms, and lips of bloody foam" (p. 395). As the sensual pleasures and dangers offered by the female vampires intertwine even in their deaths, it is difficult to tell what produces the greater horror: the monstrosity of the Brides themselves or Van Helsing's treatment of them as nothing more than meat.

These scenes also saliently demonstrate how the novels imagine these acts of violence in gendered and, more specifically, male-centred terms. While the female vampires' transgressions in these Victorian texts are determined by their "deviant" sexualities, their extermination also reveals the inherent violence typically assigned to masculinity. Indeed, if the threat of the Brides' mouths on Harker's neck reverses the logic of heteronormative, male penetration, then Van Helsing's stake re-establishes the "proper" sexual order later in the text. As such, *Carmilla* and *Dracula* remain invested in placing the mechanisms and tools of violence back in the "right" hands, in the hands

of European men, rather than questioning how these men uncannily replicate the sexual and colonial violence that the vampire itself enacts.

In contrast to the pattern that scenes like this establish, in which the female monster is sacrificed in order to establish narrative closure, Marryat and Carter's texts create representations of female vampirism that disrupt this return to male power and give their female protagonists more control over their lives and deaths. In so doing, they not only call forceful attention to the way the female vampire's need for flesh is produced out of, rather than against, patriarchal structures, but also demonstrate how this dynamic leads to their protagonists' tragic ends.

REFUSING COLONIALISM IN *THE BLOOD OF THE VAMPIRE*

Although the title of Florence Marryat's novella *The Blood of the Vampire* would seem to suggest a narrative awash in the bodily fluid, the story itself is far tidier than *Dracula,* which was published in the same year. In Stoker's novel tainted blood and fangs proliferate, as they stand in metaphorically for concerns about racial contamination and unbridled sexuality. However, in Marryat's novel these concerns manifest themselves far more literally—if less grotesquely—in the mixed-race blood that flows through the veins of its protagonist Harriet Brandt. For this reason, the novel has recently begun to garner increased interest among scholars, despite the fact that it fell out of print for over a century, because it uses the vampire narrative to link late-Victorian anxieties around "reverse colonization" and transgressive femininity in ways that are both resonant with and more explicit than *Dracula*'s.

The novel opens at a Belgian seaside resort, with the orphan Harriet having recently arrived after being raised in a Jamaican Catholic convent. When integrating herself into the well-to-do society of the Hôtel Lion D'Or, she both attracts and repulses her new acquaintances. The women, while initially enchanted by Harriet's coquettish behaviour, become increasingly disgusted by her uncultured manners and her presciently voracious appetite—while the men are immediately enraptured by her preternatural beauty and her mesmeric singing talents. Meanwhile, the people who form the closest attachments with Harriet begin to weaken and fail—in a sequence of untimely illnesses and deaths that are eventually connected back to Harriet by Dr. Phillips, who reveals her mixed-race heritage and her vampiric status. As a former colleague of Harriet's father, Dr. Phillips discloses that Harriet is the illegitimate "quadroon" child of a Creole Obeah priestess and a British

slave-owning scientist, and Phillips explains that her monstrous powers derive from the bite of a vampire bat when her grandmother was pregnant.[3] As a result, unlike her mother, who displayed a literal thirst for blood, Harriet is a "psychic vampire," who unconsciously drains the life force from her victims until they eventually waste away and die.

For Octavia Davis (2007), Marryat's presentation of Harriet's vampirism replicates and defends the late-Victorian discourse of racial degeneration. While the "surface of Harriet's body exhibits conventional white middle-class feminine delicacy," it obscures "not only the racial and social origins of the 'primitive' Other, but also the latent sexual tendencies that contemporary science defined as regressive" (Davis, 2007, p. 44). Organised by the many feline metaphors used to describe Harriet—including cat, tigress, panther and lynx—these racialized fears condense in the veneer of her seemingly-ideal femininity, which obscures the dangerous sexual threat that she poses, in her ability to both kill and breed (Marryat, 2010, pp. 37, 46, 77, 87, 91). In order to purge this danger, the novel breaks with the dominant script for eliminating female monstrosity. Rather than have Harriet be violently slain at the hands of the novel's male authority figures—as we see in *Carmilla* and *Dracula*—Harriet eliminates that threat herself, by deciding to take a fatal dose of chloral. As such, in Davis's reading, while Harriet's self-destructive act is less sensational than Carmilla's or Lucy's, it nevertheless confirms the novel's ostensibly eugenic logic that "women must act first and foremost as mothers of the race" (p. 51).

This analysis aligns closely with Elaine Showalter's (1999) reading of Marryat's larger body of work, which she argues belongs to a proto-feminist but ultimately conservative "female" tradition of "transitional literature" that "explored genuinely radical female protest against marriage and women's economic oppression" but that nevertheless remains invested in the "framework of feminine conventions that demanded the erring heroine's destruction" (pp. 28–29). Within this framework, while *The Blood of the Vampire* creates a space for female transgression, it also destroys it, in order to eliminate the threat of Harriet's vampirism to the racial and patriarchal structures that buttressed Victorian culture. At the same time, while the novel's pathologizing treatment of Harriet's race and sexuality is deeply problematic, this interpretation of her suicide overlooks what Ardel Haefele-Thomas (2012) has noted about the event, which is its tragic framing and the novel's incredibly sympathetic treatment of Harriet (p. 119). By having Harriet be an initially unwitting vector of violence, the novel notably inverts the arc of Lucy Westenra's devolution into vampirism by having Harriet

move from ignorance to knowledge in what amounts to a devastating education in the realities of Victorian racism and colonial violence.

In this respect, although Harriet's suicide note, which makes up the final words of the novel, invokes the terms of biological determinism and inheritance, it nevertheless provides a broader understanding of her monstrosity that includes not only the racial "taint" of her mother but also the sadistic cruelty of her British father—a cruelty which led to the retaliatory slave rebellion that left Harriet an orphan in the first place. In so doing, it demonstrates how the oppressive structures of plantation slavery provided the necessary crucible for producing her vampiric state. In the letter, Harriet writes, "Do not think more unkindly of me than you can help. My parents have made me unfit to live. Let me go to a world where the curse of heredity which they laid upon me may be mercifully wiped out" (p. 187). Thus, rather than solely blaming her black mother for her vampiric inheritance, she blames both of her parents for the untenability of her life. As a result, as Susan Zieger (2008) has noted, Harriet's danger to the "proper" British order is not only indicated by her associations with blackness, but in her connections with "the white legacy of plantation violence" and with the horrific acts carried out by her father, who was a "sadistic vivisectionist intoxicated by esoteric, unholy knowledge" (p. 221). First manifested in Harriet's attraction to Baby Ethel, who later becomes her initial victim at the Belgian resort, the novel repeatedly ties its most overtly racist rhetoric to Harriet's vampiric consumption: as Harriet reaches for the infant, she exclaims, "O! the darling! the sweet dear little angel! I love little white babies! […] They are so sweet and fresh and clean—so different from the little niggers who smell so nasty you can't touch them!" (p. 14). In this way, the novel presents Harriet's valorisation and eventual, if indirect, consumption of Ethel's white flesh as both an extension and inverted reflection of the racial dehumanization carried out by her father on the bodies of his slaves, which he used for torture and experimentation and, afterwards, gave to his bloodthirsty wife as food.

While Harriet is not yet conscious of these linkages when she speaks these words, she becomes aware when confronted by Dr. Phillips, after the body count in the novel has continued to mount. Telling her that she "will always exert a weakening and debilitating effect" on those friends and lovers she draws to her, he states that she will have "sapped their brains and lowered the tone of their bodies" until she has, "in fact, *sucked them dry*" (p. 162). In this moment, Harriet comes into full consciousness for the first time in her life, and recognises not only the widespread impact of her horrific patrimony

on her own fate but also the way her vampirism extends the violence enacted by her parents. While she struggles to construct a viable option for her life outside this devastating legacy, her newlywed husband Arthur dies after refusing to leave her for his own safety. Harriet realises, then, that there is nowhere she can go without causing death, and decides to take matters into her own hands by ending her life.

In presenting Harriet's suicide in this way, it would be understandable to see it as what Emile Durkhiem (1951) has called an "altruistic suicide," in which an individual sacrifices him or herself in the name of the perceived societal good. The readings that Davis, Showalter and, to a lesser extent, Zieger offer in many respects situate it as such, and critique Marryat's presentation of Harriet's self-sacrifice as ultimately affirming the misogynist and racist logic exhibited first in the actions of her parents and then by the medicalized discourse of Dr. Phillips. But presenting Harriet's death simultaneously as a choice and as a necessary tragedy also shows how the novel creates a space for critiquing these structures by revealing their devastating effects. In recounting how her parents' acts of racial and gendered violence completely determine her life and are replicated in her vampirism, the novel therefore frames Harriet's suicide as "fatalistic," in Durkheim's terms, and resulting from the 'excessive regulations' that produce "futures pitilessly blocked and passions violently choked by oppressive discipline" (p. 276). In this context, Harriet's choice to die not only displays her refusal to remain complicit in patterns of structural violence recorded by the novel, but also marks her death and the deaths she causes as the collateral damage. Thus, while the novel eliminates the threat that Harriet's vampiric condition presents, it does not do so to re-establish the beneficent authority of a masculinist, imperial order. Rather, Harriet's story exposes the monstrosity of colonialism and patriarchy as such and provides a careful and sympathetic account of their significant costs.

REJECTING MILITARISM IN "THE LADY OF THE HOUSE OF LOVE"

Since *The Blood of the Vampire* was out of print for most of the twentieth century, it is unlikely that Angela Carter knew about it when she wrote "The Lady in the House of Love." This lack of direct knowledge makes their shared depiction of a female vampire's suicide all the more striking, especially given how they both use their protagonists' acts of self-destruction to problematize the structures of patriarchal inheritance. Like Harriet in *The Blood of the Vampire*, Carter's Countess is plagued by the vampiric legacy

that she receives from her monstrous forebears, as "the last bud of the poison tree that sprang from the loins of Vlad the Impaler" and as the inheritor of Count Nosferatu's Transylvanian castle when he is "staked out" by a "chignoned priest of the Orthodox faith" (p. 94). In this way, the Countess not only gains her literal thirst for blood from her infamous ancestors but also the gothic lair that they used to carry out their ignoble acts of murder and conquest (p. 94).

Furthermore, as with Marryat's depiction of Harriet's vampirism, Carter's text departs from the male-authored treatment of female monstrosity presented in texts like *Carmilla* and *Dracula*. While the Countess, unlike Harriet, knowingly seduces men to their deaths, her sexuality is not characterised by the pleasures of supernatural power and wanton excess, as it was for the Brides and for the transformed Lucy. Rather, the Countess is described as a "somnambulist" who listlessly wanders her castle, lonely and bored (p. 93). Everywhere she looks, she is surrounded by symbols of her never-ending confinement—by the caged bird that she keeps, by the on-looking "eyes of the portraits of her demented and atrocious ancestors," and by the repeated playing of the Tarot deck which keeps turning up the same cycle of cards: "La Papesse, La Mort, La Tour Abolie" (pp. 93, 95).[4] With these images, the narrative frames her life as nothing but a 'cave of echoes… a system of repetitions … [and] a closed circuit' that seems impossible to escape (p. 93). As a result, her vampiric status does not amplify her physical and sexual power in a way that serves her; instead, it conscribes her to a life where violence and murder function as mere sustenance and where she lures in the local "shepherd boys and gispy [*sic*] lads who, ignorant or foolhardy, come to wash the dust from their feet in the water of the fountain" in order to maintain her mere existence (p. 95). Taking them into her bedroom like a Venus flytrap, she feeds on their bodies after which "nothing can console her for the ghastliness of her condition" (p. 96).

Halfway though the story, however, a young British soldier arrives and disrupts this ceaseless monotony. "Blond, blue-eyed, heavy-muscled," the soldier rides his bicycle through the "little-known uplands of Romania" and stumbles on the Countess's castle. Once he enters, he breaks the stasis that characterises the "timeless Gothic eternity of the vampires" that the castle has come to represent and sets a new narrative in motion—one that will end, significantly, with the Countess's self-inflicted demise (p. 97). After an encounter with the soldier in which she is surprised by his tenderness, the Countess refuses to feed on him and dies when the morning sun rises.

For Anne Koenen (1996), the fatal encounter between the Countess and the soldier provides a "cautionary tale of what humanising the (female) vampire means, namely a surrendering to the patriarchal order" (p. 152). By seizing on the description of the soldier as "rational" and of his bicycle as his "two-wheeled symbol of rationality," Koenen argues that the Countess submits to his male authority by rejecting her own immense power (Carter, 1993, pp. 97, 99). She makes this claim by focusing on the tonal shifts made in the text when the soldier arrives, in which the female vampire's power is "perceived through a rationalistic male consciousness" that, in turn, tames the "aggressive plot of the Queen of Vampires looking for a victim" by transforming it into "the fairy-tale plot of Sleeping Beauty passively waiting for sexual initiation by the male" (p. 154). While this move is not surprising given the story's placement in *The Bloody Chamber,* Carter's famous collection of feminist revisions of stories like 'Bluebeard' and "Snow White," Koenen nevertheless reads the shift in descriptions of the Countess as representing a "brainwashing on the part of the vampire (or women in general)," in which she is not only "robbed of her power" but also "becomes an accomplice in her own disempowering by actively yearning for it" (p. 154).

Although the Countess's rejection of vampiric violence and her resulting death are acts that admittedly privilege the soldier's needs over her own, Koenen's reading nevertheless overlooks the complicated ways that Carter constructs the sexual and gendered power dynamics in the story. By refusing to see the ways in which the text presents the Countess's vampirism as always already implicated by the terms of patriarchy, she fails to recognize how the soldier's actions parody the masculinist script of heroic rescue. Indeed, while he is emphatically "rational," his capacity for reason is one that is crucially and ironically linked by the narrator to his virginity and, moreover, to his "ignorance" and "unknowingness" about the world in general (p. 97). Thus, when he reads the Countess into the gendered plot of Sleeping Beauty, he does so erroneously, in a way that radically misunderstands the dangerous and deadly threat that she poses to him. Instead, his hyper-rational view mistakes her for a "girl with the fragility of the skeleton of a moth" rather than the powerful supernatural creature that she is.

His interactions with the Countess also resist being cast as a moment of sexual conquest. After seeing in her "extraordinarily fleshly mouth" a "whore's mouth"—with her "wide, full prominent lips of a vibrant purplish-crimson"—the soldier is "disturbed" and "almost repelled" rather than titillated. While this seeming revulsion could be seen in isolation as a sign

of sexual puritanism, the narrator makes it clear that this response indicates the soldier's capacity for compassion, when the text later links his reaction in the castle to a previous experience in a Paris brothel. After refusing his Colonel's offer to purchase him a prostitute, the soldier looks upon the woman and asks,

> How can he now take criminal advantage of the disordered girl with fever-hot, bone-dry taloned hands and eyes that deny all the erotic promises of her body with their terror, their sadness, their dreadful balked tenderness? (p. 105)

Seeing the prostitute as a subject in her own right rather as a vehicle for his own pleasure, he recognises the pain beneath her mimed performance of gender norms and her pandering to misogynist fantasies.

Later in the soldier's encounter with the Countess, the narrator similarly presents his initial withdrawal as laying the groundwork for a more perceptive sympathy. This shift finds its fullest realisation when the Countess cuts herself and when the soldier "gently takes her hand away from her and dabs the blood with his own handkerchief" (p. 106). As he leans forward to "kiss it better for her," he does so in a parental, but not paternalistic, way, "as her mother, had she lived, would have done" (p. 106). By using this maternal metaphor to depict the soldier's kiss, the story shows how, as Sarah Sceats (2001) points out, the Countess recognises how "her desire is impregnated with [her forefather's] bloodlust" and how her vampirism perpetuates the endless cycles violence that his monstrous legacy sets into motion (p. 113). And since her life depends upon her continuing acceptance of this vampiric inheritance, her refusal to feed on the soldier produces "a 'cure' [that] must culminate in [her own] extinction" (Sceats, 2001, p. 113).

By contextualising her suicide in this way, the narrative draws lines of subtle but forceful connection between the notoriously bloody wars fought by Vlad the Impaler, the Countess's entrapping performances of sexual titillation, and the coming devastation of World War I.[5] In bookending the Countess's life with allusions to these horrific histories of rampant death and militarism, the story links the blood she has consumed with the immense amount of blood shed in these wars. In a telling moment that foreshadows the young soldier's eventual death, the narrator states that his "rational" outlook and innocence will give way when he learns "to shudder in the trenches"—or rather that he will come tremble in the presence of the hyper-rational mechanization of violence of trench warfare possible that killed millions on both sides (p. 104). But when the story closes by stating that "his regiment embarked for

France" the next day, it shows how the Countess uses suicide as a way to remove herself from any responsibility for his demise and from the horrors he will experience on the front (p. 108). In so doing, it treats both deaths as tragedies that tellingly echo one another, since both are implicated within the long history of military violence that takes their lives as sacrifice. As a result, like Harriet Brandt's suicide, the Countess's self-inflicted death is one that is presented as the simultaneous result of her vampirism's patriarchal legacy and her emphatic refusal to allow it to determine her every choice.

CONCLUSION

In their now-famous articulation of the privileged status that monstrous figures have in women's writing, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979) argue that "in projecting their anger and dis-ease into dreadful figures," female authors create "dark doubles for themselves and their heroines" in their effort to both identify with and revise the "self-definitions patriarchal culture has imposed on them" (p. 79). In this way, for Gilbert and Gubar, "the female monster" expresses the writer's "ambiguous relationship to a culture that has not only defined her gender but shaped her mind" (p. 79).

This essay has endeavoured to frame not only the representations of female vampirism in Marryat and Carter's fiction in this way, but also to articulate how their decision to present these figures' lives as untenable works as part a broader critique of patriarchal gender structures. Within the worlds of their respective texts, Harriet Brandt and the Countess both confront their monstrosity and come to recognise how it has foreclosed any attempt to author their own lives. Moreover, both characters also realise how their existences both perpetuate and are produced by the patriarchal legacies of colonial domination and militaristic violence that they inherit. This recognition and subsequent disavowal of complicity is what enables Marryat and Carter's texts to disrupt the male-authored tradition of presenting the female vampire's power as a threat to patriarchal authority that must be eliminated. Within this script, the female vampire's violence is met with an even more powerful male violence, in a contest that typically elides their striking similarity. Furthermore, this male-determined template provides little space for thinking about the female vampire in terms of her own agency. Thus, while Marryat and Carter's narratives depict suicide as an incredibly complicated form of choice, they nevertheless compellingly re-claim the female vampire's fate by assigning it back into their protagonists' ultimate control. And while the end result is the same—Harriet and the

Countess end up just as dead as their vampiric sisters, after all—their decision to end the bloodshed they created by shedding their own is precisely that: a decision. In this way, the texts make a forceful call for the need to imagine otherwise, and the importance of envisioning a world in which female power is neither confined by structures of patriarchy nor perhaps even seen as something monstrous at all.

NOTES

[1] While I focus in this essay on the female vampire's acts of gendered inversion, see Christopher Craft (1984) for an analysis of the homoerotic inversions that take place between Harker and Dracula.

[2] While *Carmilla'*s influence on Stoker is more oblique in *Dracula,* his short story 'Dracula's Guest' makes much clearer inter-textual allusions to Le Fanu's text.

[3] In making Harriet Jamaican, Marryat also links her to Bertha Rochester in Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

[4] These are the French names for three of the Major Arcana cards in the traditional Tarot deck. The English translations are 'The High Priestess,' which signals a female authority figure, 'Death,' which signals a significant transition (rather than mortality), and 'The Tower,' which signals the destruction of something longstanding.

[5] Vlad Tepes was a Romanian prince involved in a number of conflicts with the Ottoman Empire during the fifteenth century. He gained notoriety as 'Vlad the Impaler,' because he would impale his defeated enemies on stakes and display their corpses outside his castle. His family name Draculesti was Stoker's source for the name Dracula.

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9. VAMPIRAS AND VAMPIRESAS

Latinas in the Graphic Novels Bite Club *and* Life Sucks

If a non-Spanish speaker were to grapple with translating "vampire" into Spanish, s/he may come across false cognates. In Spanish, a *vampiro* is a male vampire, while *vampira* is, unsurprisingly, female. The word *vampiresa*, despite its inclusion of "vampire," translates to "seductress." However, when one engages in a bit of linguistic wordplay in a reading of vampire texts that include Latina vampires, *vampira* and *vampiresa* come intriguingly close to becoming synonymous. The reality is there are not many Latino, let alone Latina, faces in vampire literature, film, or television through which to explore such linguistic nuances. Since the female vampire in so many texts and legends worldwide is seductive, broadly speaking, it is no great shock that the few Latina vampires that have emerged follow the same trajectory.

Perhaps the most emblematic Latina vampire cinematic depiction in the last twenty years appears in the 1996 film *From Dusk Till Dawn*, directed by Robert Rodríguez and written by Quentin Tarantino, (who co-stars in the film alongside George Clooney). Its most iconic scene features the actress Salma Hayek, as the seductive dancer Santánico Pandemonium, performing a table dance involving a snake at the Titty Twister bar. She incorporates all of the stereotypes of the hot Latina or *vampiresa*, who is also a *vampira*. The unsuspecting audience for this dance quickly and fatally realizes that not only is the bikini-clad, snake-wearing, sexy dancer a hungry vampire, but the bartender, the band, dancers, and various others are as well. One of the final frames of the film reveals that the Titty Twister bar has been constructed above a semi-buried Aztec temple, thereby connecting the vampire to the indigenous history of Latin America and away from the traditionally construed European vampire homeland of Transylvania.

Santánico Pandemonium and her vampire cohort come to cinematic undead life courtesy of the medium of film. Latino vampires in fiction do not appear in the reader's vision in the same way visually, except to a different degree in the format of the graphic novel. This format, which forms

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a fascinating, if under-utilized, bridge between the two, serves as the focus of this essay through a close examination of two graphic novels that feature Latina vampires. First, one must acknowledge the recent appearance of not one but two book series focused on Latino vampires, both emerging post-2000. Mario Acevedo, creator of the vampire detective series featuring Felix Gomez, opened that series with *The Nymphos of Rocky Flats* in 2006. And Marta Acosta, whose *Casa Dracula* novels feature the Latina protagonist Milagro de los Santos, began her series with *Happy Hour at Casa Dracula*, also published in 2006. Suffice to say that with at least two book series and a growing number of Latino vampires appearing as characters in film and television, *From Dusk Till Dawn* serving as only one striking example, Latino vampires have long moved past the other Latin American bloodsuckers with who one may be familiar: the vampire bat and the *chupacabra*.

When contemplating the construction and presence of Latino vampires in any medium, one runs the risk of perhaps unintentionally collapsing genders in an effort to recognize the characters' ethnic identities. Paying attention to the Latina vampire specifically allows one to become cognizant of the stereotyping, both of Latinas and vampires, which shadow these female characters. The delicate line that distinguishes *vampira* and *vampiresa* comes to light quite visibly in the format of the graphic novel, and thus in tandem with its role as bridge between book and screen allows us to better scrutinize the deployment of gender, racial, and ethnic stereotyping, of vampires and Latinos.

Two graphic novels in particular, with their prominent Latina vampire characters, provide us with a tantalizing opportunity to investigate how societal tensions permeate the worlds of monsters. The texts under discussion: *Life Sucks* by Jessica Abel, Gabe Soria, and Warren Pleece (2008), and *Bite Club* and *Bite Club: Vampire Crime Unit* by Howard Chaykin, David Tischman, and David Hahn (2004). *The Bite Club* series was initially published in episodic form as *Bite Club, 1–6* and *Bite Club: Vampire Crime Unit, 1–5*. They were later combined in *The Complete Bite Club* (2007) and published by DC Comics.[1] Both of these graphic novels share a Latina protagonist who either is, or is turned into, a vampire. Risa, from *Bite Club*, is a hyper-sexual and ruthless Nicaraguan-American vampire and is a Del Toro, of the fictional Miami-based crime cartel. In contrast, *Life Sucks* features Rosa, a Mexican-American Goth, who becomes entangled in a rivalry between two male vampires; by the conclusion of the novel she has been turned into a vampire per her request.

Outside of being Latinas and vampires, at first glance Risa and Rosa couldn't be more different, as the above brief summaries attest. Further, the novels themselves are entirely distinct; *Bite Club* features a police investigation into the Del Toro family, murders aplenty, nudity, strong language, and all sorts of sexual acts. *Life Sucks*, on the other hand, is a boy-meets-girl story set in a fictional Southern Californian town that is home to a group of vampires. Blood is shed, yes, as in *Bite Club*, but in less copious amounts and the action is not x-rated.

Despite their differences, Risa and Rosa invite a further consideration of significant questions involving vampirism, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. These women are certainly positioned as "others" due to their vampirism, but a double marginality further problematizes this: both belong to a group, Latinos, America's largest minority. According to the 2012 US census, Latinos make up approximately 17% of the US population. Projections suggest that by 2060 Latinos will make up 31% (United States Census Bureau, 2013). Even with these skyrocketing estimates for the future, today Latinos face a myriad of complicated issues in their role as minorities. These issues, while not the focus of this chapter, certainly do not diminish the importance of conversations on topics such as language, religion, skin colour, gang violence and stereotypes.

However, with their very presences Risa and Rosa provide us with a means of seeing how stereotyping of ethnicity and gender can emerge in a monstrous woman. Beyond their roles as *vampiras*, both Rosa and Risa are also *vampiresas*. In their depictions as Latina seductresses, there exist shades of difference: Risa is more likely to throw a punch while unbuttoning her shirt, swearing all the while, whereas Rosa—a sincere young Latina—sparks a rivalry between the vampires Dave and Wes. These different methods of capturing their fellow characters' affections feed into the prevalent stereotypes of the "hot tamale" and sexualized Latina, not to mention the traditionally seductive female vampire.[2] The authors depict both women as sexual creatures, albeit to different degrees. However, the emphasis placed on each woman's Latina sexuality complicates any analysis of her character as simply your garden-variety hypersexualized female vampire.

Risa wields a savage power with high stakes; Rosa is of a gentler nature with a less overt emphasis on her body but is capable of eliciting a passionate response from not one but two vampires. Further, both women find themselves in love with Anglos. In *Bite Club*, the bisexual Risa is finally thwarted in love by one of her "own," the half-Cuban, half-Irish and now-vampire Detective Paco Macavoy, following her intense relationship with Carrie

Stein, presented as Anglo and Jewish. In *Life Sucks*, Rosa is enamoured with Wes, Alistair, and Dave, none of them Latino. While Wes and Dave literally fight over Rosa, Alistair, her previous boyfriend, suddenly announces that he is bisexual and throws her over for an unrequited attraction to Wes.

Both novels, then, deal with multiple sexualities, some of which go beyond America's (regrettably) normative heterosexuality. Within these distinct worlds where sexuality figures prominently, and race and ethnicity inform much of the plot and character development, these *vampiras/vampiresas* survive and, arguably, even thrive. Despite their positions as others, in all these multiple ways, by the conclusion of both novels they occupy non-conformist positions of power. A long-standing stereotype, the seductive vampire, here wears a Latina face, and by virtue of her inclusion in vampire-themed graphic novels we can better grapple with these various stereotypes.

Graphic novels from Latin America, and from Spain, offer tremendous insight into sociocultural topics, as Ana Merino's (2009) essay on Mexican, Argentine, and Spanish graphic novels attests, via their fictitious characters. In addition, there exist plenty of Latino graphic novels on an array of topics and themes, for example: *Mi Barrio* (2010) by Robert Renteria, Corey Michael Blake, and Shane Clester, *Latino USA: A Cartoon History* (2000) by Ilan Stavans and Lalo Alcaraz, and the *Lucha Libre* series, which begins in 2008, by Jerry Frissen, and finally the seminal series *La Perdida* (2000–2005, 2006) also by Jessica Abel. No matter the ethnic identity of the author or the portrayals of the characters, one can read these various texts as speaking to a range of readers, not solely Latino ones.

In examining the rich tradition of Spanish-language graphic novels outlined by Merino and in considering contemporary Latino texts, one can discern that very few consider vampires. In other words, *Life Sucks* and *Bite Club* stand out. Not only do they focus on vampires, but they have engaging—and complex—female protagonists. This forces us to engage with the stereotype of the Latina as it is coupled with the doubled outsider role these women possess, as females and as members of an ethnic minority. Both women emerge as characters that develop and change over the course of their respective novels. The *vampira*/*vampiresa* discovers herself as she matures into a character who secures her independence, painful as that process may be. This conversation prompts us, the readers, to reflect upon our own cultural influences as we observe Risa and Rosa's interactions in their vampire world. This *vampira*/*vampiresa* is indeed a doubled outsider, and a seductress, but one that despite these perceived handicaps is in the best

position to survive. These women could be harbingers of characters to come as the figure of the vampire continues to evolve.

As mentioned briefly above, the plots of these novels are quite distinct as the authors craft radically different vampire worlds. *Life Sucks*, set in the aforementioned suburban Southern California locale, focuses on Dave. His application to work in a convenience store (The Last Stop) sets his life off course; Radu, the store's owner, makes Dave into a vampire so Dave can work evenings for Radu and further Radu's quest to make money in the United States. Radu, who shortens his name from Lord Radu Arisztidescu, is from Romania and has stereotypically dark hair and accent. In the world of *Life Sucks*, a made vampire is compelled to obey and stay with his/her master. Hence, Dave is incapable of moving beyond his role as night shift employee, where Radu berates him for not properly rotating the hot dogs and restocking the shelves.

Other characters include Dave's fellow vampire friend, Jerome, an Anglo, who is himself enslaved to Vlad, who also turns Jerome so he can work in his Kwik Kopy shop. Dave's best (human) friend and roommate, Carl, an African-American, is fully aware of Dave's vampire status and forms the third member of the trio of friends. Carl is the only one not enslaved to a vampire. Dave has a longstanding rivalry with Wes, a handsome Anglo vampire also made by Radu. They are vampire brothers in that sense, but of unequal status. Dave finds himself continually undermined and dominated by the alpha Wes, and Dave insists, "Being murdered and made undead by the same eastern European capitalist psychopath does not make us *related*!" (authors' emphasis, p. 85). For reasons that remain unexplained in the text, Wes is not enslaved to the extent Dave is. Wes no longer has to work at the Last Stop and instead is free to live his life, but must remain in the same town.

Dave's existence as a vampire is compounded by a real predicament: Dave is reluctant to kill a human. He subsists on blood bank bags, but they do not give him the physical or mental powers that his fellow vampires have, from partaking in the fresh blood of their human victims. Just as in canonical vampire fiction, here we see the Eastern European male vampire and the powers derived from the ingestion of human blood. Vampires such as Radu opt to "make" more male vampires in their quest for success in capitalist American society. That Dave grapples with killing humans disgusts Radu, who nevertheless keeps Dave enslaved, all with the end goal of making a profit.

As in the format of typical vampire or paranormal romance, the female protagonist enters this very male world, literally. Rosa and her friends visit The Last Stop after a night out (which Jerome jokingly refers to as the "running of the Goths"), where Jerome and Dave see her with her boyfriend, Alistair, a pseudo-vampire (p. 13). One thing leads to another, and Dave and Wes make a wager to determine who will "get" Rosa first. Wes becomes a seductive, European-styled, frock coat-wearing vampire which is a departure from his surfer self. He transforms himself in accordance with the accepted stereotype of the vampire so he can become more alluring. It is clear, then, that the pinnacle for erotic attraction for a Goth like Rosa is the prototypical vampire, as she finds herself swayed by Wes's attentions.

For a while it seems Dave does have the upper hand, yet he still must find the words to tell Rosa what he is. Once Rosa learns that he and Wes are both real vampires, she wants to become one too, and Dave's reluctance to do so enrages her. Near the conclusion of the novel, a throw-down at Wes's beach house takes place, where the two males combat each other following Wes's conversion of Rosa into a vampire—which she has requested—and her subsequent enslavement to Wes. In the end, Radu steps in, and in short order Wes frees Rosa from his spell.

At the conclusion of the novel, Rosa speaks with Sue-Yun, a fellow female vampire of Asian descent. Sue-Yun appears twice in the novel, both times serving as a helpful friend to Dave and, separately, to Rosa as they bemoan their situations. Rosa shares that she is looking for work and has taken the big step of leaving her family home. Much as in the paranormal romance genre, Rosa finds herself alienated by the day-to-day world; her nocturnal lifestyle does not fit in with the dynamics of her family home. She observes, "It's getting hard to explain to my mom why I'm sleeping all day" (p. 183). Unlike the continuation of that theme as it exists in paranormal romance, Rosa resists absorption into the life of the male and instead intends to earn her own wages and find her own place to live.

Dave, realizing his weakness in the face of Wes and Radu, and fulfilling his promise to Radu in order for him to free Rosa from Wes, drinks human blood by doing exactly what Radu did to him. He lures an unsuspecting young man who applies to work in the store into the storage area, and makes him into a vampire, thereby giving Dave the liberty not to work under Radu to the same extent. Rosa and Dave's futures remain unclear, but there exists the possibility that they will find each other and fall in (undead) love. Rosa does not wrestle with the dilemma Dave faces; she does not descend (in

the vampire world) to the frowned upon ingestion of blood from bags. She appears to kill for human blood from the start.

The drama in *Life Sucks* pales in comparison to the shenanigans in *Bite Club*. If in *Life Sucks* vampires are a hidden element in society—for instance, Rosa fantasizes about meeting a real-life vampire before getting clued in to the true nature of Dave and Wes—in *Bite Club* they are most definitely "out." In this society, everyone knows about vampires, in particular their power, their seductiveness, and the benefits of their blood. For example, one young woman craves, and receives, a vampire bite so that the accompanying increased metabolism will result in weight loss. They function in society quite adeptly, although their "deviant" behaviour and traits single them out. Still, they occupy a doubled outsider status as in *Life Sucks*. The reader learns early on that "[t]here are 300,000 bloodsuckers in Miami alone—an ethnic minority who owe their peculiar gifts to South American vampire bats" (p. 12). Here some, such as the Del Toros, are positioned explicitly as ethnic, yet doubly so: they are vampires *and* Latinos.

Bite Club vampires have specific origins and family trees: the bite of a vampire bat, with a mutated animal virus, can turn a human into a vampire. Further explanation of how and why this happens remains unknown to the reader. However, such an attack "turned" family patriarch Eduardo Del Toro in Nicaragua in the mid-18th century. He then married—and turned—Arabella, who as his mate is considered an omega to Eduardo's alpha. Their children, Risa, Eddie, and Leto, are all betas, setting up a clear hierarchy of oppression. At the outset of *Bite Club*, Eduardo is murdered and the reader is introduced to the dysfunctional family that is the Del Toros. There exists incest, affairs, drug use, police corruption, and all types of manipulation.

By the end, Risa has killed off her gangster brother Eddie and his troublemaking teen son, Danny, as well as her other brother, Leto, a priest, who reverted back to his vampiric and Del Toro behaviour upon being named his father's heir. Risa winds up controlling the family's assets, which include her own work in the music business as a producer, investor, and manager. Risa is bisexual; *Bite Club* depicts her intimate relationship with Carrie Stein, and the subsequent *Bite Club: Vampire Crime Unit*, sees Carrie ousted—and murdered by Risa's order—and Risa's growing attachment to the male Detective Macavoy. Vampire bats attack Macavoy, and he consequently turns. In keeping with the hierarchical structure of the vampires in the novel, Macavoy is now an alpha. *Bite Club: Vampire Crime Unit* closes with Risa pining for Macavoy, who turns to the Catholic Church as he seeks to understand his new self.

The graphic novel offers an appropriate and engaging medium to present the above tales. The action is fast-paced, and the dialogue flows from page-to-page. This particular genre is particularly attractive to 21st-century readers, and especially so to a younger demographic, as Stephen E. Tabachnick (2009) argues in the introduction to *Teaching the Graphic Novel*:

> While the reading of text unaccompanied by images will continue to be important, sequential art seems a perfect fit with modern reading habits. A graphic novel can be read in much less time than a comparable novel or work of nonfiction in prose, simply because pictures eliminate the need for lengthy prose descriptions of landscapes, facial features, physical movements, dress, and other such visual elements. (p. 4)

With the vampire, and in the presentation of Latina vampires in the two graphic novels under discussion here, Tabachnick's observation is well taken, particularly with regard to the absence of descriptive detail.

This fully engages the reader in assessing the ethnicity and race of the characters. In *Life Sucks*, Rosa is clearly Latina, fitting as she does into our contemporary popular image, as will be discussed shortly. Carl is visibly non-Anglo, as the coloration of his skin/hair attests, and in *Bite Club*, similarly, race emerges visibly with some characters. With these visuals, the reader is immediately aware of not only the differences between humans and vampires, fangs being the most obvious markers of difference in both novels, but that characters themselves display their individuality or affiliation with a racial and/or ethnic group.

Prior to delving into the complexities of Rosa and Risa, a closer look at their common thread, a Latina identity, is in order. Identifying as Latina can be a tension-fraught endeavour. Certainly, the deployment of racial and/or ethnic identities as defining factors leads to an intense scrutiny of what those identities are. Race and ethnicity are terms not to be conflated; as some broadly define them, race is the "outside," the physical, whereas ethnicity is the "inside," the cultural. Latinos in particular face numerous challenges in grappling with those terms.[3] For instance, the identifying term "Latino" loosely gathers together those whose origins are from the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and Latin America. With the disparate range of nations, traditions, and indigenous groups, the history of colonization and *mestizaje* has resulted in Latinos who can be found across the racial colour spectrum. In other words, there exists very little common ground, especially with appearance.

However, contemporary US culture has crafted its own image of the Latino. The Latina, more specifically, is along the lines of Jennifer Lopez

(J.Lo) as she presents herself in the 21st century as an exotic—but not too exotic, and therefore not overly threatening—figure. She possesses: skin that is tan (neither too dark nor too light); hair that is light brown (neither too dark nor too light); body with voluptuous curves; and knowledge of at least some Spanish. This type of Latina is the socially acceptable one, the one who exhibits difference, but not too overtly. This J.Lo-styled Latina is one that does not fully reflect, in particular, the physical diversity of Latinas across the spectrum. However, popular culture imagery can be powerful: this is the accepted face of female Latinidad.

Where this definition leads us, in connection to *Life Sucks* and *Bite Club*, is how these characters are presented—and present themselves—as Latinas, at least the culturally accepted one as described above. Both Risa and Rosa are of Latin American descent, respectively Nicaraguan and Mexican. Both drop at least the occasional Spanish word or phrase, just like J. Lo, and Rosa engages in a Spanish-language conversation with her mother. For example, Rosa states "Qué mentiroso" [what a liar] aimed toward Wes when the trio watch the *Vampirus* films (p. 111), and she and her mother have the aforementioned discussion in Spanish (p. 118). She also says "mi amor" on several occasions (pp. 150, 159) and swears in Spanish (p. 153). Further markers for Rosa include her shared interest with Dave in the *telenovela El Amor de los Amores*. As Dave observes, noting Rosa's surprise that he also watches that show, "White? Geeky? A dorky gringo like me can't like *El Amor de los Amores*?" (p. 45). Dave, as well as Carl who also views the show, must know enough Spanish to follow the plot, as *telenovelas* typically use Spanish. However, neither identifies as Latino.

Rosa certainly defines herself as Mexican-American, and at several junctures drops comments about her family not understanding her Goth lifestyle choice and her desire to be a fashion designer. She angrily tells Dave:

> My parents think I should be married already. Or close. To a Mexican guy. I should be getting a full-time job, getting pregnant…They don't get what I'm trying to do! I want to be a designer! They think I'm not a good daughter. I stopped going to Church last year, and that was pretty much it for my dad. He barely speaks to me these days. (p. 117)

Clearly, Rosa is attempting, at that particular point in the novel, to break away from her immediate family environment; this experience is hardly the sole property of the Latino. After all, many men and women face resistance from family members when it comes to those pivotal topics of love and life.

For the Latino, this becomes further problematized in that s/he must also decide with which culture to affiliate her/himself. And, this can change in situations where individuals may find themselves able to "pass" as Anglo, should they so choose. In this case, though, Rosa adds more layers to an already complex issue when she turns into a vampire.

In contrast, Risa doesn't appear to speak Spanish, and her family is anything but conservative. She does whisper "Papi" to Leto as she attempts to seduce him, asking if he, garbed in his ecclesiastical outfit, prefers "Father" (pp. 44–45). Otherwise, Latino identity does not readily emerge, save for in the opening pages where the authors make clear that the Del Toro family, beginning with their now-dead patriarch, occupy the fringes of society. The opening text of the novel reads:

> From the moment he fled the mountains of Nicaragua to begin the long journey to El País del Oro, the old bastard knew it would come to this, eventually…For all his attempts to assimilate, for all his desperate need to be perceived as just another successful American businessman, Eduardo Del Toro and his family have always been fabulously wealthy outcasts on the outside looking in. Let's get a few things perfectly clear. Jews can fight. Blacks can swim. Asians can drive. But forget all the booga booga movie bullshit…vampires can't fly… Like Eduardo, they've swarmed to places that remind them of home: San Diego, Galveston, and of course, Miami, where they give the Cuban refugees and the Jewish retirees a run for their money when it comes to political clout. (pp. 9–12)

Here, clearly, some vampires are distinctly South American in origin, Latino, and fully on board with American capitalism. Yet there exist non-vampire Latinos as well. This includes Macavoy, who is half-Cuban and half-Irish as a human prior to being turned, as well as the Latino gang who tangles with the Del Toros, the Latin Clown Posse. Some vampires are not Latino, among them Zephraim Klein, attorney to the Del Toros. In summary, Miami society in *Bite Club* has clear separations between not only human and vampire but between vampires themselves in a plethora of ways.

An unnamed, omniscient narrator provides the background information on the Del Toros, as cited above, whereas Macavoy narrates *Bite Club: Vampire Crime Unit*. This shift in narrators certainly affects the reading experience of these two graphic novels, which are aligned with characters and setting, but shift in the reading experience via the filter of the narrator. This complication of narratorial structures is a hallmark of contemporary

graphic novels, as discussed by Jan-Noël Thon (2013). In contrast, *Life Sucks* lacks a narrator; the reader immediately enters into a book where dialogue between characters, with illustrations, offers up the story line.

Leaving narratorial structure aside, of paramount importance in investigating the nuances of these *vampiras*/*vampiresas* is their visual portrayal and their use of their bodies, particularly in sexual contexts. Beginning with *Life Sucks*, Dave and Jerome immediately tag Rosa as beautiful when they see her in The Last Stop. She has long dark hair and "pale" skin and wears stylish Goth clothing. In a significant moment with Dave, when he admits to being a vampire—and she thinks he is teasing her—Rosa is depicted with long black hair flying about and wears a black negligee that reveals her curves. On the whole, she dresses in dark colours or else green or red, with accompanying jewellery.

While Rosa may be a Goth, she is also definitely Latina. Wes crassly observes that the relatively demure Rosa has a "hot Latin ass" (p. 100). In fact, Wes's motive for entering the bet with Dave is not his delight in Rosa's personality, which is Dave's interest. Rather, he desires having a sexual/vampiric conquest and simultaneously one-upping Dave, who he perceives as a rival. Therein lies some of the humour: Wes is depicted as a blond, muscled, long-haired surfer Casanova, whereas Dave is smaller with dark hair and is hardly a ladies' man.

While Rosa's derrière may indeed entice males such as Wes, she exhibits a keen awareness that her body does—and does not—belong with particular groups. More specifically, Rosa and her mother find themselves at odds in the choice of dating a Latino or an Anglo. Rosa's mother bewails the fact that Rosa is with "white boys" (p. 118). Rosa even admits that she is attracted to Wes in part because he is white and rich (she is unaware at this point that he is a vampire):

> He's [Wes's] got *everything* I don't have. He's blond and tan and… The point being, he's *white*. And he's rich. He's just…A guy like that? With a little Mexican wetback chick? Never happen. You know what they call Goths in Mexico? Darks. Makes ya think. And the list just goes on: he's a WASP. He's unbelievably hot…It's just so totally unfair. He has *everything* just by virtue of being born…selfish, selfish white boy. (Authors' emphases, p. 135)

Rosa bemoans the inequality between Latino/Anglo and male/female, little knowing that such prejudices exist in the world of the undead, too. The reader must then consider: Are vampires racially/ethnically "equal" among

themselves, united by their shared Undeadness? In this case, the answer is no. In fact, in one scene Dave and Jerome approach their vampire masters with the request that Dave take a night off. The group of four vamps is all male, with their Eastern European accents on full display, as they hotly debate Bela Lugosi's acting talent. On the wall behind them are a "Miller Lite" sign, a stuffed and mounted game fish, and a photograph of these vampires posing with the fish. This is a den of Eastern European vampire masculinity.

From Rosa's perspective, the Anglo, male Wes provides her with a way to escape the challenges of her day-to-day existence and its complicating ethnic ties. Rosa will eventually trade in this type of ethnic tension for even larger concerns when she becomes a vampire. Until then, embracing the Goth subculture and the figure of the vampire allows her to sidestep some of the ethnic complexities she faces daily. After expressing her dismay and disappointment with Dave upon learning that not only is he a vampire, but that he won't make her into one, she leaves in anger. Her desire to escape the prison of these complexities drives her to seek out Wes, who is more obliging, and in so doing he wins the bet with Dave.

Wes's ushering in of Rosa as one of his "brides" illustrates Rosa's mistaken perception of social acceptance once one enters into the world of Anglo privilege. Wes's trio of concubines (excluding Rosa) exhibit not only vampire stereotypes, but Anglo and specifically Southern Californian ones. But even as a vampire, Rosa does not fit in, and she has no hope of "passing." Simone, Madison, and Tiffani are all blond, curvaceous, white, and beautiful; in a further degree of marginalization, Simone even surfs, a sport often dominated by (non-vampire) Anglo males. Living an undead life as part of Wes's harem is not very idyllic, as Rosa will later learn. Simone berates Wes for not paying herself, Tiffani, and Madison enough attention and instead becoming fixated on Rosa. Simone angrily says:

> I go out and get myself a new bikini—for you! And what do you say? Nothing! Did you comment on Madison's hair yesterday? No! …Three vampire brides not enough for you? You have to get yourself a wetback slut on the side? (p. 96)

This tirade of Simone's bodes ill, as Wes subsequently bites off her head (literally). This illustrates, in the bloodiest of ways, that even an undead female who exhibits independence finds herself subjugated by and at the mercy of men. Wes later refers to the remaining Tiffani and Madison as "T & M" (p. 132) further indicating their oppressed place in this world.

When Rosa is 'made' by Wes, she finds herself powerless to resist him, and joins T & M. However, just before Wes liberates Rosa, he is so fed up with his current situation that he uses his favourite means of dealing with ladies—beheading them—and T & M are his next victims.

The violence towards the brides bodes ill for female sexuality and vampires. The bite of a vampire is traditionally construed to be a seductive, eroticized one, and in *Life Sucks* it is similarly a charged sexual act, but a negative one. Upon learning that Wes has bitten Rosa, Dave compares this action to "rape" (p. 179). Sexual assault and dominance play key roles here, as Rosa finds herself at this juncture overpowered by a male vampire. He mesmerizes her and she is literally powerless to move away from him. Disturbingly, while Rosa requested to become a vampire, in an attempt to gain her independence, she now steps into the role of victim, joining the ranks of Simone, Tiffani, and Madison.

The result of a vampire's conversion of a human into a vampire differs radically depending upon the gender of the victim. To illustrate, Radu compels Dave to work for him and, by Dave's refusal to consume live human blood, he is trapped in a type of purgatory. As mentioned previously, as a condition of Radu's intervention in Rosa's predicament, Dave must kill to feed. In the last pages of the graphic novel, by virtue of his attack on a young male who applies to work at the store, Dave is "free." Like Wes, Dave can now step away from punching the time card at Radu's shop. He seems to be following Wes's path toward financial independence, and a lesser degree of enslavement to Radu.

Rosa's conversion does not afford her the same opportunities. She has not been made to work for Wes. Instead, she is a sexual conquest; no such arrangement as that which exists between Dave and Radu is evident here. Attractive female vampires, such as Simone, Tiffani, Madison, and now Rosa, can instead live in a harem and a male vampire will financially support them. As there seems to be no clear path toward freeing herself through work, Rosa runs the risk of being murdered, as are the other "brides," in horrifyingly misogynistic scenarios, by their "master," Wes. Despite this potential outcome, Radu has doubts about his action to force Wes to liberate Rosa. He says, in response to Dave's request for affirmation about Rosa's independence, "[B]ut I am not sinking zis best idea, Dave. New vampire needs firm guiding hand of master. Like me to you." Dave replies, not without a touch of sarcasm, "[L]et's hope Rosa makes it despite that terrible handicap" (p. 184). Dave finally exhibits a flash of assertiveness in his talking back to Radu, who does not pick up on Dave's tone.

The other option for the female vampire, which Radu does not support, is for her to fend for herself. Sue-Yun, for example, works as a waitress in a diner, and does not appear to have a male "master," although she does say that she is not aware that an emancipation ritual exists, commenting that she is "jealous" (p. 182). Nevertheless, her statement that "[W]e vampire sisters have to stick together" implies that she is on her own (p. 183). Sue-Yun points out that Rosa does not have to work as a waitress to survive, as does she. Sue-Yun states emphatically, "[B]ut you don't have to work here. You could do anything!" (182). This occupation is one Rosa wishes to pursue for the time being, responding, "I know, but I need a job right away. I have to get some money together…" (p. 183). She is taking the "honest" route of working hard, not murdering and mesmerizing to get ahead. Dave observes the two in conversation on this topic, as he watches through the window of the diner.

Earlier in the novel Sue-Yun, as she sternly berates Dave for placing Rosa as the prize in his wager with Wes, stands assertively with her hand on her hip. Carl and Jerome "joke," as Sue-Yun walks away from the trio. Carl says "[M]m-mm-mmm. That is one fine vampire waitress. When I go Blacula, she is all mine!" Jerome chimes in, "You're gonna have to suck a lotta hot plasma to tame that tiger" (p. 130). Here we see, again, the stereotype of the sexualized ethnic female blur with the vampire. Her "sass," as perceived by the males, is part of her attraction for them.

The fact that these two "free" female vampires both possess non-Anglo identities offers a means of further addressing the distinction between ethnic and Anglo vampire female sexualities. Although Rosa and Sue-Yun, who are both clearly of a lower-middle class status in the graphic novel, may not have the luxuries the Anglo female vampires have, they are empowered by the conclusion of the novel. Rosa does have some assistance with this, via Radu's intervention. Once they have gained their independence, they appear to survive by recognizing their vampire natures—in other words, consuming live human blood without any hesitation—and have a strong work ethic. They do not choose to murder humans so they do not have to work, such as we see with Dave's final action; they support themselves. Whether or not these females will take the ultimate step towards vampire power—converting a human into a vampire—remains unclear. In *Life Sucks* there exist no female vampires who occupy such empowered positions as Radu and his male cohorts. And, in the end, while Rosa and Dave may have a future together, she does not need him to support herself, financially or otherwise.

Risa, from *Bite Club*, does not need a protector such as Dave seems to aspire to be, either. The cover of *The Complete Bite Club* semi-prepares the reader for the sexuality and violence that is to come. Risa poses naked, her hand over her bare breast, and clutches a carton of blood, which she has spilled over her chin. The inside pages are even more graphic in their depiction of Risa and her appetites. Rosa's comparatively demure Goth outfit shrinks in comparison to this other presentation of vampire fashion. Risa is undeniably attractive to all who see her, and she is equally adept at using her physique to persuade others to do what she wants. In the pages of *Bite Club* Risa wears revealing clothing (tight outfits, short skirts, open blouses, etc.) and has a distinctive hairstyle: short, with the front section dyed white, the back part, black. Risa's hair straddles two perceived races, as does her ethnicity. Whereas other Del Toro family members have darker skin, for vampires, such as Risa's brother Eddie, Risa's own skin is decidedly pale, like the culturally acceptable Latina. She is a risk taker who loves to skydive (at one point skydiving into a meeting with a band she wants to sign,) and drives a fast convertible, all the while sipping a blood smoothie and talking on her cell phone.

Her sexual behaviour is, well, extreme. In the opening pages of *Bite Club* the reader comes upon her lounging in what the reader presumes is a sex club with a male engaging her in cunnilingus. And so it continues. Not long after the reader sees Risa seducing Leto (her brother and a priest) and clearly the two have had prior sexual encounters. In *Bite Club* sexual relations with family members are not entirely unusual; Risa's mother, Arabella, has been having an affair with Victor, her late husband's nephew, for several years. Lesbian sexuality also figures prominently. Our first introduction to Leto reveals him consoling a young woman in an empty church, who is struggling with her mother who doesn't understand this young woman's lesbianism, and Leto supports her sexuality, observing that "I know *exactly* how you feel" (authors' emphasis, p. 17). As "America's first ordained vampiric priest" he too is an outsider (p. 17). With the presentation of these other sexual orientations and activities, the Latina in the form of Risa becomes even further sexualized and seductive.

Lesbian relationships form the core of not only the plot of *Bite Club*, but also of Risa and her passion, at least initially. From the beginning, Risa emerges as a character that is not afraid to step out of socially normative heterosexuality. Risa's old school friend and bisexual lover, Carrie Stein, returns to Miami and, we later learn, seduces Leto in order to assist Risa in taking over the Del Toro family. She does this all the while double-crossing

the vampire crime unit police detachment. *Bite Club* ends with Risa and Carrie toasting, with Arabella, to a new era in the Del Toro family. *Bite Club: Vampire Crime Unit* moves ahead in time, and Risa and Carrie's relationship is on bumpy ground. By the conclusion, the relationship ends when Risa has Carrie murdered because of her treachery in betraying Risa. This love between the two women, which at first was a testament to their future together in business and a hailing of a "love conquers all" approach, has crumbled. Risa's ordering of the hit upon Carrie reveals not only Risa's determination to succeed no matter what the cost, but her extreme anger at being betrayed. She is a volatile woman, who responds to threats to herself with vehemence.

As a reflection of her fluid sexuality, at the end of *Bite Club: Vampire Crime Unit*, Risa is enamoured of Macavoy who, previously having been smitten with Risa, believes (accurately) her to be innocent of any criminal charges. As mentioned previously, following his conversion to vampirism via vampire bats, he is no longer interested in Risa and turns instead to the church, where the last scene is of him attending confession. Risa longs for him, and the reader sees her lying on a couch, not having eaten her dinner. Her mother tries to comfort her, in her own way, saying "There's no reason to be hostile…your *father* broke my heart every day…Well, at least we're back to boys" (authors' emphasis, p. 258). This implies, of course, that Risa is bisexual and is herself ready to embark upon a heterosexual relationship—but the object of her affection doesn't return that love. Macavoy remains independent, and thus may not find himself in Carrie's more vulnerable position with regard to Risa.

Risa's ruthlessness may threaten any empathy on the reader's side. As explained earlier, Risa is someone who has no qualms about responding to perceived or actual threats with extreme violence. Her sexuality, then, verges on frightening, especially in comparison to Rosa's. Risa teeters on the edge of existing as a vampire female who is truly monstrous in her lack of remorse and tendency towards violence. The sexy female Latina vampire here is a savage one, in the lineage of the voracious Santánico Pandemonium. What possibly redeems Risa for the reader may not be her attractiveness or her astute—although deadly—business acumen. Rather, she emerges as a victim, due both to her family's behaviour and the complications that entail being a vampire in this society. Even though Risa does exist as such, she fights back and will not "stay put" in a role as a sexualized Latina. Like Rosa, Risa realizes that even though she is a victim, both by virtue of others' actions and to some degree by her own choosing, she can—and does—take steps to survive on her own.

Other women in the world of *Bite Club* similarly have relationships that are fraught with disaster, such as betrayal and murder. Carrie and Arabella have, as stated above, double-crossed and had affairs. Both women are depicted as attractive women, with stylish outfits, but are not as visually sexualized as Risa. Another vampire woman, Yama, provides an intriguing point of comparison. Yama is a police officer and a vampire who, we learn, has real issues with her vampire nature. She is tattooed all over and conducts an illicit sexual relationship with her superior in the department, Fontine. It isn't merely an affair, though. It is an S & M relationship, with Yama as the submissive, as Macavoy witnesses clandestinely by peeking in through the motel room window and watching their sexual encounter. An added complication to the demarcation between vampire and human arises in Fontine being Black and Yama being of Asian descent. Power issues in combination with markers of racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, and vampire identity thus become conflated in the pages of *Bite Club*.

With these myriad issues, it is fascinating to see them come to life, as it were, in this genre of the graphic novel. These two are distinct works, but each separately navigates a tale of a vampire world that presents unique twists on the standard folklore. Some elements remain in place—notably the need to consume blood—as well as a seductive female vampire. The fact that these women in *Bite Club* and *Life Sucks* are alluring is certainly compatible with that stereotype. However, *Life Sucks* and *Bite Club* complicate this classic seductress by not only making her Latina, hence potentially at a social disadvantage due to her ethnicity, but by presenting her vampiric Latinidad as a possible avenue towards a means of empowerment.

At first glance, both Risa and Rosa may seem disenfranchised at the end. Rosa needs to leave her parents' house but isn't sure where to move, and she needs to find employment now that she is no longer beholden to and financially supported by Wes. Risa has conquered the crime world and retained her place at the head of the Del Toro family, but she has a broken heart.

However, Rosa finally has a way of liberating herself from her traditional and conservative Mexican family. She has tried the "white" world of Wes and of Anglo vampirism, at least as it is depicted in *Life Sucks*. She is ready to strike out on her own, and a fellow female vampire of colour, the only one in the novel, Sue-Yun, helps her. Rosa will forge ahead, living life outside on her own terms. She and Dave may even rekindle their romance, but if not, Rosa will be just fine on her own.

Risa's "success" is less transparent. She has, as acknowledged above, maintained her role in the crime family, but she is without a partner, having had Carrie killed off, and been spurned by Macavoy. Although the novel ends with her moping on a couch, Risa has, finally, matured. The woman who was engaged in sexual acts in a nightclub is finally quiet, still, and reflective. She is aware that she genuinely has loved both Carrie and Macavoy and with that realization she is keenly knowledgeable that she is currently bereft of them. At some point, we gather, she will embark upon a new love affair—after all, this is Risa Del Toro—but will do so from another, more sensitive and empathetic, angle. A female is now fully in charge of the Del Toros; she presents herself as feminized and powerful, as well as Latina.

There undoubtedly exists a universal element in this depiction of vampire women: attractive, seductive, and glamorous, yet marginalized and dangerous. However, by adding an emphasis on ethnicity in novels where vampires are Latinos as in *Bite Club* and *Life Sucks*, their difference and marginalized positions become startling to behold. With a visual face to racial, ethnic and female otherness, these novels force the reader to question the role of outsiders in vampire fiction. This vampire survives as a doubled outsider, and a seductress who finds herself doubly sexualized as well, but one that despite these perceived handicaps may be in the best position to truly live forever. Further, the creators of these novels have complicated the stereotype of the seductive and sexualized Latina with the addition of blood craving. While this seems at first to only reinforce "passion," and to add to the "hot tamale" stereotype, ultimately vampirism liberates and matures Risa and Rosa as they balance on the line between being *vampiras* and *vampiresas*, eventually winding up with a foot on either side. These vampires have no need for table dances or snakes to forge their own way and fend for themselves.

NOTES

[1] All references in this essay are from *The Complete Bite Club*.

[2] Victorian vampire fiction offers *the* template for the seductive female vampire: Dracula's brides and Lucy Westenra in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and Carmilla in J. Sheridan LeFanu's novella, *Carmilla* (1872).

[3] Linda Martín Alcoff's work, such as *Visible Identities: Race, Gender, and the Self* (New York, NY: Oxford UP, 2005), is particularly insightful on this topic.

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RHONDA NICOL

10. "YOU WERE SUCH A GOOD GIRL WHEN YOU WERE HUMAN"

Gender and Subversion in The Vampire Diaries

No doubt due in large part to the phenomenal success of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga*, L. J. Smith's beloved series of novels from the 1990s, *The Vampire Diaries*, was adapted for television by Kevin Williamson, previously best known for his writer-producer work on both the *Scream* film franchise and the television show *Dawson's Creek*. Williamson knows both horror and teen angst, and the two come together in *The Vampire Diaries* television show, which had its broadcast premier on the CW in September 2009 and has, as of this writing, recently completed its fifth season.

Although the television series obviously owes its existence at least in part to the *Twilight Saga*, it is also clearly influenced not only by its source material (Smith's books) but also by the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (*BtVS*), which set the standard for the vampires-in-high-school television show. In both the *Twilight Saga* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the focus on the male vampire and his human female paramour serves to make the particular monstrousness of the vampire primarily masculine in nature. In *The Vampire Diaries*, the association is certainly not reversed, but it *is* mitigated, largely by interrogating cultural conceptions of "acceptable" female gender performance via its female characters' shifting subject positions, primarily from human to vampire. As the series has developed, it has steadily increased its interrogation of the figure of the monstrous feminine, first by introducing Katherine (Nina Dobrev), Stefan's (Paul Wesley) and Damon's (Ian Somerhalder) progenitor and Elena's doppelgänger (also played by Nina Dobrev), as a nemesis and then by chronicling Elena's own transition from human to vampire and its effects upon her relationship to and with Katherine. Additionally, the series has explored Caroline Forbes's (Candice Accola) journey from Elena's vain, selfish sidekick into a fledgling vampire whose physical transformation occasions her emotional evolution. Sharon Marie Ross and Louisa Ellen Stein suggest that one of the defining characteristics of what they call "Teen TV" is "its recurring engagement with questions

A. Hobson & U. M. Anyiwo (Eds.), Gender in the Vampire Narrative, 145–160.

of identity and self-discovery" (2008) and certainly *The Vampire Diaries* is typical of a program on the CW network in that regard. By examining Caroline, Elena, and Katherine's character arcs, we can observe how the series as a whole explores and confronts cultural anxieties for young women regarding identity development generally as well as gender performance specifically, providing a space in the popular media landscape for complex and nuanced depictions of gender.

In the early days of the series, it was apparent that the production team understood fully that comparisons between their show and *Twilight* were inevitable, and it's clear that they sought to declare their independence very early on. In the fourth episode of the series, Damon, the bad-boy vamp and foil to the more generally noble Stefan (in *BtVS* terms, Damon is Spike and Stefan is Angel) is flipping through Caroline's copy of *Twilight* and mutters, "What's so special about this Bella girl? Everyone's so whipped. Oh, I miss Anne Rice. She was so on it" (Kriesberg & Young, 2009). When Caroline asks, "How come you don't sparkle?" Damon snarls, "Because I live in the real world where vampires burn in the sun" (Kriesberg & Young, 2009). In the series' pilot episode, Damon also grouses, "I couldn't take another day of the '90s" (Williamson & Plec, 2009b), and although in context he's ostensibly talking about grunge, it might also be interpreted as an effort to distance this show from the original *Vampire Diaries* book series and/or *BtVS,* both '90s artefacts. Additionally, in an early episode, when Elena and Stefan are on the outs because she can sense that he's keeping secrets from her, Elena tells Aunt Jenna, "I'm not going to be one of those pathetic girls whose world stops spinning because of some guy" (Reycraft & Stanton, 2009), which seems like a fairly obvious repudiation of the entire plot of *New Moon*, the second book in the *Twilight Saga*, during which Bella spends most of the novel moping and pining for Edward, who has left her.

Elena Gilbert, our heroine, is like Buffy and Bella before her, indisputably a heroine in the "good girl" mould. However, the series is fairly transgressive, even in its early seasons, by suggesting that this in a world where good girls do have sex, and teenage sexual activity is frequently treated as value-neutral, which is probably due largely to its inclusion on the CW, a network which is known for its somewhat racy fare and frank depictions of teenage sexuality. Very quickly in its run, the series reflects changing the stakes for women's sexuality—no longer is there a simple dividing line between the "good girl" who doesn't have sex outside of a committed (implicitly eternal) relationship and the "bad girl" who does. Although both Buffy's and Bella's chastity and the "loss" thereof are fairly major plot points in their respective

series, when Elena has sex with Stefan, there's no real "very special episode" build-up. Because this is broadcast television, the sex is more of the rolling-around-on-the-bed-fade-to-commercial variety, and it is only when Elena confronts Stefan about his failure to mention her resemblance Katherine, Stefan's troublesome ex-girlfriend (and sire, as she later discovers) that it's made entirely clear that Stefan and Elena even *have* a sexual relationship. It is also possible—even probable—that Elena wasn't a virgin when she and Stefan had sex, given her previous long-term relationship with Matt, a relationship that ended a few months before Stefan returned to Mystic Falls. Although the show does implicitly acknowledge that young women must still negotiate a complex set of social codes in order to be "appropriately" sexual, and behaviours perceived as transgressive are likely to result in social censure, the preservation of chastity simply does not carry the same kind of weight in *The Vampire Diaries* that it does in both *BtVS* and *Twilight*.

The valuing of chastity for young women is not the only social construct that the series calls into question. Over the course of the series thus far, as the young women in the show have gone from being late teens to early twenty-somethings (in experience if not in literal aging; two of the three central female characters are vampires and the other is a kind of ghost), they have evolved and grown in how they think about themselves and their options as women, especially as those options relate to "appropriate" female behaviour. Although the bad girl/good girl binary is very much in effect, it is frequently complicated and sometimes even outright subverted.

Caroline Forbes, for example, has experienced tremendous character growth over the course of the series. In the first season, she is presented as a kind of "frenemy," which is more in keeping with the book series. Caroline is ditzy, boy-crazy, and generally annoying; one of those members of a circle of friends that no one in the group really seems to like all that much. She is initially determined to pursue Stefan, and when she makes a drunken pass at him at a party, Stefan rebuffs her and asks Elena, "Is she always like that?" Elena responds, "You're fresh meat. She'll back off eventually" (Williamson & Plec, 2009b). Although the show doesn't specifically venerate chastity per se, it does still install and police some boundaries with regard to female sexuality; Caroline's sexual assertiveness is taken as a joke, something slightly embarrassing and pitiable.

First-season Caroline is by her own admission not to be taken seriously. Early on in the series, she admits to Matt (Zach Roerig), "It's true. I'm worse than shallow. I'm a kiddie pool" (Kligman & Stanton, 2009). In her review of the pilot, *New York Times* media critic Ginia Bellefante notes that

The Vampire Diaries "has the feel of something more permissive and less morally rigid than the Twilight franchise" but observes that the show, at least early in its run, does suggest that "indiscriminate sex is emotionally destructive" (2009), and certainly Caroline's behaviour underscores this point. When it becomes clear that her bid for Stefan is doomed to failure and that Stefan has eyes only for Elena, Caroline urges Elena to "jump his bones already." "It's easy," she proclaims, "Boy likes girl, girl likes boy, *sex*" (Williamson & Plec, 2009a). Elena demurs, and Caroline's hypersexualization and desire to "win" a boyfriend at any cost results in her falling into the clutches of the villainous (at that point in the series) Damon, who uses her for sex and blood and uses his powers of compulsion to manipulate and demean her, routinely calling her "stupid and shallow and useless" (Kligman & Stanton, 2009). In the pilot episode, Caroline says to Bonnie (Kat Graham), a mutual friend, "How come the guys I want never want me? …I try *so* hard and I'm never the one," and when Bonnie replies, "It's not a competition, Caroline," Caroline responds, "Yeah. It is" (Williamson & Plec, 2009b). Caroline understands the economy of high school, an environment in which young women are expected to perform sexual availability and are valuable on the basis of their sex appeal. As Caroline explains to Elena, "I'm always the backup. You're always everyone's first choice" (Oh & Chambliss, 2010). Young women only have value if they are sexually desirable, and if you are the most desirable, you are rewarded with social accolades, but if your performance as a sexual being is excessive, you garner the wrong kind of attention, becoming a mad/bad woman who exists only as a kind of scapegoat.

Caroline eventually becomes a pawn in the struggle between Katherine and the Salvatore brothers, who are battling Katherine on behalf of Elena. Katherine kills an injured and hospitalized Caroline, who happened to have Damon's blood in her system at the time of her death. Thus, in one of the show's first transgressive moments, instead of being the quickly dispatched blonde bimbo *à la* established horror trope, Caroline comes back to "life" as a vampire herself, newly powerful and possessed of a moral compass. Suddenly Caroline is a character worth taking seriously.

Caroline goes from foil to ally largely because she quickly learns to behave appropriately with her newfound capabilities. When she wakes, alone and transformed with no inkling of what's happened to her and why, she does at first enjoy her newfound ability to bully people, using her powers of compulsion on hapless humans and, most satisfyingly, standing up to Damon, chastising him for his ill-treatment of her, punctuated by her tossing him like a rag doll (Young, 2010). However, Caroline quickly

learns that in order to be a "good" vampire, she must exercise emotional control. Stefan tells her, "No matter how good it feels to give yourself over to it [bloodlust], you fight it off. You bury it" (Young, 2010). Caroline's transition from shallow punchline to powerful young woman is marked by her willingness to learn to sublimate her urges, especially her desire for self-gratification.

Over the course of the series, the point is made repeatedly that to be a vampire is to exist in a state of perpetually heightened emotions, and the show as a whole is something of an extended meditation upon the concept of emotional control, no doubt an issue of considerable interest for its primarily youthful audience. Stefan tells a newly-changed Caroline, "When someone becomes a vampire, all of their natural behaviours get amplified" (Chambliss, 2010a). For women of the series, ability to control one's impulses – and to go about doing so the right way – is the most important distinguishing characteristic between the good girl and the bad girl.

In this fictional world, vampirism is thus a kind of permanent adolescence, and although the characters grow in knowledge and experience, the fight to control their emotions is never-ending. The series repeatedly insists that a vampire has two choices: s/he can fight to master her/his impulses and achieve a kind of emotional equilibrium, or s/he can simply choose not to feel empathy at all. At one point, Damon explain, "You can turn it [having feelings] off. It's like a button you can press" (Dries & Young, 2010). Thus the "natural" state of being a vampire in the series is inherently feminized: characterized by an excess of emotion. One can turn away from it, reject it, but the vampires who aren't "in touch with their feelings" and aren't able to exercise appropriate control over their urges are the bad ones.

Caroline may have been a "bad" teenage girl, but she is indisputably a "good" vampire and therefore a good woman. Stefan refers to her as "a genius at self-control" (Matthews & Sonneshine, 2012). Shortly after her transformation, Matt, her old boyfriend, attempts to reunite with her, and Caroline's vampire nature (as in *BtVS*, this is indicated by her changing face) comes to the surface, but she forces it to recede, thus making herself "tame" for Matt (Young, 2010). When she eventually loses control and bites Matt, she acknowledges that she is not "safe" for him and acts like a jealous girlfriend in order to get Matt to break up with her (Chambliss, 2010a). Ironically, it is her performance of the "old Caroline"—neurotic, insecure, and quick to attack anyone she perceives as a sexual rival—that cements her transformation into "new Caroline": compassionate, restrained, and nurturing, she places the needs of others above her own desires.

Caroline not only masters her own urges but also provides comfort and support to her friend Tyler (Michael Trevino) when he is a newly-minted werewolf. Tyler, who is fearful of his first full moon and what he will become, asks Caroline why she is going out of her way to help him. She tells him, "I was alone when I turned. I had no control over my body and my urges and I killed somebody. I don't want that to happen to you. I don't want you to be alone" (Dries, 2010b). The good girl controls her own urges by encouraging others, particularly men, to control theirs, especially urges of the body. Part of what makes the "good girl" good is her ability to control the monstrous male and to keep *his* predatory urges in check as well as her own.

Unsurprisingly, Caroline is rewarded for her virtue with an adoring boyfriend; she and Tyler become lovers in the show's third season. However, their eventual breakup causes Caroline to slide back into old habits: She impulsively has sex with Klaus (Joseph Morgan), an Original vampire who serves as a perfect brooding Byronic hero with homicidal tendencies, and Tyler, who has ample reason to despise Klaus, is enraged. However, adult-woman Caroline is very different from her high school self; she recognizes the hypocrisy of standards applied to women's behaviour, particularly as they relate to sex and sexuality. She tells Tyler, "Your hybrid bite just *killed* someone and no one even batted an eye. I sleep with the wrong guy weeks ago and I don't hear the end of it. How is that fair?" When Tyler responds, "I don't know, Care. Maybe people just expect more from you," Caroline unleashes her anger:

> Because being good comes so easily to me? Well, guess what, Tyler? It doesn't. I am a vampire. I have the same impulses as you. I'm allowed to make some mistakes along the way. Yes, I slept with Klaus, but after *you* walked away from me. That was *my* choice, and I don't need to be hearing about it every five seconds. So get over it, or get out of my life, but I'm done feeling guilty. (Hsu Taylor, 2014)

Her response represents a marked progression in the way the show treats female sexuality. In the first season, Caroline's libido is seen as a source of embarrassment and/or a reason to dismiss her as a worthwhile person, but in the aforementioned scene, she is asserting her absolute right to make decisions about her own body and her own sexuality and demanding that her autonomy be respected. She is no longer willing to be treated as a pawn or a joke, or as someone whose sexuality exists to please others. Although she characterizes her liaison with Klaus as a mistake, she also admitted earlier in the episode that she took pleasure in the act itself. Caroline is unwilling to

accept Tyler's judgment for her choice without pointing out his hypocrisy; he, too, is not above reproach. Caroline, by earning her "good girl" credentials, has achieved the cultural and social power to critique, even repudiate, the very standards by which good and bad girls are delineated.

Caroline does evolve throughout the course of the series, but the main bad girl in *The Vampire Diaries*—Katherine, the vampire who was once the object of both Salvatore brothers' affection and who turned them both into vampires—remains almost entirely unrepentant. When Katherine is first introduced, she exists simply to be the anti-Elena: the figure of vice and corruption who makes Elena appear all the more virtuous in comparison. Katherine and Elena are also doppelgängers; they are, of course, physically identical, since Nina Dobrev plays both roles.

One of the most obvious moments in the series that encourages a contrast between Elena and Katherine occurs at the beginning of the episode "Plan B"—scenes of Katherine in bed with her werewolf lover Mason (Taylor Kinney) are intercut with scenes of Elena and Stefan in bed together. In the Stefan/Elena scenes, Elena is in a pale pink tank top. In the parallel scene, Katherine is clad in a black lace bra and matching panties. Elena pricks her finger with a needle and offers Stefan a drop of blood; Katherine nips Mason, taking his blood, purring "Scared I'm gonna kill you?" The juxtaposed scenes end with Elena declaring her love for Stefan and Katherine coyly telling her werewolf boy-toy that she loves him. It's quite clear which one of them is sincere (Craft & Fain, 2010).

However, we do discover over the course of the series that Katherine is not entirely devoid of sentiment. In flashbacks revealing her origins, we see that she fought to keep her illegitimate biological daughter, and when Klaus slaughtered her entire family, Katherine, by then a vampire herself, wept for them, especially her own mother (Chambliss, 2010b). When Elena returns some family keepsakes to her, we see Katherine crying over a sketch of her with her centuries-dead parents. Perhaps most importantly, when Katherine's long-lost daughter, who is also a vampire, finds her in season five, Katherine shows moments of genuine affection for Nadia (Olga Fonda), most poignantly when she sits by her deathbed and uses her vampire powers to project a vision of a bucolic childhood into her daughter's fading consciousness:

> This is not what your life should've been. 500 years searching for a mother who ended up …being me. Let me show you what your life should've been. What your perfect day would have been like. You and I had a little cottage. It was an ordinary summer day. You had been playing outside so you were tired and it was time for bed. You told me

> about the fort that you had built out in the woods by the river. So I asked if I could visit and you said when the sun came up in the morning, and I said, "Goodnight, Nadia. Sleep well. Your mother loves you." (Hsu Taylor, 2014)

It's not that she doesn't have the capacity to feel empathy or affection; it's just that she doesn't let those feelings interfere with her quest to achieve her goals. She tells Elena, "I always look out for myself. If you're smart, you'll do the same" (Chambliss, 2010b). She asserts the validity of her viewpoint repeatedly, telling Stefan, "What do you want me to say, Stefan? That I'm sorry for everything I've done? Well, I'm not, okay? It's called self-preservation. I've been looking out for myself for 500 years" (Daniels, 2010). She also assures Stefan, "I want what I want, Stefan, and I don't care what I have to do to get it. My list of victims is a long one and I have no problem adding more names to that list" (Dries, 2010a). Ironically, Katherine is, in her way, every bit as much a paragon of emotional control as Caroline. However, Katherine's version of emotional control means that she can successfully repress any altruistic impulses she might have if she deems them an impediment to achieving her own goals.

Katherine serves as Elena's very own personal madwoman, at one point sealed in a tomb instead of an attic. However, as the series progresses, with every additional appearance of Katherine, the line of demarcation separating good girl from bad is steadily eroded, and by season five, it is nearly erased. In her earliest appearances, there were distinct visual cues marking Katherine and Elena as opposites—Katherine's hair in unruly waves, Elena's hair in a sleek, smooth curtain; Katherine in dark colours, usually black, and Elena in pastels, usually pink—but as the series progresses, it becomes less and less easy to tell the two apart. As early as the second season, Katherine gloats to Elena, "It's getting really easy being you," after having fooled not only both Salvatore brothers but also the viewers themselves (Dries, 2011).

In the second season, a scholar of the occult tells Elena, "Doppelgängers usually torment the people they look like, trying to undo their lives" (Dries, 2010a), and it is noteworthy that Elena is initially referred to as *the* doppelgänger. If Elena is the doppelgänger then that suggests first, that Katherine is the real, the authentic one and second, that Elena is the one doing the tormenting, that her presence exists to undo Katherine. However, later, Katherine *herself* is also sometimes referred to as the doppelgänger, thus destabilizing the idea that either Elena's or Katherine's existence might be viewed as the "authentic" or "legitimate" one. Also, it raises the question

of who, if anyone, is being "undone," and this question persists throughout the series' run to date.

This progressive complication of the Elena/Katherine binary is accelerated quite dramatically at the end of the third season, when Elena dies with vampire blood in her system and is accidentally turned into a vampire. The onslaught of intense feeling precipitated by the change brings about significant shifts in Elena's behaviour. Although Stefan tries to teach her to live as he does and exist primarily on animal blood, Elena can't tolerate it, nor can she exist on bagged human blood; she must take blood directly from donors, which means that she must cultivate her newly-minted hunter instincts.

When Damon teaches Elena how to hunt and feed, she enjoys it enormously. After choosing a victim, taking blood, and compelling him to forget her actions, she is euphoric, telling Damon, "I want more." She and Damon end up dancing together, revelling in their vampire natures as they smear blood on their faces. It is only when Elena realizes that Bonnie is watching her on the dance floor, appalled at her behaviour, that she feels shame, later telling Stefan, "I'm feeling things that I don't want to feel. And I'm becoming someone that I don't want to be. I don't think I'm gonna survive this" (Matthews & Sonneshine, 2012). Interestingly, it is only when Elena sees her behaviour through Bonnie's eyes that she experiences distress over her own actions, which underscores the tension between a public performance of self that adheres to social expectations for female behaviour and her internal, private urges and instincts, which may not cooperate with externally imposed expectations.

In a very real sense, Elena—or at least the Elena who existed before—*doesn't* survive the transition. Her vampire nature affects her essential personality, and she does become, if not precisely like Katherine, more Katherine-like; part of making peace with her new existence is acknowledging that some less-than-altruistic instincts come with being a vampire. Stefan has trouble accepting this development, and much of the tension between post-turn Elena and Stefan comes from what Stefan keeps insisting isn't "authentic" behaviour for Elena. Compelled by Rebekah (Claire Holt), an Original vampire, to tell the truth about her feelings about and for Stefan, Elena notes, "Lately I feel like I'm a project. Like I'm a problem that needs to be fixed. I think I make him [Stefan] sad. And I can't be with someone like that, because when he looks at me, all he sees is a broken toy" (Matthews, 2013). Her resistance to being pathologized brings about her break-up with Stefan and her relationship with Damon, the "bad boy" Salvatore brother. As Rebekah wryly observes, "Vampire Elena is a trollop who likes bad boys,"

and Elena admits, "When I'm with him [Damon], it feels …unpredictable. Like I'm free" (Matthews, 2013).

On the surface, Elena's romance with Damon would seem in keeping with the kind of girl-falls-for-brooding-Byronic-bad-boy we've come to expect from the genre, but Elena's relationship with Damon is really more about Elena herself and her attempts to figure out who she is and, perhaps more importantly, who she wants to be. The angst-ridden love triangle plot sells, of course, but the show is doing something more subversive with the Stefan/Elena/Damon storyline. Her on-again, off-again relationships with both Salvatore brothers reflect Elena's own state of mind, her understanding of her needs and desires and how she wants to meet them. At one point, she breaks up with Damon, telling him, "It's not just that we're bad for each other. It's that when we're together, we do bad things *for* each other. And I can't live like that" (Matthews & Reynolds, 2014). Vampire Elena struggles to find some kind of moral middle ground that allows her to embrace fully all aspects of herself – even the ugly ones, the ones that interfere with her image of herself as good girl – in a way that she can accept.

In her quest for self-acceptance, Katherine becomes the avatar for all that Elena struggles to integrate into her new sense of self. Katherine is the literal outward manifestation of Elena's worst fears about her evolving identity. When Elena starts having hallucinations after taking a human life, she envisions Katherine taunting her. This spectral Katherine gives voice to Elena's subconscious anxieties, telling her "The girl he [Stefan] fell in love with is gone, you know. You're like me now. Maybe even worse" (Bleiweiss & Plec, 2012). Once she becomes a vampire, she and Katherine do start becoming far more alike, which Elena finds terrifying. She describes her new vampire self to Damon as "different, somehow. Darker" (Bleiweiss & Plec, 2012). Since identity formation is at least in part a process of negation—I am not that which I reject—Elena's recognition of parts of herself in Katherine, who is supposed to be safely Other, rattles her.

Like both Caroline and Katherine, Elena must learn to discipline her emotions if she is to survive as a vampire, and her evolution as it relates to emotional control takes a gripping turn in the episode "Stand By Me." Jeremy (Steven R. McQueen), Elena's brother, dies (apparently permanently), and Elena has a complete emotional meltdown. Fearing for her mental and physical well-being, Damon urges her to cut herself off from her emotions. The show presents this manoeuvre, repeatedly referred to as shutting off one's humanity, as the kind of nuclear option for dealing with the heightened emotional state of being a vampire: if it all becomes too much to cope with,

you can simply make the decision to effectively stop having a conscience, a move Damon calls "vampire Prozac" (Finch & Narducci, 2013). Although in the show's rhetoric "not feeling" and "shutting off one's humanity" are sometimes used interchangeably, it's clear that this mysterious shut-off switch actually blocks access to feelings rooted in empathy and a sense of community responsibility. Vampires who have "shut it off" still seem capable of at the very least being annoyed, as post-shut-off Elena repeatedly demonstrates.

After Elena sheds her humanity, her similarities to Katherine become far more pronounced. Katherine's prediction in "We All Go a Little Mad Sometimes"— "You're like me now. Maybe even worse"—is fully realized. From this point on in the series, Elena also starts to more closely resemble Katherine physically. She begins wearing her hair in a tousled style closer to Katherine's own lush waves and adds some bright red streaks. Although the show makes an effort to keep Katherine's and Elena's respective aesthetic styles visually distinct enough for ready differentiation, the two look far more alike than they did in the earlier seasons.

Her behaviour also rivals, perhaps even surpasses, Katherine's for sheer brutality. At the end of "American Gothic," Elena completes her transition into being a more vicious version of Katherine when she coolly snaps the neck of a hapless waitress in order to convince Damon and Stefan to take her seriously when she says that she does not want them to keep searching for a cure for vampirism for her. She tells them, "That's one body you're responsible for. If you keep trying to fix me, they'll be a second, a twentieth, and a hundredth. Your choice" (Bleiweiss & Molina, 2013). This new Elena sees herself as evolved, not something in need of repair. Elena objects, sometimes quite violently, to being characterized as damaged goods. Compassion-free Elena may not be a sympathetic character, but her presence allows for a voice of female resistance to social constructions of femininity. Bad-vamp Elena serves as a repudiation by example of all of the values that young women are supposed to internalize: caring about others' feelings, worrying about being "nice" and "good" and self-sacrificing.

Ironically, Katherine, whom we might expect to approve of Elena's choice to cut herself off from her humanity in the name of pure pragmatism, derides Elena for her actions. Katherine tells Elena, "I've done some pretty horrible things to survive, but unlike you—poor, delicate Elena—I don't turn it off. I *deal* with it" (Narducci & Sonneshine, 2013). Katherine's comment suggests that perhaps she is far less indifferent to the consequences of her choices than she has previously claimed. In this scene, Katherine exhibits

an awareness that her calculating choices may have facilitated her survival, but they came at a personal cost, and she expresses her disgust that Elena effectively took a short cut, avoiding having to pay for her choices.

The development of the Elena/Katherine relationship in season four underscores the extent to which both Katherine and Elena are forced to contend with available narratives for women. Interestingly, Katherine repeatedly disparages Elena for her perceived frailty while at the same time clearly envying it. When Katherine first encounters Elena sans humanity, Katherine is amused at Elena's new coldness, but observes that Elena isn't holding up her end of the bargain and maintaining her role as the fragile female in the Stefan/Elena/Damon love triangle: "So sad for the boys, though. Their special snowflake of human frailty, gone" (Bleiweiss & Molina, 2013). Katherine frequently derides the idea of the "good little girl" and declares herself the opposite of it, but her repeated assertions of it as a concept suggest that the paradigm still has power over her, that she still judges not only Elena's but also her own behaviour against some mythological standard of ideal femininity just as much as Elena does.

Katherine's resentment of Elena builds to a physical altercation wherein Elena attempts to murder her. Katherine tells Elena, "I never had a graduation or a prom or, you know, a life. But you did. You have everything, and it's not because you're a good little girl who deserves happiness, it's because you stole mine" (Dries & Plec, 2013). The aforementioned fight is another instance of Katherine and Elena being marked physically to underscore their evolving relationship to one another. As in the cross-cut bedroom scenes in "Plan B," Katherine is once again in head-to-toe black, but this time, Elena is wearing a pale peach sheathe dress with an overlay of cream-colored lace and a cropped denim jacket. For the obvious practical reason that one actress is playing two roles, the two characters always need to be physically distinct, but this time, although Elena is still essentially wearing white, it's a much more muted and less immediately discernible opposition to Katherine's aesthetic, visually underscoring the conflation of the two characters. At the end of the episode, Elena force-feeds Katherine the cure for vampirism, and Katherine becomes a mortal human, thus completing the circle; Katherine and Elena have fully switched subject positions from where they both were when the series began.

After Katherine lives and dies as a human, she is, for various convoluted reasons, able to force her dying consciousness into Elena, and the collapse of the two is complete; they are literally inhabiting the same body for much of season five. However, the show seemingly repudiates the mad/bad woman

in the end. When her spirit is successfully expelled from Elena's body, it's strongly implied that rather going to the kind of purgatory where other supernatural spirits are corralled, Katherine's spirit gets pulled down to some kind of hell space (Hsu Taylor, 2014). Katherine's exit does not restore order as one might expect, though; her banishment does not conveniently restore Elena to her previously unsullied state. The episode following Katherine's demise opens with Elena dancing on top of a bar, partying and doing tequila shots with her friends, who cheer her. Matt even urges her to "take it off," which she does, removing her shirt and undulating suggestively atop the bar in a tank top and jeans. At first it seems to viewers that Elena is celebrating her newfound independence from Katherine, but after a minute or two of observing this new, carefree Elena, it becomes clear to viewers that this scene is actually Elena's nightmare. She confronts her friends over their failure to recognize that she was possessed by Katherine for nearly a month, demanding, "Am I seriously that easy to impersonate or do you guys not know me at all?" When Matt asks her what she is talking about, she responds, "I'm not Elena, Matt. It's not me. You guys know me. I would never do that [dance on a bar and do tequila shots with her underage brother]. Guys, Katherine has taken over my body. This isn't me" (Dries, 2014). Elena's interrogation of her friends implicates viewers, as well: How could we not know? At the same time, it underscores the show's general theme of identity as something unfixed and constantly evolving that has developed over the show's five seasons. Moreover, Elena in the dream is talking as if she is Elena possessed by Katherine who is pretending to be Elena, but a true Elena/Katherine separation would necessitate Elena's ignorance of her own possessed state. Her self-conscious awareness of the possession (in the dream world, at least) suggests that symbolically, Katherine lives on in Elena, as the parts of Elena with which she is not entirely comfortable.

In this series, literally all of the main characters (with the possible exception of Matt) do horrible, seemingly unforgivable things. All of the vampires are killers; they have committed deliberate murder on at least one occasion, usually more. The question the show repeatedly asks us to consider is how one goes about dealing with those horrible things, the cruel and anti-social impulses that bedevil us. On the surface, the show may seem mostly about the Stefan/Elena/Damon love triangle, but I suggest that it is deeply preoccupied with questions of identity formation and ethics. What does it mean to be a "good person"? How can we move past our mistakes? The CW network aggressively courts a teen-to-twenty-something demographic, and these types of examination are undoubtedly of import to the network's

viewership. All of these characters are, in their various ways, perpetual adolescents who have been deeply damaged and abandoned by the social structures—families of origin in particular—that are supposed to facilitate their growing up as emotionally healthy adults.

For adolescents, identity formation is still very much an ongoing process, and the show speaks to its primary viewership by acknowledging and exploring this issue, especially for the show's female characters. Rachel Fudge observes that for young women, "a certain awareness of gender and power is ingrained and inextricably linked to our sense of identity and self-esteem—call it feminism's legacy" (1999), and Caroline, Katherine, and Elena certainly express beliefs and exhibit behaviours that mark them as inheritors of this legacy. However, "feminism's legacy" is riddled with contradiction and conflict, and for the young women of *The Vampire Diaries*, their struggles and triumphs reflect the integration of feminist ideologies into popular culture, a move which has definitely introduced an array of options both enticing and alarming for young women.

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11. PERFORMATIVE FEMININITY AND FEMALE INVALIDISM IN JOHN KEATS'S "LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI" AND S.T. COLERIDGE'S *CHRISTABEL*

John Keats and Samuel Taylor Coleridge never employed the term "vampire" to describe their supernatural belles in "La belle dame sans merci" (1819) and *Christabel* (1797/1800) respectively. Nonetheless, even though they do not possess the sharp fangs paraded by Dracula's sister-brides or Carmilla's bloodlust, there is something intrinsically vampiric about their appearance—masses of glossy hair, pallid complexion, heavy-lidded eyes, interminable eyelashes, a languorous gaze, and glistening red lips. Many scholars have attempted for the past few decades to provide an exhaustive definition of the *femme fatale* and to crystallize a profile that describes coherently this special typology of womanhood. For instance, Silke Binias's (2007) work on the origins, history, and applicability of the "fatal woman" prototype in Western culture identifies two major nineteenth-century archetypes of lethal femininity: "the vampire-like woman" and "the exotic or ethereal fairy creature" (pp. 33–34). Despite their morphological differences, however, both categories refer to a *very* specific kind of female identity – the hypersexual, un-maternal woman with a monstrous appetite for destruction. By examining "La belle dame sans merci" and *Christabel* through the lens of the metamorphosing woman (or lamia) and the nineteenth-century fixation on feminine passivity, in this chapter I argue that both Keats and Coleridge used the concept of performative identity in relation to their female vampiric characters to promote female invalidism as a socially authorized type of femininity. Despite the belle dame's and Geraldine's ability "to play the game" or to adopt a disguise that allows them to temporarily escape patriarchal policing and thus to occupy a site of liberation through performance, their masquerades of (man-made) femininity are penalized and eventually posited as a caveat meant to tame defiant women into submission. That is, while these female masqueraders unveil or seem to talk back to the machinations of patriarchy, their performances are ultimately controlled *by* or *for* a male agent.

A. Hobson & U. M. Anyiwo (Eds.), Gender in the Vampire Narrative, 161–171.

Analysed ad nauseam by feminist critics in particular, both Keats's "La belle dame sans merci" and Coleridge's *Christabel* draw on the mythos of the "lamia," a hideous serpentine creature whose main predatory tactic is to assume the physical appearance of an enthralling woman in order to lure men to their doom. In *The Living Dead*, James Twitchell explains the genesis and history of this mythological being: in classic lore, she was Zeus's lover who turned into a cannibal and snatcher of babies; in Jewish lore, she was Lilith, Adam's first wife, who became a bloodsucking fiend after being discarded by her husband for her excessive seductiveness. In Western accounts of the myth, her modus operandi is analogous to a "rite of initiation" that ensures her male victim's access to "the perplexities of manhood" (with its sexual connotations), even though he is ultimately "used and presumably forgotten" (Twitchell, 1981, pp. 39–40). This rite or retaliation against a male partner not only compromises patriarchal authority by inverting the traditional gender roles but also denounces the rigid male definitions of gender difference, which generally posit the man as the active agent and the woman as the passive receptacle. The lamia's hybridity (beast and woman) and her *merci*-less tantalizing machinations, typically incorporate both the feminine ideal (the chaste and nurturing mother) and the fallen woman (the sexually insatiable, masculinized predator). The juxtaposition of quiescent maternity and active female sexuality becomes, especially in male texts, a source of extreme male anxiety, triggered primarily by the patriarch's impossibility to reconcile these two archetypal images within the same female body.

One of the lamia's tactics, depicted by Keats and Coleridge in their poems, is her shape shifting performance—from serpentine or animal to woman—that guarantees the success of her predatory act. During this performance, which is in fact an enactment of culturally prescribed gender roles, the lamia's bestial or carnal self is obscured, while her "performed" femininity enables her to take advantage of what the male system deems appropriate or "natural" for a woman to be, feel, and experience. It is important to note here, however, that the lamia's performance of normative femininity is possible only within the restrictions of the patriarchal surveillance or the confines of the binary *gazer—gazed at*. That is, the lamia's performance cannot unfold in the absence of a male viewer, whose very understanding of "femininity" is the very one that regulates the exchanges that occur between him (the spectator) and her (the spectacle). In *Gender Trouble,* building on Simone de Beauvoir's claim that "one is not born, but rather *becomes* [sic] a woman," Butler defines gender performativity as "a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce

the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (1990, p. 33). From her perspective then, gender does not refer to a "natural" state but rather a set of acts that entail the rehearsal and replication of certain "scripts" that are constantly surveilled and scrutinized by the institutions that not only act as cultivators of norms but also disciplinarians and enforcers. In this particular context, when the performance is conspicuous in its exaggeration of gender conventions, it can or should be understood mainly in terms of a subversive act that exposes both the constructedness of gender identity and patriarchy's obsession with boundary-making. However, it can also be argued that the subversive possibilities of this performance are diminished, if not annulled, when there are several male filters that control not only the female performer's performance but also to what extent she gets to exert her female power over men. But who are the performing lamiae in Keats's and Coleridge's texts, what are their transgressions, and how exactly do they prey on their victims?

Keats's "La belle dame sans merci" debuts with a knight-at-arms' post-traumatic perceptions. In an unexplainable state of despondency, he relates to an unidentified speaker the debilitating event, which disrupted his existence and caused his current state of mind, "so haggard and so woebegone" (p. 6).[1] The two men's heart-to-heart unfolds in a barren and lifeless natural setting: the sedge is withering, the birds have ceased their songs, and the ripened crop has been already gathered. The function of the first two stanzas is to position the male sufferer's tale in a timeframe—the end of autumn or the early stages of winter when Nature is preparing for hibernation—as well as to project an intimate correlation between the infertility of the landscape and the knight's existential crisis. The speaker and reader learn that the pale stranger's current predicament originated in a brief yet debilitating encounter with an unusual woman with an abundance of loose hair and a wild gaze:

> I met a lady in the meads,
> Full beautiful, a fairy's child;
> Her hair was long, her foot was light,
> And her eyes were wild. (13–16)

In *Idols of Perversity*, Bram Dijkstra (1986) aligns the nineteenth-century cult of feminine invalidism, a trend associating desirable womanhood with an almost "natural" invalidism (both mental and corporeal), with images of long tresses, which were fetishized as a sign of "mental disability" and super-femininity (p. 229). The mysterious woman's physical appearance in Keats's poem forces the knight to assume an almost voyeuristic position, as he seems

to derive sexual pleasure from seeing her in a feral state, untouched by the precepts and regulations of civilization. This male spectator is perplexed, as he seems unable to "read" the woman's interiority: Is she virtuous (inoffensive) or a fiend? Despite her untamed appearance, "her foot was light;" that is, she displays the fragility or vulnerability that the knight assesses as refined or socially proper, given that after all, he refers to her as "a lady." Hopelessly enraptured by her apparent elegance and gracefulness, he offers her flowery gifts:

I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan. (17–20)

Anne Mellor configures the knight's attempt to secure an intimate bond with this lady as symptomatic of his civilizing or "natural" drive to dominate her; his first impulse is to start implementing "a program of domestication" by binding her to him, "even if with lovely chains" (1988, p. 88). This strategy proves to be effective as the lady begins to perform a variety of maternal and domestic activities: she feeds him an aromatic concoction with herbs and honey and provides him with the comfort of her enchanted lair or cavern where she sings him to sleep:

I set her on my pacing steed
And nothing else saw all day long
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A faery's song.

She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild, and manna dew,
And sure in language strange she said—
"I love thee true."

She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept, and sigh'd fill sore,
And there I shut her wild wild eyes
With kisses four. (21–32)

It is important to note here that the lamia's performance of domestic womanhood renders the knight vulnerable and exploitable, as he seems to be completely unaware that the woman with "wild eyes," despite her apparent domesticity, may harbour a threat. When the knight labels the belle's

declaration "I love thee true" (28) as "strange," (27) is it because she speaks a language that he cannot understand? Or, does he deliberately translate her words incorrectly as a way to persuade himself that her passivity is "natural"? The impenetrability of the woman's "truth," expressed here through a language that the knight may not recognize as his own, projects his failure to ascertain the lady's agency, perhaps because his male "translators" can understand only conventional or *less* strange versions of feminine expression. Therefore, this domestic bliss seems to be experienced solely by the knight as the entire exchange is, first and foremost, filtered through his patriarchal lenses: the lady's almost savage beauty is what intrigues him initially, but it is her apparent silent submissiveness, lack of voice (both literally and metaphorically), and helplessness that completely monopolize his attention. Or, as Mellor insightfully notes, the woman's reciprocity seems to be simply fabricated for it is a male construct: "Gazing on the lady's face the knight 'nothing else saw all day long'—captivated by the mirror he constructs, he fails to realize it may simply reflect back his own enchantment" (p. 88). The knight's conceptualization of female agency and body testifies to his incapability to acknowledge that the woman, just like him, may indulge in sexual exchanges.

Another question that drives my analysis in this chapter refers to the outcome of the female performance: Is the lamia ultimately constrained to cohabitate with the knight or does she in fact mimic the knight's version of normative femininity in order to seize the power and reclaim her agency? Initially, it is the knight who functions primarily as a sexual predator, since he is the one who initiates the erotic interaction through male courtship: he attempts to seduce her by offering her (flowery) gifts and by gallantly mounting her on his horse; meanwhile, her desirability as a "proper" mate is materialized in her passivity and apparent acceptance of the seduction ritual. However, it can also be argued that through her awareness vis-à-vis the very mechanisms of her performative tactics, she *is*, in fact, the one who occupies the active position. That is, she seems to deliberately emulate maternal behaviour and adopt subservience to weaken the knight's guard as a way to lure him into her private space or womb, where she can launch her final predatory attack and exploit him for her own gain.

In the last section of the poem, the failure of the union (from the male subject's perspective at least) to reach completion is foreshadowed by the woman's "sigh" (sorrow or relief?), as the consummation of the relationship is interrupted by the knight's terrible vision of "pale kings and princes" (37), who warn him about the belle dame's treacherous clutches and admonish

him for his naiveté. Shortly after, the lady vanishes and the knight suddenly wakes up, pallid and prostrate "on the cold's hill side:"

> And there she lulled me asleep,
> And there I dream'd—Ah! woe betide!
> The latest dream I ever dream'd
> On the cold hill's side.
> I saw pale kings and princes too,
> Pale warriors, death-pale were they all;
> They cried—"La Belle Dame sans Merci
> Hath thee in thrall!"
>
> I saw their starved lips in the gloam,
> With horrid warning gaped wide,
> And I awoke and found me here,
> On the cold hill's side. (33–44)

What is implied here is that the domesticity shared by the knight and "his" woman may simply be his fetishistic projection, especially since after she devitalizes him, she violates her promises of eternal love by abandoning him. Furthermore, the lines "And there I dream'd — Ah! woe betide! / The latest dream I ever dream'd / On the cold hill's side" (34–36) intimate the possibility that the knight has never physically left the barren landscape in which the anonymous speaker finds him in stanza one, and that the entire romantic exchange is just a fantasy, perhaps induced by the lamia as she cannot drain her victim's energy unless he is in a state of lethargic consciousness. His pale complexion and sudden physical debility, suggesting a lack of vitality, seem to be indicative of a supernatural creature's predatory attack (Perhaps his blood has been drained as well?).

The lamia's willing participation in this duplicity annuls thus the possibility of rape, given that her feminine performance, which only accommodates the knight's expectations and perceptions of female corporeality, destabilizes his status as predator by feminizing him, as she eventually feeds on his energy. By the end of the poem, it seems that the lady's ultimate project is depicted as her attempt to use and abuse the man, but she knows that the only way to attain this goal is to assume the role of object, exclusively for male consumption. Consequently, this performance of normative femininity not only enables her to elude a fixed position within the knight's traditional view of gender but also serves to expose the rigidity of gender prescriptions, which confine women to a very limited typology of womanhood. In this particular context, the distinction between the lamia's "narrative" of

liberation (i.e., an absence-presence that can be discerned between the lines) and the knight's version of the events is very important; that is, even though the lamia's performative machinations are exposed in the end, the power that she derives from her rehearsal of male-generated scripts of femininity should be acknowledged here. The knight's perception of her body as an object of the male gaze seems to provide her with an opportunity for empowerment through performance.

However, the male agent's role in the inscription of the belle dame's performance is quite problematic, as it seems to destabilize her female subjectivity. The fact that the poem grants access only to the knight's version of the events, his story being narrated retrospectively and formulated almost as a cautionary tale, implies that the knight learned of the female masquerader's trick too late, so the (male) listener/reader is warned (*in advance* this time) about the dangers of female manipulation. Also, of paramount significance is that both the knight's reality and the lamia's performance are filtered through three dominant male voices: the knight's, the speaker's, and the poet's. The speaker encounters the knight who enumerates the details of his predicament and who describes his exchanges with the lamia. The "narrating" voice, which filters the knight's tale through detached, patriarchal, and sympathetic lenses, enables the reader's knowledge about the lamia's treachery. Ultimately, the poet transcribes the narrator's account of the knight's tale and his pen allows him to assume the identity of those "pale princes" (poets?) who emit the warning about the dangers of falling prey to merciless seductresses. Mellor, who also rejects the notion that the woman in Keats's poem exercises her agency in a substantial way, argues that the union between the knight and the lamia is "knowingly deployed by the artful poet" who "encodes this doom in a way that distributes its effects unequally, with all benefits accruing to the masculine subject," i.e., the male poet's "accession to an all-male [poetic] community" (pp. 90–91). Thus, the lamia's performative ability, which she uses as a tool to sabotage the dominant male ideology, is eventually subject to male regulation, and her identity and influence inscribed as pernicious and destructive respectively.

Unlike Keats's poem, which operates only within a heterosexual framework, Coleridge's *Christabel* complicates the imagery of the "monstrous feminine" through the lamia's sexual victimization of a young woman, Christabel (Baron Leoline's daughter). Christabel meets Geraldine, "a damsel bright, / drest in a silken robe of white" with an unnatural pallor ("The neck that made that white robe wan, / Her blue-veined feet unsandal'd were") and "gems entangled in her hair" (58–65)[2] under an oak tree while

praying for her betrothed. The beautiful stranger reveals the origin of her visible disarray: she has been "chocked […] with force and fright" and "tied […] on a palfrey white" by "five warriors" (83–84). Moved by the lady's apparent physical invalidism and plight, as Geraldine claims to be "of a noble line" (79), Christabel invites her to convalesce in her father's home. When the two young women reach the gate of the castle, Geraldine is seized with sudden physical weakness, which forces Christabel to carry her over the threshold, a nuptial behaviour traditionally juxtaposed with images of hyper-virile masculinity. Oddly enough, once within the baron's property, Geraldine regains her stamina "and move[s], as she were not in pain" (134). Besides immediately drawing attention to Geraldine's performance of invalidism, Coleridge also seems to adapt the popular convention that vampires cannot prey on their victims unless invited, even though Geraldine, like Keats's cruel belle dame, is not a vampire in the strictest sense.

In the intimacy of her bedroom, Christabel offers her guest a wine "of wild flowers" (made by her own mother to be consumed on her daughter's wedding night), while mourning her deceased mother's absence: "Oh mother dear! that thou wert here!" (202). Her nostalgic sorrow incenses her female companion, however, as Geraldine performs a rite to banish the spirit of the mother, who seems to sense the threat posed to her daughter's virginal chastity by the beautiful stranger: "'Off, wandering mother! Peak and pine! / I have power to bid thee flee. / […] Off, woman, off! this hour is mine —/ Though thou her guardian spirit be, / Off, woman, off! 'tis given to me'" (205–213). A perverted maternal substitution manifests in Geraldine's behaviours, as she engages in an exhibitionist act of uncovering her breasts and allowing Christabel to gaze upon their voluptuousness and bareness:

> Her silken robe, and inner vest,
> Dropt to her feet, and full in view,
> Behold! her bosom and half her side—
> A sight to dream of, not to tell!
> O shield her! shield sweet Christabel![3]
> …
> In the touch of this bosom there worketh a spell,
> Which is lord of thy utterance, Christabel!
> Thou knowest to-night, and wilt know to-morrow
> This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow. (250–270)

When Christabel touches her pseudo-mother's exposed bosom, the erotic intimacy shared by these two women is complicated by its maternal dimension.

Reminiscent of the knight's brief domestic bliss, Christabel's *jouissance* is interrupted abruptly when Geraldine puts her new "daughter" under a bizarre spell that not only prevents her from betraying their indiscretions but also allows for a parasitic relationship that enables the lamia to self-sustain.

As the poem progresses, Christabel's energy levels decrease while Geraldine's languor is strangely cured and her health revitalized. It appears thus that the homoerotic gaze exercised by Christabel is penalized and has dire repercussions for her. Geraldine forbids her to expose their nocturnal transgressions to Sir Leoline, the father or patriarch of the castle, whom she seems to have targeted all along. First, such divulgence would disturb the dynamics of the patriarchal gaze—the man as the subject of vision and the woman as the object—through its re-inscription as "female spectator—female spectacle." Secondly, it would also disrupt the patriarchal ideology of "real" womanhood and motherhood, which would render Geraldine undesirable as a wife to Sir Leoline (and by extension as the kind of mother to Christabel that he would expect). Interestingly enough, "real" womanhood is never fully materialized in the poem, as Christabel's potential is nullified by Geraldine's malignant influence. Despite Christabel's initial conformity to patriarchal values and standards of femininity (i.e., her submission to the paternal authority and choice of a knight as future husband), her homoerotic desire is problematic, implying that the patriarch's hetero-sexualizing program has failed to "normalize" his daughter. Christabel's courage to experience her female body outside this man-made domestic structure is drastically punished in the end. Coleridge's use of the popular convention that vampires prey solely upon the willing suggests that Christabel's susceptibility to Geraldine's seduction and her subsequent deterioration are not accidental, but rather inevitable, due to her failure to internalize appropriately the scripts or behaviours of normative femininity.

The second part of the poem focuses less on Christabel's affliction and more on Geraldine's motivations for performing her gender identity; as aforementioned, her final scheme targets, after all, not the Baron's daughter but his fascinated gaze: after removing and ruining his daughter, whom she potentially sees as an obstacle, she seeks to lure him into marriage and possibly to usurp his authority. Her performance, employed at first to corrupt the male spectator's child, remains unknown until the very end. She readily assumes the roles of a "good mother" when she comforts the motherless Christabel (in order to access the patriarch's private space and "possessions") and of a "good (future) wife" when she manipulates her male conquest into believing she is a desirable match and maternal figure. When the Baron is

introduced to Geraldine, he is so mesmerized (like the Keatsian knight) by her languid, invalid, and passive ladyhood that he fails to notice his own daughter's degeneration. Like the lamia in "La belle dame sans merci," Coleridge's female performer mimics the patriarch's ideas of womanhood, possibly because what she wants is to sabotage or destabilize the man's domesticating tendencies.

Like in "La belle dame sans merci," however, there are male filters that control the lamia's performance. Interestingly, Geraldine's sole opponent is actually a poet, Bard Bracy, an artist, and as Twitchell remarks, "Coleridge's 'other half'" (p. 45), who attempts to warn Sir Leoline about his daughter's ruination and Geraldine's manipulative tactics. Geraldine's status as a serpentine creature turned woman is implied when Bracy describes his prophetic dream about "a bright green snake" (the temptress Geraldine) camouflaging in the grass and preying upon an unsuspecting dove (the chaste Christabel) (pp. 549–552). Within the context of Bracy and Coleridge's authorial agencies, their relationship to the lamia seems to emulate the exchange between the Poet and the Muse (i.e., the "pale" men in Keats's poem who are so enthralled, yet terrified that they *have* to write about her). As Robert Graves remarks in *The White Goddess* (1966), "all true poetry" needs "a lovely, slender woman with a hooked nose, deathly pale face, lips red as rowan-berries, startlingly blue eyes and long fair hair," who will "suddenly transform herself into sow, mare, bitch, vixen, she-ass, weasel, serpent, owl, she-wolf, tigress, mermaid or loathsome hag" (17). However, since the act of creation here is performed by a male agent and not the Muse, the relationship clearly operates only within a hegemonic framework that regulates the dynamic between the male fetishist and the female object.

While Coleridge's unfinished poem does not reveal its female performer's ultimate fate, which it could be argued ultimately allows her to acquire a voice in her campaign against patriarchal subordination, Coleridge, through Bracy, manages to warn the reader about Geraldine's machinations. Despite Geraldine's attempts to destabilize the very binary prescriptions that reduce her to the "bitch-Muse," her motion toward a space that would enable her to reclaim complete control is not possible, in that her duplicitous performance is exposed and ultimately exploited for male (poetic) gain. Thus, even though Geraldine does not die, her denunciation by the male agents serves to (re)affirm those very norms that celebrate female passivity, pre-marital virtue, and naturalness and that penalize any kind of female excess or desire experienced outside and against the patriarchal system.

As seen in this chapter, the feminine masquerade narrativized by both Keats and Coleridge is a performance that seems to benefit primarily the male spectator. Despite the female masquerader's ability to emulate normative womanhood in order to escape, albeit temporarily, patriarchal judgment and his penalty of exclusion, her performance is ultimately inscribed within the sex/gender systems regulated by the male agent and serves to propagate certain ideals of femininity. While the female performer's persecution exposes the rigidity of patriarchal ideology, her empowerment is never complete.

NOTES

[1] This text cites John Keats's "La belle dame sans merci" from *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Romantic Period* (2006) edited by Stephen Greenblatt (899–900). The poem is cited in the text with parenthesized references by line.

[2] This text cites Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Christabel* from *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Romantic Period* (2006) edited by Stephen Greenblatt (449–464). The poem is cited in the text with parenthesized references by line.

[3] According to Stephen Greenblatt, the editor of *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Romantic Period* (New York, NY: Norton, 2006), 455, in other versions of the poem, the last line of the passage is replaced by "And she is to sleep by [*or* with] Christabel."

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12. THE FEMALE VAMPIRE IN POPULAR CULTURE

Or What to Read or Watch Next

INTRODUCTION

The vampire has had a chequered history that mirrors attitudes towards women over time. Presented as outside acceptable femininity—single, independent, homosexual, and eschewing biological reproduction—female vampires reflect the unending fear of the powerful woman. As a result, vampiras in mainstream visual culture have typically been formed from the simple template of the Whore or Temptress.

There are in fact hundreds of representations of the female vampire dating to the Lamia of Ancient Greece. However, the most significant representations in contemporary culture of unfettered, overtly sexualized women arise from two core texts: Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's novella *Carmilla* (1871) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). If the male vampire reflects our cultural fears of the Outsider, then the vampira is the manifestation of patriarchal societal fears. Yet as with the contemporary romantic male, the modern vampira image alters slightly depending on the context of authorship. The following chapter provides a short introduction to some of our favourite works (films, television shows, novels, and webseries) for students and scholars alike, which present the most explicit versions of these templates from Carmilla offshoots, to contemporary images like the Warrior Woman.

CARMILLA AND ITS OFFSHOOTS

Carmilla by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu (1871) is an intensely erotic gothic novella recounting the life of the Countess Millarca Karnstein (Carmilla is an anagram of Millarca), who lives through the centuries by feeding on young girls (particularly her descendants). This novella, which predates Dracula by over a quarter of a century, represents the most complete vision of the female vampire: a lesbian seductress who desires to overturn patriarchy by

A. Hobson & U. M. Anyiwo (Eds.), Gender in the Vampire Narrative, 173–192.

promoting female independence from men, and the rejection of biological reproduction. Its dreamlike narrative and romantic style make it an essential read. The novella has resulted in innumerable "adaptations" since its release, and inspired many more (including the lesbian vampire movie genre).

Blood and Roses (*Le sang et la rose*), Roger Vadim (1960) [Motion picture]

> This oft-forgotten classic features a Young Carmilla jealous of her friend's engagement, whose obsession leads her to the tomb of a female vampire. Complex, philosophical and engaging, this French film offers an interesting take on the image of changing womanhood right in the heart of Second Wave Feminism.

Carmilla, Jordan Hall and Ellen Simpson (2014–2015) [Web series]

> A modern take on Sheridan Le Fanu's gothic novella, which embraces the legacy of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Veronica Mars*, this transmedia narrative consisting of thirty-six 2–5 minute webisodes (at the time of writing), follows Silas University freshman Laura Holli, as she investigates the disappearance of her roommate while dealing with her strange, nocturnal, replacement, Carmilla—who may or may not be a centuries-old vampiress. A truly modern take on vampirism and sexuality perfectly reflective of Millennial concerns.

THE LESBIAN VAMPIRE FILM

Uncoincidentally coinciding with the backlash against Second Wave Feminism, Lesbian Vampire films built on the core themes of the exploitation genre popular at the start of the 1970s. Popularized by the British Hammer House of Horror Studios, the use of the historical and literary images of Carmilla (and the Hungarian "blood" Countess Erzsébet Báthory) allowed producers to titillate audiences, while confining vampirism and lesbianism to a "safe" fantasy structure. Often shot in multiple versions suitable for television all the way to hard-core pornography, lesbian vampire films generally feature rich, decadent women (like the original Carmilla), who seduce the young and innocent.

The Vampire Lovers, Roy Ward Baker (1971) [Motion picture]

> The first part of Hammer House's seminal *Karnstein Trilogy* (1970–1971), this movie tells the story of lesbian vampire Marcilla Karnstein (Ingrid Pitt) and her seduction of the young, innocent Emma Morton (Madeline Smith). Focusing on the titillating nature

of fantasy lesbianism, this film straddled the line between eroticism and pornography, while reassuring the audience that patriarchy always ultimately wins.

Lust for a Vampire, Jimmy Sangster (1971) [Motion picture]

Set forty years after the *Vampire Lovers,* the second instalment of Hammer House's *Karnstein Trilogy* (1970–1971), begins when the Karnstein heirs resurrect Mircalla. A nearby finishing school filled with nubile innocent young ladies helps multiply the choices for the newly raised vampire, who craves both blood and sex. This film furthers Hammer House's patriarchal concerns by emphasising the fantasy that lesbianism is the result of confused feminism.

The Blood Splattered Bride (*La Novia Ensangrentada*), Vincente Aranda (1972) [Motion picture]

One of the few early vampire movies from Spain that garnered attention in the UK and US, this movie takes the classic lesbian vampire narrative—the new bride seduced by a mysterious version of Carmilla—and adds a fresh feminist twist. In this version, the innocent Susan (Maribel Martin) discovers on her honeymoon that her new husband is both a misogynist and a sexual sadist. When her husband finds a naked woman on the beach, he brings her home and finds that she is in fact the infamous Carmilla, thus offering Susan the chance of release from domestic abuse through female companionship.

The Hunger, Tony Scott (1983) [Motion picture]

Inspired by the Whitley Strieber (1981) novel of the same name, this soft-focus eighties classic stars Catherine Deneuve as mysterious Egyptian vampire Miriam Blaylock, who survives the centuries by transforming her lovers into human/vampire hybrids and consuming their blood. Susan Sarandon stars as her latest love interest Dr. Sarah Roberts. An interesting development of the narrative that explores the nature of immortality, power, and love in a period in which women were beginning to find their voice in society (and film).

We Are the Night (*Wer sind die Nacht*), Dennis Gansel (2011) [Motion picture]

This German movie co-written and directed by Dennis Gansel is (apparently) a contemporary reinterpretation of the Carmilla tale

following four female vampires: Lena (Karoline Herfurth), Louise (Nina Hoss), Charlotte (Jennifer Ulrich), and Nora (Anna Fischer), as they feed and party their way through Berlin over two centuries. The film's focus on the causes and consequences of vampirism offers an interesting modern take on the Carmilla tale, as these four women are the only vampiras in a world ruled by male vampires. Though like many the films in this genre, and like Carmilla herself, the warnings about unfettered sexuality and homosexuality remain prevalent with each of the women ultimately punished by men and ending with the possibility of a safe return to heteronormity.

THE COUNTESS ERZSÉBET BÁTHORY

History is sometimes stranger than fiction. In the case of Hungarian Countess Erzsébet (Elizabeth) Báthory, the myth of her life has become fodder for a great deal of vampire fictions with some convincing evidence that both Sheridan Le Fanu and Bram Stoker used Báthory's tale to inform their iconic characters Carmilla and Dracula. Báthory was born into a noble family in 1560. It was in the early years of the 1600s that rumours began to circulate throughout the region of tortures and deaths on the Báthory estate. The accounts of deaths attributed to Báthory and her companions range from 200 to upwards of 650 depending upon the source. Some accounts state that she bathed in the blood of her victims, biting and feeding upon the blood of some. In 1610, a trial ensued that led to Báthory's conviction and her imprisonment in her home until her death in 1614. While accounts of her crimes vary, her lasting impact on the vampire trope is evident in not only the aforementioned *Carmilla* and *Dracula* but in all their offspring. In addition, studies of Báthory's life exist in biography and historical explorations of the vampire myths, fiction, and film.

Kimberly Craft has become the primary scholar on the topic of Báthory, devoting her career to exploring the Countess's life in a multitude of ways from an extant biography, to a collection of her personal letters, and finally the on-line community *Infamous Lady* http://www.infamouslady.com/

Infamous Lady: The True Story of Countess Erzsébet Báthory (2009).
The Private Letters of Countess Erzsébet Báthory (2011)

The Blood Countess, Andrei Codrescu (1996). [Novel]

Codrescu weaves together two stories in this neo-gothic work: that of the Countess Elizabeth Báthory and her distant descendant, contemporary

journalist Drake Báthory-Kereshbur, who must return to his native Hungary and come to terms with his bloody and disturbing past. The fact that Codrescu is a real life descendent of Báthory and spent many years researching her life, gives this novel a verisimilitude that elevates it above the somewhat pedantry storyline.

The Countess, Julie Delpy (2008) [Motion picture]

Written, directed and starring actress Julie Delpy, this French-German drama offers the only existing pseudo-historical presentation of the complex story of Erzsébet Báthory on film, and attempts to humanize this infamous figure, while highlighting her fluid sexuality and destructive sadism.

THE BRIDES OF DRACULA

So much has been written about Bram Stoker's 1897 tale of Count Dracula; indeed, it remains the most important source for the Western contemporary vampire image. In the context of the female vampire, this tale about the reclamation of white patriarchal control and the battle over the white female body reflects attitudes towards womanhood of the day in the same ways as Carmilla in the decades before it. Thus Dracula's Brides have become common images that reflect the dangers of unfettered female sexuality.

The Angry Angel: Sisters of the Night Series #1, Chelsea Yarbro Quinn (1999) [Novel]

Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's clever reimagining of the timeless legend focuses on the untold histories of the three brides of Dracula. Each novel in the series focuses on a different "sister" offering a contemporary reclamation of the brides by adjusting the perspective and giving the women a voice. *The Angry Angel* follows Kelene, a medieval girl with a great gift that unfortunately brings her to the notice of the infamous Count.

Van Helsing, Stephen Somers (2004) [Motion picture]

In the action comedy *Van Helsing,* Dracula's Brides, Aleera (Elena Anaya), Marishka (Josie Maran), and Verona (Silvia Colloca) become secondary antagonists with a real purpose and emotional interior life focused around their desire to bring their dead children to life.

THE WARRIOR VAMPIRE

Whilst strong female characters have always existed in mythology, what has changed are the sheer numbers of tough girls that inhabit our viewing experience. Televised and filmic examples of non-traditional femininity or re-imagined womanhood, such as *Xena the Princess Warrior* (1995–2001) or *Wonder Woman* (1975–1979), offer examples of heroic womanhood in the last century. Yet the twenty-first century has witnessed an explosion of tough, physically strong, supernaturally enhanced women in the popular media—including films, television shows, comic books, and video games.

Generally aimed at female audiences, urban fantasy offers a genre-blend of romance, fantasy, soft porn, and action, allowing a range of authors and producers to explore topics traditionally outside of the limits of fantasy for women, thus expanding their traditionally restricted roles. From *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997–2003) to Selene of the *Underworld Series* (2003–2012) and beyond, these contemporary female protagonists appear as independent action heroes freed from the constraints of traditional patriarchy, fighting in traditionally male worlds against uber-masculine foes. In the world of the female vampire, these "tough chicks" offer an alternative to the dangerous, yet disempowered, Carmilla descendent by shifting the paradigm from villain to hero.

Underworld Series, Len Wiseman (2003–2012) [Motion picture series]

> Part of Screen Gems "babes in spandex" series, which also includes the prequel *Underworld: Rise of the Lycans* (2009) and the post-apocalyptic vampire tale *Ultraviolet* (2006), the *Underworld* series, currently at four films and counting, follows the vampire Death Dealer Selene (Kate Beckinsale) as she struggles against a complex web of deceit, while helping create a new species and become a new type of daywalking vampire. Here the werewolf-hybrid Michael Corvin, is the one-dimensional love interest and damsel-in-distress, reversing the standard romantic trope in popular culture. Wiseman manages to create an effective image of a woman strong enough to defeat evil while traveling her own emotional road without the need for male support. However, the latest part of the series, *Underworld: Awakening* (2012), effectively undoes the accidental feminism of the tale by reducing Selene to an unwitting biological mother, thus emphasizing the incompleteness of independent womanhood.

Dark Days Series, Jocelynn Drake (2008–2011) [Book Series 1–6]

The *Dark Days Series* offers a truly feminist reading of the vampira with six novels about Firestarter Mira, the most powerful vampire on earth who must come to terms with her powers and her femininity, all while saving the world. These novels also offer an exciting version of a paranormal world (the Naturi are the all-encompassing Fey, werewolves etc.) featuring a range of powerful female creatures while successfully creating a well-rounded and feminist vampira for the twenty-first century, who does not need a man to save her and who is not punished for her independence.

Night Huntress Series, Jeaniene Frost (2008–2014) [Book series]

Jeaniene Frost's *Night Huntress Series* is urban fantasy and paranormal romance with an added side of mystery in a world of supernatural and human politics. Cat Crawfield is a half-vampire hybrid who hunts vampires in search of the one who fathered her and ruined her mother's life. When forced into an initially uneasy alliance with a vampire named Bones, Cat discovers that being a vampire (or a half-vampire in her case) isn't always a bad thing. Cat's metaphysical powers, her leadership position, and skills grow over the course of the seven core books, though the series ends with the reclamation of the traditional heteronormative family.

Deep in Your Veins Series, Suzanne Wright (2012–2014) [Book Series 1–3]

While most female characters in paranormal romance must become inferior to a male protagonist in order to achieve their happily-ever-after, Suzanne Wright inverts this narrative and effectively examines sexism in the workplace and male insecurities about strong womanhood without compromise. In this series, Sam Parker is a female vampire with typically impressive powers, who must prove herself to a sexist all male army convinced of her inherent inferiority. A great take on the modern independent woman in an all-male profession, who, like so many of us, must find a way to be her authentic self. This is one of the few treatments in urban fantasy/paranormal romance that does not revert to female supported sexist stereotypes.

FEMALE VAMIPRES OF COLOUR

Ethnic vampire tales exist in periphery markets, marginalized in the same ways as peoples of colour. As a result, there are limited representations of

mainstream female vampires of colour, certainly limited representations where the vampires are the protagonists. Nevertheless, as the most marginalized of social bodies, the non-white female vampire offers clear evidence of the insurmountable power of white privilege and patriarchy while highlighting the important fact that peoples of colour around the world are exposed to the same images and cultural expectations as whites.

Ganja and Hess, Bill Gunn (1973) [Motion Picture]

> Released at the height of Blaxploitation cinema, and the success of *Blacula,* writer and director Bill Gunn's film centres on themes of addiction, social inequality, race, gender norms, and sexuality. In a key scene, the protagonist, Dr. Hess Green, composes a letter to "black male child," in which he outlines fears and anxieties about race and gender in American culture. The film features a strong female protagonist, Ganja, who through her resilience is able to learn to deal with her life as a vampire while Hess is unsuccessful and commits suicide. Gunn and this film are underrepresented in contemporary conversations about the horror film generally and vampire films specifically.

The Ultimate Diet, Monica Jackson (2004) [Short Story]

> Monica Jackson's *The Ultimate Diet* is a funny erotic short story about Keisha, an obese black woman searching for the easiest way to achieve the American Dream (beauty and wealth without effort), while dealing with the very real impact of insurmountable white privilege. Then a beautiful sexually promiscuous woman moves in next door and provides her with the perfect solution. A witty take on the vampire narrative that manages to insert a great deal of humour and social commentary.

Fledgling, Octavia Butler (2005) [Novel]

> Indisputably the most important science fiction author of African descent, Octavia Butler's *Fledgling* stands as one of the more interesting takes on the vampire narrative. The novel explores the connection between blood and race through the body of Shori, a fifty-three year old member of the "Ina" with the appearance of an eleven-year old girl. One of the few examples in vampire literature where the vampiress is the physical superior of the male love interest (Wright) without becoming a parody of the controlling, destructive Carmilla archetype, this novel is vital reading for anyone interested in alternative images of the vampire.

The Complete Bite Club, Howard Chaykin et al. (2007) [Graphic novel]

The Bite Club series of graphic novels, authored by Howard Chaykin, David Tischman, and David Hahn, focuses on the Miami-based, vampire Del Toro crime family. In the world of *Bite Club*, vampires and humans coexist but this isn't without its perils, as events reveal. The Del Toro family, Nicaraguan in origin, finds itself in short order run by the female Risa Del Toro. Risa is depicted as a sexualized and ruthless Latina vampire, who nevertheless succeeds in outwitting both male rivals for control of the Del Toro cartel and police investigators that threaten to dethrone her. An excellent alternative vision of the vampire narrative from a "non-white" perspective that effectively plays with the traditional narrative in a Latino context. [Entry by Lisa Nevárez, Siena College]

Life Sucks, Jessica Abel et al. (2008) [Graphic novel]

Life Sucks by Jessica Abel, Gabe Soria, and Warren Pleece offers one of the oft-told tales of vampire-human love but does so with a twist by including Southern California Latino culture both in setting and characters. Rosa, the human, Latina, Goth love interest of Dave—himself an Anglo vampire—is acutely aware of stereotyping and sensitive to Latino cultural pressure; these complicate her yearning to be a vampire. She may well be trading one set of societal limitations, as she perceives them, for an equally limiting type of Otherness as a vampire. Further, *Life Sucks*, in its medium as a graphic novel, provides a visual depiction of these vampiric/human and Latino/Anglo relationships. [Entry by Lisa Nevárez, Siena College]

A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night, Ana Lily Amirpour. (2014) [Motion Picture]

A Girl Walks Home (دوریم مناخ هب امنت بش رد یرتخد Dokhtari dar šab tanhâ be xâne miravad) is one of the few Middle-Eastern films to premier at Sundance Film Festival (2013). Hailed as a triumph, this Iranian flick about a vampire vigilante manages to celebrate elements of the traditional vampire narrative while critiquing historical colonialism framed against a backdrop of political instability in the Middle East. "The Girl" (Shelia Vand) functions as one of the most contemporary vampiras through her reaction to sexual vulnerability, thus offering a film that works on multiple levels. Set in a decaying Iranian ghost town

filled with the worst elements of society, this film tackles race, class, gender, and sexuality through the body of a female vampire.

Da Sweet Blood of Jesus, Spike Lee (2015). [Motion picture].

Da Sweet Blood of Jesus is an updated version of 1973 classic *Ganja and Hess*. This contemporary independent film focuses on the life of female vampire Ganja and her struggles to retain her independence in the face of seemingly insurmountable patriarchy and racism. In typical fashion, Lee effectively brings together multiple elements of oppression while offering a dark, twisted version of the female vampire that both celebrates the original film and reflects the issues of today.

YOUNG ADULT AND NEW ADULT

The female vampire has found a growing space in the young adult/new adult worlds spurred on by the success of book series like *The Vampire Diaries* (1991–2012), *The Vampire Academy* (2007–2014), and of course *The Twilight Saga* (2005–2008). With its focus on eternal youth, the vampire image lends itself to emerging adult concerns. Ultimately, much in this genre replicates the stereotyped attitudes of teenage life, featuring the girl that does not know she is pretty, the two boys who like her, and an unending series of angst-filled plotlines. Thus the most effective tales are the ones that allow the female characters true agency beyond their desire to find a mate.

The Twilight Saga, Stephenie Meyer (2005–2008) [Book series]

It seems a little moot to list this here since the popularity of this series has been undeniably mind-blowing, but the range of female vampires in Meyer's novels certainly makes them worth inclusion. There are a number of women here who arguably represent different aspects of womanhood (Rosalie Hale, Esme Cullen, Sasha Denali and Renesmee Cullen for example). I say arguably because ultimately these are variations on the same theme of disempowered femininity where the only purpose of the feminine is motherhood. Nevertheless, the presence of so many female characters offers an interesting avenue for discussion even beyond that of the problematic presentation of Bella Swan. The visualization of these characters in the films (Summit Entertainment 2008–2012) develops them beyond the narrow stereotypes of the novels in ways familiar to images in urban fantasy, allowing the women seemingly more agency and certainly more positive images for young girls.

The House of Night Series, P.C & Kristen Cast (2007–2014) [Book series]

> *The House of Night Series* blends fantasy and paranormal romance genres, weaving together goddess-worshiping pagan religions and vampire mythologies. Book one, *Marked* (2007), follows Zoey Redbird, who has been marked as a fledgling vampyre, forcing her to leave behind her human life and become a student at the House of Night. Zoey has a special path designated by the vampyre Goddess Nyx. Over the course of twelve novels and a few novellas, Zoey and her circle of friends must contend with not only the average high-school problems but must battle the forces of evil and overcome conspiracies and manipulations of the leadership of vampyre society. *The House of Night Series* addresses issues of young adult sexuality through frank and open exploration, and it includes positive descriptions of lesbian and gay relationships. The series prominently features very strong female vampyre and human characters of multiple generations. Moreover, the world of the vampyres in *The House of Night Series* focuses on female-oriented leadership and matrilineal cultural ideals. Written by a high school English teacher and her young adult daughter, P.C. Cast had her students serve as beta readers in order for the characterization and language to be authentic to the experiences of young adults.

The Vampire Diaries, Julie Plec and Kevin Williamson (2009 to present) [Television series]

> *The Vampire Diaries*, adapted from the wildly successful series by LJ Smith, follows the protagonist Elena Gilbert (Nina Dobrev) in the mythical town of Mystic Falls, Virginia, as she falls in and out of love with vampire brothers Stefan (Paul Wesley) and Damon Salvatore (Ian Somerhalder). As a long-running series, we are able to see the emotional development of a range of female vampires, including Elena's doppelgänger Katherine and Caroline Forbes (Candice Accola), through a focus on traditional CW issues of cultural anxieties and gender-identity development. Certainly one of the strongest reflections of complex contemporary femininity through the very stylized CW lens.

SUPPORTING CHARACTERS AND HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Women, far too often, feature as the supporting characters in popular culture, and this is often the case in vampire tales so focused on romance where the core vampire is male and the woman is human (albeit usually enhanced

in some way). However, the very nature of such supporting characters demonstrates the ways in which female vamps are seen. Given that vampires are often the villains, female vampires tend have few complimentary attributes. Nevertheless, sometimes their presence becomes so vital to the overall tone and intent of a piece that they are worth mentioning here. In addition, sometimes an image is so transcendent and non-stereotyped that it defies categorization.

Blacula, William Crain (1972) [Motion Picture]
Scream, Blacula, Scream, Bob Kelljan (1973) [Motion Picture]

> These films are excellent examples of Blaxploitation, a genre that exploded in reaction to the Civil Rights Movement as Hollywood film studios attempted to cash in on black audiences. *Blacula* and its less well-known sequel, *Scream, Blacula, Scream*, offer subversive takes on both the vampire and on racial and gender norms. Turned against his will in Africa by the European vampire Dracula (Charles Macaulay), Blacula (William Marshall) becomes the first on-screen overtly colonized body to become a vampire. *Scream, Blacula, Scream* is notable for the appearance of Blaxploitation icon Pam Grier, as apprentice Voodoo queen Lisa Fortier. As with all Blaxploitation films, these two vampire films offer contradictory and complex presentations of race and gender.

Queen of the Damned, Anne Rice (1988) [Novel]

> The third instalment of Rice's *Vampire Chronicles* features the mother of all vampires Queen Akasha, a play on Lilith. Akasha is presented as a petty, selfish tyrant, who purports to seek the elevation of all women at the expense of men. Nevertheless, not only is this an important series, the presentation of Akasha is one of the few adaptations of the Lilith image in popular fiction, and one in which the origins of the vampire are to be found in Egypt instead of Transylvania. Moreover, in a world of problematic self-obsessed vampires, Rice creates a range of powerful vampiras such as ancient Roman Pandora, Gabrielle (Lestat's mother), and the ancient Egyptian twins Maharet and Mekare.

Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter Series, Laurell K. Hamilton (1993 to present) [Book series]

> The *Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter Series* follows the adventures of necromancer Anita Blake, a kick-ass vampire hunter, whom the

vampires have nicknamed the Executioner, in a world in which vampires have announced their presence and are fighting for their rights. Beginning with the publication of *Guilty Pleasures* in 1993 through the twenty-fourth book *Dead Ice* (2015), Hamilton blends detective fiction with urban fantasy, spiralling into erotica in the middle of the series, eventually landing in a hybrid universe unique to her style, as evidenced in both the *Anita Blake Series* and her *Merry Gentry Series*, creating a complicated and intricate mythology over the course of the narrative. While Anita herself is not a vampire, her necromancy and her eventual role as a human-succubus establish her as part monstrous and vampiric. The series also features many vampiras, including some of the creepiest female vampires ever seen in the characters of Nikolaos (*Guilty Pleasures*), Valentina—a broken child vampire bent on torture (*Cerulean Sins*), and Itzpapolotl (*Obsidian Butterfly*). Moreover, the series features long story arcs with Belle Morte, mother of the core vampire line, and Marmee Noir, the mother of all vampires, imagined as truly evil and insane.

Interview with the Vampire, Neil Jordan (1994) [Motion picture]

Neil Jordan creates a visually stunning adaptation of Anne Rice's classic novel (1976) in which the 200-year old vampire Louis de Pointe du Lac (Brad Pitt) narrates the story of his life. Claudia (Kirsten Dunst) is the young 'daughter' transformed by the hedonistic Lestat de Lioncourt (Tom Cruise) in a manipulative attempt to keep the Byronic Louis from leaving him. Kirsten Dunst is remarkable as an intelligent, assertive woman trapped in the body of a pre-adolescent (she's five in the novel) whose frustration at never growing up slowly turns into bitterness and murderous rage. This is a wonderful treatment of the female vampire, effectively reflecting the problems of the male gaze and the infantalization of the female body, which works primarily because of the convincing portrayal by the twelve-year old Dunst.

Kindred the Embraced, John Leekley (1996) [Television series]

Based on the most popular vampire RPG of all time, *Vampire the Masquerade*, this short-lived television show was the first of its kind to feature a developed paranormal world. The show centred on vampire prince Julian Lunar (Mark Frankel) and the clans of vampires (Ventrue, Gangrel, Toreador, Brujah, Nosferatu, Assamites) collectively called "The Kindred," who each loosely represent different emotional aspects

of humanity. While there are surprisingly few female vampires on the show, the main vampira is Lily Langtry (Stacy Haiduk) (named after the famous nineteenth century American actress) leader of the artistic and sensual Toreador Clan and owner of nightclub *The Haven*. However, despite being a leader, as a female television character, her clan is the weakest, and her character fulfils the template of the female vampire—powerful, sexualized, and damaged by her desperate need for the love of the one man (Julian) who only wants her body.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Joss Whedon (1997–2003) [Television series]
Angel, Joss Whedon and David Greenwalt (1999–2004) [Television series]

Buffy stands as one of the most popular and important television shows of the last 30 years, offering multiple avenues to discuss gender and sexuality. However, despite the range of positive female images, the female vampires, as the villains, emerge from the negative template of the crazed succubus. While there are very few female vampires of note in the show, Darla and Drusilla are conspicuous in their importance to the development of the narrative in both *Buffy* and its spinoff *Angel*. Drusilla (Juliet Landau), who joined the show as the "Big Bad" in Season 2 was a British psychic, tortured to insanity by Angelus before he turned her in 1860. Her character was typified by extreme emotional outbursts and emotional instability with an arc that had limited development despite offering a stark comment on the impact of emotional abuse on the female psyche. Darla (Julie Benz), on the other hand, has one of the most interesting emotional arcs of all the characters over both shows. We meet the sire of Angel (David Boreanaz) in the opening episode of *Buffy* where she appears as the evil vampira. Yet once the vampires become the focus in the show *Angel*, she is reintroduced, allowing her to develop from insane evil vampire to a woman that makes the ultimate sacrifice to birth Angel's son Connor (Vincent Kartheiser).

The Blade Trilogy, David S. Goyer (1998–2004) [Motion picture series]

Loosely based on the Marvel Comics character of the same name, this action-horror series focuses on Blade (Wesley Snipes) a hybrid vampire-human, turned in the womb when his mother was attacked, making him a "daywalker" that possesses all of the strengths of both species. While the series offers one of the few treatments of a vampire protagonist of African descent, the series also features a surprising array of female vampires that function as more than stereotypes. *Blade* (1998) includes

three vampiras of note each with very different personalities: Vanessa Brooks (Sanaa Lathan), Blade's mother; Dr. Karen Jenson (N'Bushe Wright), Blade's love interest and haematologist who discovers the cure for vampirism; and Racquel (Traci Lords), the seductive evil vampire. *Blade II* (2002) features vampire Nyssa (Leonor Varela) as a member of the vampire council's Bloodpack—a team of vampire warriors—working with Blade to wipe out the Reapers (vampires with a mutation causing them to feed on both humans and vampires). *Blade Trinity* (2004) features the delightful Danica Talos (Parker Posey), leader of the born vampires and certainly the smartest and strongest of the villains. Of the three films, the first has the greatest range of female characters, but overall this is one of the few series where the female vampires (and other female characters) have agency, independence, and function in leadership roles.

True Blood, Allan Ball (2002–2014) [Television series]

Reflective of the contemporary vampire narrative featuring complete and diverse paranormal worlds, *True Blood*, loosely adapted from the Charlaine Harris *Southern Vampire Mysteries* (2001–2013), is a soap opera set in a world where vampires have "come out of the closet." Over seven seasons, Ball presents a wide array of female vampires that, taken together, intentionally (or perhaps not) create a complete picture of womanhood in the twenty-first century. The show features young female vampires struggling to find their voice (Jessica Hamby and Willa Burrell), powerful workingwomen (Nan Flanagan and Pamela Swynford de Beaufort), power-hungry rulers (vampire queens Lilith and Sophie-Anne Leclerq and Vampire Authority leader Salome Agrippa), warrior women (Nora Gainesborough), even a collection of insane damaged women (Violet Mazurski and Lorena Krasiki). While there are certainly limits to these characters, the very presence of a range of women offers an exciting avenue to discussion.

The Black Dagger Brotherhood Series, J.R. Ward (2005 to present) [Book series]

J.R. Ward's *Black Dagger Brotherhood Series* is pure paranormal romance set in Caldwell, New York, featuring aggressive male warriors locked in a battle to protect their species from annihilation. In this world, vampires are a separate hidden species, born rather than made (at least in theory). While they can breed with humans, vampires cannot

gain sustenance from them, but they must feed from the opposite sex of their own species, literally reinforcing heteronormative and gender-normative structures. In typical romance series pattern, the early part of the series follows the core group of the Brotherhood as they each meet and court the women who become their mates. These women—some vampire and some human—play different roles for the Brotherhood and the race of vampires from Queen to doctor to social worker to nurses to nun-like keepers of the faith. Ward does introduce some female vampire warriors through Payne and Xhex—part vampire and part Sympath (a different vampire off-shoot). As the series continues to evolve, the roles for female vampires have expanded and the audience is treated to different visions of womanhood. Additionally, the later novels feature gay and bisexual vampires. Ward's explorations of gender, sexuality, and race continue to be problematic, but the series is overall valuable reading.

Neil Jordan, *Byzantium* (2012). [Motion picture]

Jordan returns to the world of vampires with this Irish fantasy thriller set in the gloomy world of a deteriorating coastal town. Following the teenage vampire Eleanor Webb (Saoirse Ronan) and her mother Clara (Gemma Arterton), this hidden gem focuses on the position of women as both workers and vampires in all-male worlds. With Clara traversing through time as a sex worker, Jordan presents a vision of the female vampire that makes clever connections to class and gender, proving how little has changed for those without privilege even when they are immortal.

The Originals, Julie Plec (2013 to present) [Television series]

A spinoff of the CW hit *The Vampire Diaries*, *The Originals* tells the tale of the first family of vampires, Klaus (Joseph Morgan), Elijah (Daniel Gillies), and Rebekah (Claire Holt) Mikaelson as they attempt to reclaim their place as New Orleans ruling monarchs. Rebekah is the only female vampire in the show's first season and reflects the image of girls generally found on the CW—a female character whose entire existence is predicated on male approval. While she has all the strength and powers of a vampire, Rebekah is entirely disempowered, finding validation only through her connection to the men in her life who continually emotionally and physically abuse her. Still, the New Orleans setting and the use of emotionally stunted pouty young adults offers an

interesting modern take on the narrative and reminds us that, despite the growth in literature and film, the female vampire on television still struggles to find her independence and her voice.

Only Lovers left Alive, Jim Jarmush (2013) [Motion picture]

This melancholy and bittersweet tale about love and mortality is a very modern version of the vampire tale from the mind of auteur Jim Jarmusch. Vampire musician Adam (Tom Hiddleston) and his wife Eve (Tilda Swinton) play deeply romantic, philosophical, and sophisticated vampires. Uncategorizable in its take on the vampira, Eve is a roaming bibliophile, who delights in life, soaking up knowledge like a sponge and offering a serene, renewing influence over her moody, melancholy, Byronic husband. Reminiscent in tone and style of *The Hunger* (1983), *Only Lovers Left Alive* is a contemporary work of art; a languid, rock'n'roll infused tale of joie-de-vivre lost and regained, which creates a picture of two vampires elevated above standard gendered stereotypes.

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