Cultural Representations of the Transformative Body in Young Adult Multi-Volume Vampire Fiction, 2000-2010

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University's requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2021

University of Worcester

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Abstract

The literary vampire of traditional horror has moved away from the horror genre and found a new and unlikely home in the pages of Young Adult multi-volume vampire fiction, where s/he has embraced and indeed vampirised existing YA generic tropes to transform his/her own physicality in unprecedented ways into something uniquely situated within its new socio-cultural and generic position. This vampire has attracted vast audiences to the YA genre, has arguably been responsible for the increase in YA fiction titles available and has captured a unique socio-literary zeitgeist which will never exist again.

The nascent YA "neoteric vampire", as cultural construct, and its transformative body will form the topic of this thesis in relation to Gothic theories of the body and emerging YA critical theory. The novels will be used as an interpretive vehicle for discussion of the cultural context in order to establish a more formalist close reading and context-driven critical discourse. The key themes addressed will include adolescence and physical maturation, religion, sexuality and gender, beauty and food and each of these salient elements of discussion will look to over-arching topics and their use across these thematically specific areas. Such over-arching tropes will include heteronormative feeding, consumption and vampiric gendering.

The original contribution to knowledge lies in the study of a newly introduced literary genre and a newly created kind of teen vampire, constructed specifically to speak to contemporary Western teen audiences of the 2000-2010 period like no vampire has before. This study evaluates and investigates this unique vampire construct in conjunction with linked

interdisciplinary, culturally specific critical analysis, from spheres including literary food studies, transformation studies, gender studies and sociology, and Gothic theories relating to the body in metamorphosis. By examining five series of largely unanalysed YA vampire fiction as body-centric, as Gothic, as genre-specific, and as socio-culturally and geopolitically located for the first time as a whole, this thesis adds to and furthers the academic debate in the arena of YA vampire studies as it relates to notions of the body of the vampire, and ultimately the teen body, as represented, culturally constructed, transformable and ephemeral.

Abbreviations List

Young Adult = YA

Evernight series books = *Evernight*

House of Night series books = HoN

Twilight series books = *Twilight*

Sadomasochism = SM

Darke Academy series books = Darke

Vampire Academy series books = Academy

Introduction: The Young Adult Vampire Revolution

The geek, the activist, the artist, the quietly attractive one, the intellectual, the outsider, the vampire. Each of these designations is representative of an accepted subject position found in postmodern Anglo-American Young Adult novels where stereotypes of typicalised "popular" high school students are brought to life. The vampire's inclusion in this list is somewhat surprising because, of course, this construct does not exist in real-life teen academic situations. However, those familiar with earlier versions of the pre-2000s, female-centric YA romance genre may baulk at this list, not because it contains a vampire, but because it does not include the traditionally popularised archetypal YA characters such as the cheerleader, the sports star, the beauty queen and the rich girl/boy. The deliberate removal of these characters as protagonists is representative of shifting social perceptions amongst teens whereby those "every man" character types listed above, who were previously the under dogs and minor literary figures, are now the main characters.

The excision of the cheerleader/jock/rich kid types as mean and catty protagonists occurred around the same time as the vampire came to prominence as a YA protagonist. As an opportunistic individual, the vampire found a niche in YA romance novels which had been vacated by the previous apex predators in the form of the rich, beautiful and entitled teens. As a fictional avatar of the intellectual, the geek, the outcast, the quietly attractive one, the artist and the activist, the vampire is well-placed to embody all of these favourable Postmodern prototypes as an arch-prototype because s/he too was once the under dog in his/her own horror genre before moving into the realm of YA fiction as hero/heroine. What is more,

whilst the previous generation of young, rich, beautiful, attractive and physically powerful YA protagonists no longer occupy their central positioning, the YA vampire has vampirised this group to take on all of their notable positive traits. The conundrum of featuring these villainised character types was answered by the introduction of the vampire figure. These outdated stereotypes as cheerleader/sports star/beauty queen/rich kid were removed because of their decreasing relevance to the societal landscape and their over-reliance on physical ideals as sufficient replacement for the developed literary personalities teen readers were moving towards.

The YA romance genre, and teen representation at large, has always dealt in a currency of dual representation, particularly with regard to young women, whereby it provides what it recommends to readers and also what it tells them they should not desire. For example, on the surface the YA genre provides characters befitting contemporary ideals who are independent, moral, intelligent and strong. It tells those readers that they should not desire superficial beauty, overt masculinity or femininity, and unearned wealth, while at the same time glamourising those traits as oppositional and covertly desirable. The old guard of beautiful YA protagonists embody these oppositional traits but cannot be included due to their outmoded and exiled status. However, a vampire who has no literary connection with these characters and their adverse connotations can certainly be employed to take on these characteristics without repudiation or repercussion because by their very nature, these newly-created YA vampires are young, attractive, beautiful, physically powerful and wealthy and that they are written to be secretly desired is part of their vampiric heritage. Thus the vampire entered the YA marketplace as a replacement of sorts for the beautiful, rich, young figures it had vampirised, both as a relic from its horror genre past of taking such victims and from a

radical repositioning as the new YA protagonist of choice. It is this new vampire of the YA genre which will form the central aspect of investigation within this thesis.

The storied vampire is an extremely visible figure in the Western world and has in recent times undergone a series of significant evolutions, or revisions, from its various incarnations throughout history. The revisionist "neoteric vampire" of YA multi-volume vampire fiction, as this variety of vampire will be labelled throughout this research, represents the culmination of those metamorphoses in terms of steadily building popularity amongst non-specific genre audiences¹ and the general public. The notion that the vampire's variability means s/he acts to mirror any given cultural moment is common in wider academia (Auerbach 1995: p.145, Wilson Overstreet 2006, Adler 2010: np, Clements 2011: p.4) and more focussed within this study where the "neoteric vampire" is viewed intrinsically as a metaphor for metamorphosis. This is understandable given the vampire's history of malleability. Therefore it is perhaps predictable to some degree that a teenaged vampire in high school would be the end product of a rewriting into the YA genre in the early 2000s. Similarly, that this heroical construct would be young, beautiful, without Christian affiliations, and sexually active is also within the bounds of possibility considering its positioning for a Western readership. The impact of these combinatorial traits and the literary readings behind the socio-cultural creation of each of these aspects of the "neoteric vampire" are less predictable and wholly surprising given its intended YA audience, as this study will detail. What is more, this vampire was born into a very specific cultural climate, as the cultural contextualisation throughout this thesis will demonstrate, and as a result has become a fictional vampire like no other and the salient aspect of a YA publishing phenomena never before seen.

¹ Converging and often interchangeable sub-genres of Gothic YA vampire fiction include romance, action, fantasy, urban fantasy, and dark fantasy.

1. Cultural Construction of the Young Adult

Notional adolescence as a character type in literature, film and theatre was first noted as early as the 1930s and by this time there already existed differing male and female young adult stereotypes which were tailored to contemporary cultural beliefs, ideas and fears (Nash 2006: p.2). By 1944 the term "teenager" had come into use and this young adult soon garnered immense importance in society due to his/her ability to contribute to the economy through the purchasing of goods (Savage 2007: p.453). A vast consumer industry sprung up around this new socio-economic entity and the life phase of the "teenager" become officially recognised. It was more than twenty years later before the literary world began to see young adult protagonists in novels with any regularity, but by the 1970s books specifically written for this age group were available in book shops and the Young Adult genre was born. By the 1980s the YA tropes and themes as we understand them today were being developed and this is also the period when the YA sub-genre of fantasy, as we might associate it with YA vampire fiction, was first established (Lineberger nd: np).

As YA fiction became a viable avenue for selling books, so too did films and television programmes aimed at the same age groups become popular and more universally available. The availability, appeal, format and distribution methods of these multi-media products aimed at young people increased over time to become the present day's "screen-dominated culture" (Falconer 2010: p.88), where screen-savvy teens are the norm rather than the exception and where these audiences will be much more familiar with television, films, online streaming services and video blogs than paperback books. This youth phenomenon of immersion in all of these varying modes of discourse (Drury 2009: p.234) is vital to this study of the "neoteric vampire" because awareness of its many incarnations across screen and

page plays a vital role in the development of this creature and in analysis of its repositioning as a YA character within an era of screen domination where discussions of the literary and discussions of the film and television sphere are often interchangeable.

Defining the literary development of the Young Adult genre is relatively straight forward, however applying those same developments to real life young adults as a way of defining this stage of life is much more complex. Teenage years are lived between the ages of thirteen and nineteen and the YA imagined reader is said to be the same age group. The fluidity of "youth" is borne out by the arbitrary age categories assigned to this stage in life, which provide "substance to youth's existence as a universal social category" (Mizen 2004: p.9). The United Nations and Unicef define "youth" as being between the ages of fifteen and twenty four (UNDESA nd: p.2). In Western Europe the definition of youth differs from country to country, with Denmark and Finland deigning an individual to be a "youth" from birth (Eastern Partnership Youth Regional Unit 2015: np). At the upper reaches of the definition of "youth" ages range from eighteen years old to the mid-twenties, whilst Italy and Greece deem the end of the thirtieth year to be the end of this period (Eastern Partnership Youth Regional Unit 2015: np). In the original Eastern European home country of the variety of vampire under investigation, Romania, the upper limitation for youth is thirty-five years old (Eastern Partnership Youth Regional Unit 2015: np). These wide-ranging figures are demonstrative of the fact that youth is a social construct, much like the vampire him/herself. As socially constructed entities, both youth and the vampire are subject to societal trends and cultural beliefs.

According to recent research by sociologists, the state known as adolescence is lengthening, so whilst the older generation may wish for a way to extend their youth through a

preoccupation with its retention, it would seem that the younger generation is experiencing that desire as a reality. When the term "teenager" came into accepted use in 1944, teens were defined as being between fourteen and eighteen years old (Savage 2007: p.453, p.447). From the 1980s onwards critics such as Neil Postman (1982) noted a trend in the disappearance of childhood due to various factors including increasingly early puberty, access to new media (Postman 1994: p.120, p.121, Prout 2005: p.14), and the more recent commencement of adolescent behaviours amongst children (Coleman and Hendry 1999: p.8). These factors resulted in adolescence being noted as early as eight years of age (Chalabi 2013: np). In just forty years, the period delineated as adolescence had increased but conversely the time designated as childhood had decreased by up to six years. For literary theorist Laurence A. Rickels the "lack of childhood in the Teen Age...is symptomized by vampirism" (1999: p.263) and in the literary sample under scrutiny this is precisely the case. In the real world, childhood is being symbolically vampirised by the ever-encroaching adolescent domain, and is being replaced by it.

At the other end of the adolescent spectrum economic factors, for example the delayed entry into the workplace and living in the parental abode for longer, mean the traditional milestones associated with entering the adult world are also being postponed (Coleman and Hendry 1999: p.8). As a result the juvenile stage of life extends beyond the teenage years for the first time. An adolescent is now considered to range from eight years of age up to the midtwenties. This extension of adolescence is created by subtracting time from the period previously delineated as adulthood and it draws parity with the eternal youth of the vampire and perhaps goes some way to explaining the popularity of the "neoteric vampire" amongst its young readership. As a population adolescents have gone from having a four-year window

of existence during the 1940s, to almost fifteen years of "youth" in the present day. Therefore the "neoteric vampire" and the young reader now share an unusually prolonged period of youth for the first time in history, due to the consumption of those years which were previously external to youth.

1.1 Consumerism and Youth Consumption

The teenager has been marked out as a consumer since its cultural invention in the 1940s and in the time period contemporaneous to the sample novels in this thesis, the socio-cultural increase in the consumption of goods and services has been unprecedented. As such, the concept of consumerism will form a culturally-contextualised running thread throughout this thesis. It is undeniable that consumption and, by extension, consumerism are integral aspects of the vampire character in terms of feeding and the drinking of blood. That the vampiric form is defined by its diet and the physically adapted teeth with which to feed, and therefore marked by its specific means of consumption, is no great surprise. The extent to which consumerism and consumption feature within the lives of both the YA protagonists within the sample texts researched here and in real life inform the relationship between the fictional characters featured and the "neoteric vampires" and forge undeniable links between the consumption patterns of both of these beings.

A cultural construct created in the Capitalist West, be it the teenager or the "neoteric vampire", and therefore governed by its reigning economic and socio-cultural mores, would certainly be highly influenced by consumerism. Furthermore, as the "neoteric vampire" is constructed in direct response to its cultural environment and acutely reshaped to comply with those conditions in order to be as much like the imagined young adult reader as possible,

then it stands to reason that this creature would be as much affected by consumerism as his/her real-life human contemporary.

All "neoteric vampires" are wealthy whether from investing and saving for centuries, from using their vampiric powers to become heads of industry, or from being born into powerful dynasties. Only by being wealthy, no matter the direction that abundance stemmed from, can a vampire truly consume in all aspects of society. Having monetary means releases these vampires from the horror genre and distant graveyards and propels them into the arena of wish-fulfilment where they are free to be the protectors, friends and lovers required within the YA genre. Without wealth the "neoteric vampire" could not consume fashion and fast cars, could not separate themselves from the antagonistic nomadic vampires who live wildly by their wits, and could not afford a diet of prepared or proffered blood. Without the other aspects of consumerism to fall back on this vampire would return to the rabid consumer of blood s/he has always previously been.

1.2 Consuming the YA Vampire

The audience for the vampire is no longer limited to genre fans, this is confirmed by the vampire's entry into the mainstream consciousness and the unprecedented financial gains it has made. The Twilight Saga films featured in an international advertising campaign for Volvo cars and The CW network's *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-2017) television series, from show creators Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec, appeared on huge advertising billboards in New York's Times Square and Los Angeles' Sunset Boulevard, amongst other locations (Weiss 2011: np). The HBO network went one step further with the "mainstreaming" of its

² The term used in *True Blood* to refer to the practice of a vampire living within a human community and surviving on synthetic blood.

True Blood (2008-2014) television show, with an award-winning advertising campaign not merely covering popular publications like *Entertainment Weekly* and *Vanity Fair;* but creating adverts for its fictional branded blood substitute Tru Blood and reserving slots for it in vending machines; by creating websites which appear to be written by show characters (Jokinen 2014: np); and by producing political posters and adverts of real-life brands³ aimed towards vampires to create the impression they exist.

Alongside such developments, the YA book market has seen unprecedented expansion, particularly with regard to fantasy, to the point that it was described as "the literary world's fastest growing genre" by 2011, initially thanks to the Harry Potter series and then to Twilight (Carpenter 2011: np). The number of books being published in this field increased: in 1997 three thousand YA titles were released and by 2009 that figure had risen to thirty thousand (Brown 2011: np). The space dedicated to those books in bookshops has expanded and they have been moved out of the children's reading section to appeal to a wider demographic (Corbett 2011: np). Book sales in the genre increased and the industry is worth millions of pounds worldwide (Howlett 2015: np). What is more, as a product of consumerism the multi-volume format which spawned this "neoteric vampire" is designed specifically to increase revenue and encourage further consumption. In the consumer-driven economy, people and young adults more specifically, have taken on the role of the rampant consumer, so the "neoteric vampire" does not have to.

Fans of this variety of vampire come from across the age spectrum and from both sexes (Kubiesa 2016) and their response to these "neoteric vampires" has been astonishing, as the "Twilight Moms" phenomenon attests. "Twilight Moms" are middle-aged women who are as

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³ Brands included Gillette, MINI, and Harley-Davidson (Patel 2009: np).

equally fanatical about the series as their teenage daughters (Em & Lo 2009: np) and they are not alone in choosing YA fiction as adults. Adult readers now buy 55% of YA books (Bowker 2012: np). Here we see a fascinating trend in changing readerships, because whilst these books might be intended for a YA audience, they are in fact being consumed by adults in large quantities.

2. Contextualising the Vampire

The vampire legend has undergone a phase of unprecedented popularity and has entered the realm of vampire-related films, television programmes, books, and associated merchandise. New vampires are being created, such as Charlaine Harris' Sookie Stackhouse Series and its television adaptation *True Blood* (2001-2014), and previous literary and cinematic vampires are being unearthed to feed this new-found popularity. For example, out-of-print vampire stories, like Christopher Pike's YA The Last Vampire series originally published from 1994 onwards, are being re-issued with new cover artwork, and old versions of the legend are being revived, such as Johnny Depp's film portrayal of *Dark Shadows* (2012), originally a 1960s television series. Fans can now appear in personalised vampire novels alongside their favourite character (Romance By You nd) and in the UK, the National Health Service has produced a vampire dental health video (*The Telegraph* 2011: np). Other literary and cinematic "monsters" such as the werewolf are also enjoying a renaissance, with titles like *The Howling* film franchise from 1981 being "re-vamped" in 2011 in the style of vampire sensation *Twilight* (2008).

The vampire craze is not solely for the vampire of horror stories, but for many variations of the legend, particularly its latest incarnation which has moved away from its horror roots and

into romance and fantasy. The success of The Twilight Saga franchise, which has sold more than 100 million books worldwide (Stephenie Meyer nd: np) and made more than six billion dollars in revenue (Statistic Brain 2016), has been widely attributed as being responsible for this and for opening up the audience for the vampire, bringing him/her many new fans in the same way that the popularity of *Dracula*, The Vampire Chronicles, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* did in their respective periods.

The outpouring of fan art and fiction has dwarfed similar responses garnered by the Buffyverse in the 1990s in terms of sheer volume alone – a 2018 online search of fanfiction for *Twilight* registered more than thirteen million hits, while a search of *Twilight* fan websites yields more than six million responses. Even fanfiction is reaching best-seller status with the success of E. L. James' erotic series Fifty Shades of Grey (2011-2015), initially written as fanfiction for *Twilight* and ranked in 2012 as the best-selling novel in Britain of all time (Singh 2012: np).

The literature has had such an impact that it has spawned an anti-*Twilight* industry, with hundreds of parodies in film and book form including the films *Vampires Suck* (2010) and *Breaking Wind: Part 1* (2010), and novels *Nightlight: A Parody of Twilight* (2009) and the *Twishite Saga* (2009). There even exists a short film called *Twilight Cycles With Brandon Routh* (2009) in which the film star plays a spoof version of Edward Cullen in a mock vampire tampon advertisement. The development of a fan/parody tradition perpetuates the existence of the "neoteric vampire" and applies to all of the well-known series in the chosen sample. As parody relies on audience awareness of the subject being parodied, this steady stream of vampire films denotes the continued presence of the vampire in the cultural sphere, something which is reinforced by the presence of the "neoteric vampire" and its spoofs.

Whereas texts before *Dracula* and from the Victorian era onwards were largely perpetuated by professional theatre companies, writers, and the makers of film and television, the tradition of the "neoteric vampire" is being perpetuated by amateurs and fans (Kubiesa TBC), for the most part, in an age of instant media and people-driven media coverage.

3. Vampiric Evolution: From Revenant to Teen Idol

Until relatively recently, Western culture's notion of the "traditional vampire" as anti-hero and Gothic monster was dominated by Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) and its cinematic adaptations by Universal Studios (1930s) and Hammer Films (1960s). This thesis aims to represent and investigate the progression of the vampire from that of "traditional vampire" to the guise of "neoteric vampire", therefore a brief overview of the history and development of the literary and cinematic vampire as it relates to this study is essential in understanding that progression. While this research is predominantly concerned with the literary vampire, the cinematic vampire genre adds to the overall popular perception of the creature, particularly as it concerns screen-dominated discourse. The following timeline touches upon the history of the vampire figure in the West by way of introduction to the topic of the "neoteric vampire", however it is in no way intended as a comprehensive history and instead covers a selection of entries which are academically recognised and/or popularly acclaimed. Elements of the overview that follows are, however, expanded upon in each of the subsequent chapters in relation to the "neoteric vampire" and contemporary cultural trends.

The literary vampire was initially the inhabitant of poetry. *Der Vampir* (1748) was the first modern poem on vampires, followed by Goethe's *Bride of Corinth* (1797), Coleridge's

⁴ This research topic has been fully covered by academics in books dedicated to the history of the vampire and a repetition of it would be redundant.

Christabel (1798) – the first vampire poem in the English language, Stagg's *The Vampyre* (1810), and Lord Byron's *The Giaour* (1813). These were vampires in their most base form, male and female, dwellers of the night who left their graves to drain life-blood. They took inspiration from the centuries-old creatures of folklore which provided the first incarnation of the vampire legend and which bore vampires who were little more than feral predators.

Dracula was by no means the first nineteenth century vampire; in 1819 John Polidori's *The Vampyre* introduced debauched aristocrat Lord Ruthven. This tale was an instant popular success and was considered as the archetypal vampire for the first half of the Victorian period. It was enormously influential and writers across Europe made literary and theatrical adaptations of it.

The majority of these adaptations were produced before *Dracula* author Bram Stoker was born in 1847 and demonstrate the contemporary popularity of this particular vampiric incarnation. This is in no small part attributable to the involvement of the infamous Lord Byron. Byron is himself an important figure in vampire mythos, not only was he initially credited with authorship of *The Vampyre* and subsequently attributed as being the inspiration for Lord Ruthven, he has become a vampire character in several novels including Tom Holland's *The Vampyre* (2007) and Matt Haig's *The Radleys* (2010).

The next popular vampire was created in the part-work *Varney the Vampire* (1845-47) in a throwaway "penny dreadful" or "penny blood" magazine, publications aimed predominantly at the working class according to *The Art of Gothic: Britain's Midnight Hour* (Graham-Dixon 2014: np). As the first vampire series, *Varney* was also the first story to feature a vampire that

attacked young girls by alighting through their window as they slept, was perturbed by his own existence, sympathetic, and ultimately takes his own life.

In 1872 the novella *Carmilla* by Sheridan Le Fanu, initially published in parts, added an air of the erotic to the story, with a vampire series featuring same-sex attraction and teens. Around twenty years later, Stoker's book was published and whilst it was not a best-seller, it was well received by critics (Dukes 1982: p.47) and has never been out of print (Hensley 2002: p.59). *Dracula* was influenced by and borrows from both *The Vampyre*, and *Carmilla*. Using these successful variations of the vampire story, Stoker turns his vampire into a member of the nobility, with a pale visage and cold skin, who feeds on virgins and leaves twin punctures to the neck. Stoker replicated these traits in his novel alongside elements of the folkloric vampire such as the need to sleep in native earth, the fear of religious iconography, and the lack of a reflection, to create a universally remembered vampiric character who would go on to replace and overshadow the existing denizens of the vampire world. He is still so well-known that the word "Dracula" has been appropriated as a synonym for the word "vampire".

In 1922 the story of *Dracula* moved to film with F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu (1922)*. Whilst critics view this as an important development in the production of *Dracula* myths, they are divided on whether it adds to the overall advancement of the vampire, who is projected as feral and animalistic and more akin to pre-Victorian vampires than Stoker's eponymous Count. On one hand, Leonard G. Heldreth points out that there are more than forty vampire films which pre-date *Nosferatu* thus rendering its status as the first film version of *Dracula* as less important (1999: p.2), whilst Wayne E. Hensley counters that *Nosferatu* and its story changes driven by copyright issues are what saved *Dracula* from obscurity (2002: p.67). In

particular he notes the added elements of romance for this success. In relation to this study, it can be contested that *Nosferatu* is important as the progenitor of the Dracula legend on screen and thus the forerunner of later mass market films which typify the persona of the "popular vampire", however, Count Orlok does not add to the development of the vampire, *per se*, within the bounds of this study.

Whilst the eponymous Count is widely known to be Stoker's literary creation, it can be argued that Dracula's physical appearance, in the psyche of popular culture, can be largely attributed to the cinematic representation of the character as created by Universal Studios and Hammer Films. Today, thoughts of Dracula might bring to mind the 1931 Universal Studio's film *Dracula* and actor Bela Lugosi's pale skin, slicked back hair complete with widow's peak, and evening dress with cape, not to mention his slow and deliberate speech and heavy European accent. Critic Dukes even attributes *Dracula*'s overall success to the popularity of the 1924 stage production, which was transferred to the big screen by Universal Studios, and its star Bela Lugosi (1982: p.47).

Equally, a modern audience may recognise Dracula from Christopher Lee's portrayal in Hammer Films' 1958 production and its subsequent sequels, which also helped to perpetuate this legend for the populace. Here the supernatural boyar wears a cape, is tall and thin, has a crisp English accent, and retractable fangs.

In *Vampires in Film and Television* (1999), Leonard G. Heldreth argues that the next step in vampiric development came from the television melodrama *Dark Shadows* (1966-71) and its "self-conscious, questing vampire", which he says pre-dates the more well-known character

of a similar nature produced by Anne Rice (p.3). However, as we have already seen, this element was formerly introduced in the character of Sir Francis Varney.

The publication of the Dracula Sequence (1975-2002) and its first book, *The Dracula Tape*, sees the story told from Dracula's viewpoint. Considered to be the first novel to allow the vampire a narrative voice, *The Dracula Tape* features a protagonist who drinks animal blood, who is honourable, idealistic, and intent upon re-joining the human race against a backdrop of humans who misunderstand him and ultimately try, and fail, to destroy him. This novel marks a move away from the horror genre, and more closely represents a period romance although it is not widely known by the public.

Anne Rice's Vampire Chronicles (1976-present), originally published the year after *The Dracula Tape*, have enjoyed enormous commercial success and have altered public perception of the vampire to that of Byronic hero. Not only did this new breed of vampire tell their stories first hand, but they were darkly introspective, burdened with a soul, and desirous of death. Whilst it has been stated that at least three vampires prior to Rice's carried these kinds of traits, they were emphasised and portrayed in such a way in The Vampire Chronicles, with the vampire moving from the sphere of the supernatural to become superhuman, to catch public attention and to virtually obliterate the previous sympathetic vampires, which were less well known, from memory. As with *Dracula*, this is another example of the popularity of a text obscuring lesser-known examples of the same traits.

Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's Saint-Germain Cycle (1978-2009) is also noteworthy here. The vampire series, which contains elements of horror and romance and has a historical setting, sees the role of the vampire and human move from one of predator and prey to that of sexual

partners, reminiscent of the earlier vampire of poetry. In this story world, Yarbro states that her vampire Le Comte de Saint-Germain uses the same raw materials as *Dracula*, but employs them in a different way (1997: np). This difference sees Saint-Germain as a mysterious hero who wants to be part of humanity and whose process of feeding produces orgasm in both vampire and partner. This radical shift from the role of vampire and victim is vital in the development of the "neoteric vampire", even though it is one which is somewhat restrained in the adolescent relationships between the vampire and their humans.

Heldreth asserts that the evolution of the vampire legend in film to truly include teens began in the 1970s with the teenage vampire in *Martin* (1976) (1999: p.3). He goes on to chart the relationship between teens and the vampire in the 1980s with the vampire who attacks teens in *Fright Night* (1985) and teens who become vampires in *The Lost Boys* (1987) and *Near Dark* (1987). The latter two he describes as: "...films that expanded the vampire territory into carnivals, malls and game rooms as well as into Southwestern redneck bars" (Heldreth 1999: p.3). This re-siting of the vampire was to foretell the move of the "neoteric vampire" into the American high school.

Said to be the first vampire novel written for teens, the 1984 *Prisoner of Vampires* by Nancy Garden features a 12-year-old boy as the protagonist. Significantly it uses variations on the characters of Dracula and Carmilla to bridge the gap between the adult and YA genres, allowing juvenile readers to familiarise themselves with these vampires as a topic suitable for YA fiction.

During the 1990s several YA vampire series and standalone novels were published, most notably *The Silver Kiss* (1992) by Annette Curtis Klause, *Companions of the Night* (1995) by

Vivian Vande Velde, Mary Downing Hahn's Look for Me by Moonlight (1997), and Amelia Atwater-Rhodes' In the Forests of the Night (1999). These novels carried the raw ingredients of the "neoteric vampire" and prepared the foundations of the genre for the teen vampire protagonists which were to follow. However, the presentation, realisation, and treatment of the "new vampire's" immediate predecessors was unlike the YA vampire of today. Downing Hahn's Gothic tale is written as a child abuse narrative where a female teen and her young brother are preyed upon by a vampire who appears to be in his thirties. The stories by Vande Velde and Curtis Klause bring us closer to the "neoteric vampire" figure, but the former features a male vampire using a human adolescent for his own gains with the ultimate intention of killing her, and the latter carries the over-arching themes of disgust and self-loathing with a male teenage vampire encouraged to commit suicide and a human teen who feels repulsion after sharing kisses with him. Atwater-Rhodes' narrative lacks the vampire community and romance elements, and the campus setting which locate the "neoteric vampire" in the heart of the adolescent world.

Each of the aforementioned texts was well received upon publication but did not reach the same heights of popularity as texts from the following decade. This again exemplifies the concept of a more popular vampire overshadowing its canonical predecessors. The Vampire Diaries books (1994-2013), initially by L. J. Smith and later ghost-written, and Christopher Pike's The Last Vampire series (1994-2013) brought the YA vampire into the serial format. Due to the success of *Twilight*, the 1990s texts have received recent attention⁵, most notably *The Silver Kiss* owing to its shared qualities with Meyer's first novel. Pike's series has been

⁵ Each now has a contemporary fan following and a resource of fan-generated fiction, much like the sample texts.

re-released under the title "Thirst" and The Vampire Diaries has garnered audience awareness and academic consideration relating to its television adaptation in 2009.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer⁶ outshone all of its 1990s counterparts with its vampire which was edgy, sexually active, and at home in the modern urban world. It was commercially successful spawning books, fanfiction, and spin-off series Angel (1999-2004), and it revolutionised the commonly held idea of the vampire to become what I will term the "popular vampire". In turn this multi-episodal format developed into the YA multi-volume vampire fiction which will be the subject of this study and which presents the latest incarnation of the vampire as hero, lover, friend, and contemporary.

From the preceding vampire chronology it is evident that three salient incarnations of the vampire: *Dracula*, The Vampire Chronicles, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, have courted popular success in a way their counterparts have not, to ensure their continued survival in the vampire mythos, using a coeval cultural representation of the vampire that the public have responded to. As such they act as pivotal points in the development of the vampire legend and mirror the current status of the "neoteric vampire" which, it can be argued, is capturing public interest in the same way as each of its progenitors. In view of the popularity of each of these three pivotal rewritings, these Traditions will be referenced throughout this thesis as markers for comparison with developments of the "neoteric vampire".

⁶ This series proved more popular than the earlier film of the same name and brought the teen vampire series to the attention of the viewing masses.

4. Embodying the YA "Neoteric Vampire"

The unique vampire construct of YA multi-volume vampire fiction from 2000-2010 has revolutionised the appearance, characteristics, and morality of the vampire of legend when compared to what has gone before. The Western book-reading, cinema-going public has embraced this new vampire, as evidenced by its inclusion in best-selling book lists and its record-breaking box office receipts from cinematic adaptations (Child 2012). As such, this new vampire could surpass the popularity of more traditional vampiric variations.

The "neoteric vampire" is a commercially successful product of a newly developing genre and warrants academic study due to its popularity and influence alone. The YA multi-volume vampire novel, with its unique "neoteric vampire" construct, is an emergent genre in literature. As such, there is a gap in research pertaining to this construct in relation to the cultural context of the West. Thus there exists a gap in the academic study of such bodies in anthropomorphic transformation, particularly when allied with seminal vampiric works and contemporary socio-cultural issues, of which the notion of transition is representative.

Therefore this study is relevant, unique, and important. Its importance is based on developing an understanding of a still emerging literary genre and a new literary construct. The combination and investigation of primary literature and varied inter-disciplinary secondary literature will equate to the synthesis of original knowledge and an original contribution to the writings in this field, and to the broader critical understanding of the literary vampire.

With the popularity and commercial success of this "neoteric vampire", a study of its development is both valid and timely and will be carried out using five series of multi-volume vampire fiction targeted at the YA audience, and written or first published between

the years 2000 and 2010. These texts will be investigated with the intention of gauging potential readings of the vampiric body in transformation in the climate in which the novels were written and received in the West.

The initial aim of this research project is to define the metamorphosis of the "neoteric vampire", in terms of the transformation from "traditional vampire" (the vampire of legend popularly recognised by the general public) to "neoteric vampire", in terms of the site of the initial change from living being to revenant, and in terms of the continued state of that transformation as a new state of being. It will debate these morphic states with regard to work on the Gothic and YA body, with reference to similarity and dissimilarity, contemporary constructs of human identity, Otherness, and the permeability of self.

Furthermore, this thesis aims to investigate that body in relation to readings of contemporaneous socio-cultural developments, beliefs, and trends in the Western world which relate to or affect the physical form. Those cultural and societal issues can be divided into distinct areas, for example: beauty, adolescence, and religion, and will be read using contemporary Western culture to inform the research. These cultural and societal reference points will be drawn from expert research in a range of chosen fields. Critical discourse will come from a variety of disciplines and will include psychologist Nancy Etcoff, cultural studies critic Wendy Steiner, and anthropologist Jeremy MacClancy.

As an academic analysis of the YA vampire in transformation, this thesis will combine the two salient aspects of that character to form a dissemination of it. The vampire element will be represented by the use of Gothic theory, which as it pertains to YA literature, carries elements of YA theory. The youthful portion of this entity will be represented by theories of

YA and Children's literary criticism. There are no specific titles covering YA theory that discuss body paradigms in the same way that texts pertaining to the vampire do. YA literary theory is relatively new as a critical entity and critics have been slower to respond to it as a standalone research topic from an analytical standpoint. Children's literature is a more established genre and its literary theory acts as an umbrella theory which encompasses YA. This research will use that existing theory as a base and extrapolate out from it to form a framework from which to explore these YA texts using a working YA theoretical viewpoint. The reason for including elements of both the YA and Children's aspects stems from the relative newness of YA criticism and the lack of available material covering that subject matter. As YA as a genre and a critical perspective both stem from children's literature and children's literary theory, then this area will be used as a base from which to read the YA vampire and it will act to fill out any gaps in criticism yet to be determined by published critical works in the YA sphere. Analysis of the sample literature as it pertains to the roles and experiences of young adults in relation to their socio-cultural sphere using the aforementioned Gothic/YA theoretical dualism will be combined with a linked and complementary inter-disciplinary cultural discourse study.

While there are considerable gaps in the study of YA literary theory from a published academic standpoint, there exists a thriving critical discussion on this topic from the perspective of fans, the YA literature writing community and readers in reading groups, blogs, online discussion forums and magazine articles, who have developed their own framework of terms to share their findings. These are sites where new research can be presented without delay and developed rapidly in response to interactions between those knowledgeable in this field. And whilst the critical rigour used may vary depending on the

source and location, there is no denying this pool of genre expertise is vast and its outputs are continually developing and being added to. In the true spirit of youth, critical discussions of its literature have moved to the most applicable and fast-moving platform and have gone some way to fill the research and knowledge deficit of academia on this subject. For this reason, and because the research done in this area academically are negligeable, these online sources will be used in this thesis as the developed/developing authority they represent in terms of YA literary theory. I propose that a coupling of these disparate elements will go some way to beginning to create a cohesive theory of YA literature, that is more than merely an offshoot of its children's literary roots.

Research into the "neoteric vampire" in this thesis will be divided into five fundamental themes around which vampire narratives have been created for centuries. After researching the most prominent and popular vampire lore, literature and film from folklore to the end of the study period of 2010, across the wider vampire super genre, I mapped the vampiric paradigms as they arose over time. The most well-used and most prominent recurring themes utilised are those used as the basis for the subject of each thematic chapter, within which the recurring vampire paradigms, tropes and thematic motifs from the super genre were used as starting points to create a dialogue with each YA series under investigation. The most popular and influencial developments of the super genre as they relate to this study and to salient vampiric development are added as Traditions for continued reference as the Folklore Tradition, Stoker Tradition, Rice Tradition, Whedon Tradition.

Each chapter in this thesis will deal with one fundamental theme, as it relates to the cultural contextualisation of the time period, and one YA multi-volume series from the chosen literary sample. For example, adolescence and physical maturation, sexuality and beauty are common

themes in YA fiction as a whole and in the YA vampire serial fiction at hand, whilst issues surrounding the cultural problematisation of religion and eating have widely been found in YA problem novels and more generally in YA fiction overall. The novels will be used as an interpretive vehicle for discussion of the cultural context in order to establish a more formalist close reading and context-driven critical discourse.

Chapter One considers the theme of adolescence in relation to the Evernight series by Claudia Grey, combining discussions of the Gothic theory of Abhumanism with inter-disciplinary critique from Transition Studies. The long-held connections between youth and the vampire, present throughout the canon's history, are re-shaped and re-invented when shepherded into the arena of YA fiction in the West. Here, becomings from childhood to adolescence, youth to pseudo-adulthood, adulthood to teen, and from human to vampire are multitudinous and representative of the "new vampire's" immortal youth as coloured by contemporary sociocultural developments amongst its readership and society at large. This chapter investigates these transformations as they relate to youth and the adolescent body, where the notion of transformation is key.

In Chapter Two, the House of Night series by P. C. Cast and Kristin Cast forms the subject of discussion in terms of religion. Here religion and its associated tropes are analysed against a critical framework of Sociology and Faux Catholic Gothic theory. The connections between the vampire and religion have existed since their instigation by the Church during the Middle Ages when townspeople were fearful of the revenant as a real-life threat. The notion of discord between the vampire and established religion continued as a theme throughout the history of the vampire canon. Today, however, those religious conventions have mutated to incorporate spirituality and consumerism and this chapter will investigate that shift in

religiosity in relation to the House of Night series, where vampires have manufactured their own religion, and bodily transition.

The association between the vampire and the erotic is a long one. With this in mind, a chapter on vampiric sexuality will be included in this thesis using a combination of Sexology and Gender Studies against a backdrop of Postfeminist Gothic theory. The literary series under review will be Twilight by Stefanie Meyer. From the vampire's early literary appearances as sensual foreign other in Carmilla (1872) and Dracula (1897), to the dark and brooding beauty of the contemporary age, the notions of vampirism and sexuality are indivisible. Twilight, however, is famous for its treatment of teen sexuality and is often referred to by commentators as a "sexless text". This is not the case, as this chapter will make clear, due to its compelling use of teen sexuality, which is much more complex than it is given credit for. Chapter Four concerns itself with the Darke Academy series by Gabriella Poole. This series is evaluated and explored using theories of Aesthetic Gothic and the associated Study of Aesthetics. That physical attractiveness occupies the aesthetics of the postmodern vampire has been much commented upon and often maligned as somehow incongruous with the wider vampiric genre. However, as this chapter makes clear, vampiric beauty is integral to representations of the "neoteric vampire" and has far-reaching implications for the Gothic body in transition and its associations with the contemporary West, and not just from the

The defining aspect of the vampire is his/her food source: humans. This topic will be investigated here using Richelle Mead's Vampire Academy series as its principal frame of reference. This will be combined with readings of Gothic Consumption, Medicine and

perspective of superficial appearance.

Literary Food Studies. The act of feeding; the manner in which that feeding occurs; the apparatus used in the process; and the effect that feeding has on both the vampire and the victim, have become focal aspects for readers and critics alike (Kubiesa 2016). Throughout the various incarnations of the Western vampire in folklore, early poetry, literature, and film, the act of feeding has remained a constant. Richelle Mead's Vampire Academy series affords a unique prospect for the exploration of feeding because vampires in this series need to drink human blood and eat conventional food stuffs to survive, thus the two practices are conversant. The topic of feeding/eating, as this chapter posits, provides a telling representation of oral consumption in the contemporary world.

Chapter One

Children of the Night: Adolescent Becomings in Evernight

1. Introduction: Vampiric Youth

A thesis focusing upon the primacy of the YA vampire must immediately concern itself with the salient aspects of that character: youth and vampirism. By nature this sub-genre of YA fiction is written for teens, about teenage vampires, concerning actual or codified adolescent experiences (Cheryl nd). This vampire has elevated the youth experience into the realm of wish fulfilment to "become a teen idol" (Clements 2011: p.1). Vampire and teen have coalesced and this combinatorial creature has flourished during the study period (Clements 2011: p.1, Cummins 2016). As such the vampiric transformation is written both overtly and covertly, as the transformation most relevant to its audience: maturation. The essence of the juvenile individual lies within the universal truth that this state is ephemeral and that a metamorphosis of one kind or another is irrefutable and inescapable. Thus the twin threads of transformation and youth are indelibly and inextricably linked and provide an apt starting point for a discussion of the teen vampire body in flux and the becomings it faces.

The most recent crop of fictive vampires are popularly understood to be immortal teens or youths. This predominantly relates to the vampires most well-known amongst the general public. Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec's *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-2017) television series, broadcast by The CW in the USA and globally syndicated, features a cast of immortal adolescent vampire characters, some sired during the Civil War, some during the Middle Ages, and many in the contemporary era, but all of whom appear from an aesthetic standpoint

to be young. Similarly, The Twilight Saga films⁷ (2008-2012) promote and propagate the same theme of eternal youth with vampires from varying historical periods who, again, preponderantly have the physical appearance of adolescence or youth. The concept of the unageing immortal teen is a common and oft repeated trope both in early key YA texts like *The Silver Kiss* (1992), *The Last Vampire* (1994), and *In the Forests of the Night* (1999), and also in later texts which are contemporaneous to the ones in this study, such as *Suck It Up* (2008).

Outside of the YA marketplace the vampire has enduring links with youth. A very brief look to the vampire's long-held associations with youth from the wider genre sheds some light onto its shared pasts. Classic tales such as *Carmilla* (1872) and *Dracula* (1897) feature youthful victims, whilst Carmilla was herself a young woman and Dracula become young after drinking blood. Prior to *Carmilla*, the concept of the young vampire/victim pairing was the predominant one and it continues in YA fiction today. Before the publication of *Dracula*, the idea of a vampire feeding upon a young victim was immortalised in texts like Heinrich August Ossenfelder's *Der Vampir* (1748) and in *Varney The Vampire* (1845), and it continued in later vampire films. In Carl Theodor Dreyer's 1932 film *Vampyr*, a book on vampires shown on screen states:

Accounts of many ages and lands tell of terrible demons called vampires...Under the bright light of the full moon, they rise from their graves to suck the blood of children and young adults and thus prolong their shadowy existence (np).

Of course, the notion of the vampire drinking blood to fuel its immortality is now commonplace, but the idea of using this fluid from young victims to retain or produce a

⁷ Films are chosen for reference because they have a wider general audience.

⁸ This pattern features in texts including *Lenore* (1790), *The Bride of Corinth* (1797), and *Christabel* (1798) in the eighteenth century; and *Lamia* (1820) and *A Mystery of the Campagna* (1887) in the nineteenth century.

youthful appearance stems from stories surrounding historical figure Elizabeth Bathory and her practice of bathing in the blood of young girls. The vampiric retention or instigation of youth persevered in texts like Féval's *Le Chevalier Ténèbre* (1875)⁹ where the vampire wears scalps from young victims to appear young, Haggard's *She* (1887) where the vampire-like female uses magic to stay young, and in the Stoker Tradition. Bathory and her legend were also remembered in films *Countess Dracula* (1971) and *Thirst* (1979), and more recently *Metamorphosis* (2007), *Bathory: Countess of Blood* (2008), and *The Countess* (2009) to name but a few of the more contemporary rewritings of the youth theme.

The *Twilight* series features the trope of the unageing adolescent within the sample for this doctoral investigation, but the other texts employ a literary device to prolong vampiric existence, such as unusually long lifespans, or some manner of reincarnation. The fact that these vampires age when youth and its retention are so culturally sought after by many in the Western world (Morris 2000: p.120), and when the vampire is best known as an immortal whose body is figuratively frozen in time at the moment of turning, is at odds with prevailing desires and with genre tradition. Youth plays an equally important role within both of these kinds of vampire narratives, as this chapter will demonstrate.

The *Evernight* novels by Claudia Gray, real name Amy Vincent, will be analysed within this chapter on adolescent becomings because they feature teen vampires who are immortal and those who age before becoming immortal. Their differing metamorphoses arise from being bitten or born and offer contrasting perspectives on a transformation which I will henceforth term "vampiric becoming". This term will refer to the initial state of transformation and any subsequent becomings which occur. *Evernight* also details the physical transformation of

⁹ Translated as *The Vampire Countess* (2003).

teenage vampire protagonist Bianca Olivier, which is prolonged, experienced from a first person viewpoint, is integral to the plot and the motivations of the central character, and is contextually reflective of the kind of physical and emotional developments a real-life teen might face.

This initial chapter will touch upon notions of the youthful body in transformation and of physical maturation, and will more implicitly deal with the specificity, or lack thereof, of socio-cultural conceptions of youth/adolescence and its individuation. It will interrogate the topic of the adolescent becoming in Claudia Gray's *Evernight* series in relation to Kelly Hurley's theories on the abhuman – a Gothic body in transition, using texts from salient interdisciplinary areas including transition studies related to the body. *Evernight* provides the ideal platform for the study of this topic because to date there is no notable or sustained academic investigation¹⁰ of it. *Evernight* therefore proffers the opportunity for unique research, which in turn represents a new contribution to knowledge of the "neoteric vampire".

2. Becoming Adolescent: Teen Re-enactment

The vampire has metamorphosised from the world of adult horror fiction into the YA genre as a teen. Many of the "neoteric vampires" in this study, particularly the protagonists, are newly-experiencing the transformation into vampirism as an integral part of their "vampiric becoming". As a result they are fully functioning twenty-first century teens completely conversant with the adolescent world and its practices. The remainder of the vampires, the ones who were born or made in the past, have another kind of transformation to contend with:

¹⁰ Evernight is mentioned by Amy Cummins in a 2016 book chapter, which is largely concerned with the romantic relationships between protagonists.

that of the transposition into contemporary teen. As with the aforementioned transition from adult literature to YA fiction, the vampire must forego its existent paradigms to allow for a rewriting into an unfamiliar scenario as a postmodern teen. S/he must accomplish an abhuman becoming physically, mentally, emotionally, and aesthetically, in order to be fully accepted as a teenager in the contemporary arena and is thus required to relinquish all claims to adulthood.

The formerly adult vampire of adult fiction must negate previous ties to become a postmodern youth. S/he must learn/re-learn societal behaviour patterns and develop fitting vampiric tropes to survive the genre and the time period, something discussed throughout this thesis. The vampire must also alter his/her physical appearance to meet perceived juvenile norms. These changes are achieved unconsciously with authorial intervention or consciously as the character struggles to stay abreast of the times. Whatever the underlying method of transformation, these vampires must become adolescents, as we understand the term today, for the first time in their unnaturally extended lives.

There is some academic dispute on whether the state of "childhood" existed in the Middle Ages or whether children were considered as miniature adults once weaned from the breast (Kenway and Bullen 2001: p.38). This is significant to the study of adolescence because the Middle Ages produced much vampire folklore and many of the fictional vampires in today's "super genre" are said to originate from the period (Weinstock 2012: p.126). The life phase of youth was recognised throughout history, but it was not until the 1940s when the distinct social construction of the "teenager", as separate from adult and child, came into being (Savage 2007: p.453). This sheds fresh light on the "neoteric vampire" as teen because

¹¹ A term coined by Jeffery Weinstock to reference the wider catalogue of vampire fiction and film.

fictional vampire characters turned or born before the 1940s, even if their age or physical appearance positioned them within the sphere of the adolescent, would not have been teenagers as we know them from a societally constructed standpoint. Furthermore, vampires who came into being earlier than this pivotal stage of the teen's evolution could be described as youths, but again this would mean something different depending on which historical period the vampire was from, or indeed where in the world they originated (Jones 2009: p.4). If the vampire under discussion was born or turned during the Middle Ages when the phase of childhood as contemporary audiences understand it may not have been recognised, by extension the coeval state of youth would also be unrecognisable. The resulting vampire would be far removed from today's experiences of the teen.

In order to create the teen "neoteric vampires" for the YA market, following the argument above, then the oldest vampires to be featured within the series would be those who carried the life experience of being a teenager, as readers would understand it, from 1944 onwards (Savage 2007: p.453). Therefore the very oldest teenage vampires in the sample novels would have been turned seventy-seven years ago and the rich veins of history mined to embellish the life stories and experiences of the "neoteric vampire" would be lost. This is not the case as *Evernight* characters Ranulf, Balthazar and Charity, and Patrice can attest. Ranulf was turned in the "medieval period" (2008: p.165), siblings Balthazar and Charity were early Puritan settlers to America, and Patrice was an "octoroon" courtesan slave (2008: p.237).

If these aesthetically young vampires were truly from their allotted historical periods, they would most likely be adults because the teenage state, as it is understood in the contemporary West, did not exist when they were alive. Thus these vampires must adapt to pass as postmodern teens so they are believable from the perspective of an adolescent reader growing

up during that time period. This is a reader who would be much more familiar with the juvenile world than the adult author. In order to accomplish this, the "neoteric vampire" has to undergo a metamorphosis to adapt to his/her new surroundings. S/he has already taken the not inconsequential leap and moved away from the adult genre, now the adult vampire must learn to become an adolescent. This adolescent becoming appears as both a move from adult to teen and as a shift from a historical time period to that of the present day.

"Neoteric vampires" learn to become adolescents by associating with human teenagers at Evernight Academy and by having lessons on the modern world and technological advancements like the *iPod* and *iPhone*. In order to assimilate into the cultural climate, they are in effect taught to be economic consumers via increasing familiarity with technology and its consumption. Since its inception in the 1940s, the teenager has been associated with "mass production" and has been the target of "youth marketeers" (Savage 2007: p.453). More recently "young people have been systematically habituated" into the "dynamics of the consumerist ethos" according to Rob Latham (2002: p.1), who equates consumerism with notions of the vampire. Leonard G. Heldreth would argue that teen vampires have been part of this world since entering America's malls and game rooms in the 1980s (1999: p.3) and the situation has only intensified as time has gone on. Latham states: "The vampire is literally an insatiable consumer driven by a hunger for perpetual youth" (2002: p.1). As perpetual youth is readily available to unageing "Evernight types", their adolescent becoming is sealed with an introduction into the consumer marketplace, a move reflective of their establishment in consumer-driven YA serial fiction.

Vampire students attend some lessons with human students, partly to ensure they fit seamlessly into an environment with "peers" and partly to assimilate teen behaviour. As

youth "is a vital period of identity construction" fueled by interactions with peers, these vampires are being remade in the image of the postmodern adolescent and are thus constantly experiencing a transformation of sorts (Jones 2009: p.58). They have lessons on reinterpreting history, because each new time period has new perspectives on historical events that someone living in that era would naturally adhere to. A vampire must become familiar with these perspectives to fit into society and to adhere to "historical conditions and the social concerns of the time" which create the contemporary teen (Jones 2009: p.4). Hence vampire students learn to understand the latest cultural perspectives on life and the past in order to blend in and remodel themselves. They also learn to understand the contemporary teen in order to become one.

The teenaged vampire, born or turned in the past, has learned to be an adolescent as we know them in the contemporary Western world. His/her behaviour, persona, and physical appearance has undoubtedly been modified by the contemporary human teens s/he has been written alongside, has observed, and has lived amongst during very long life spans. As an adult Gray has almost certainly learned to create the teen characters she writes about in the same way, producing a dual narrative of adolescent reenactment which is both authorial and vampiric and which carries multiple refractions to shape and re-shape the vampire within this genre.

Evernight and the other literary samples included in this thesis fit within the bildungsroman tradition in that they follow the formative years and struggles for maturation of the series' young characters. Within the YA genre, this theme of maturation and growth is commonly known as the "Coming of Age" trope. Traditionally the bildungsroman is presented as a story of youth, retold by the protagonist at the latter stages of their life. This mechanism would be

an unwelcome one in YA circles as it removes the immediacy of the narratorial action from the YA timeline and somewhat detracts from the primacy of the protagonist as an adolescent. In *Evernight* instead of a retelling of a life lived, we see a re-enactment and rewriting of teen lives perpetually relived to suit shifting societal rules. In discussing the bildungsroman, Michael Minden refers to the youthful protagonist as "the subject represented" (1997: p.6) and the narrator telling his own story as "the subject representing" (1997: p.6). *Evernight's* teen vampires constitute both "the subject represented" and "the subject representing"; they are both youth and pseudo-adult at once, they are both a continually transforming entity and a product of their histories. Because they hold a subject position which is simultaneously "representing" and "represented" within the novels, the bifurcation of their histories and their cultural reinventions never takes place and thus their teen re-enactments are solidified as both the product of lived experience and a created identity to be consumed.

The question of whether Gray's "neoteric vampires" successfully become adolescents can be answered in two parts. Firstly, one must assume these teenage vampires are accepted by YA readers because the series reached New York Times bestseller status (Gray 2017: np) as a mark of its success and a spin-off book featuring *Evernight* character Balthazar has since been released. Secondly, from the perspective of character formation, in many aspects the vampires are just like any other depiction of contemporary YA teens. They are garroulous; they love to shop; and they attend illicit parties without discovery by adults. The reader initially believes they are ordinary boarding school students because protagonist Bianca Olivier is somewhat of an unreliable narrator. She reveals she and her parents are vampires more than halfway through the first novel, after which the division between the "Evernight-type" students who are wealthy and haughty, and the other students who are in the minority

and who are described as outsiders, becomes something more than an economic separation. Once the reader is aware "Evernight-types" are vampires and other students are humans, the division between the fictional teen and the fictional vampire-passing-as-teen becomes clear and proffers the impression that the vampire's adolescent becoming has failed. However, given the fact that cliques and friendship groups are a common paradigm within American teen cultural representation both in novel, television, and film form, and that they also exist in real life high schools, surely means this vampiric becoming is successful. The vampire has moved beyond merely observing human teens or mimicking them, to the point of independently reproducing their behaviours and appearance until they are almost undetectable from normal fictional adolescents, vampiric superlatives notwithstanding.

3. Maturation as Metamorphosis

Physical maturation forms a central topic of investigation in discussions of transformation within the arena of the adolescent, and as with other texts within this sample, the YA genre at large and the bildungsroman tradition, *Evernight* makes "the general difficulties of transition into adulthood the wellspring of the plot" (Butler 2013: p.24). The bildungsroman novel and the YA "Coming of Age" trope proffer a journey from troubled youth into successful adulthood via a narrative centred upon the maturation of an individual. All novels in the sample are bildungsromans in the general sense that they chart the uneasy development of a YA protagonist through their journey of maturation and self-discovery. However, the onus falls upon maturation as a desirous state rather than a transformation into adulthood, because adulthood is never attained and nor is it sought within the YA vampire genre.

The transition initially comprises of the implementation of maturation whereby the body moves from the world of childhood into the world of the teenager, and it continues with the physical process which sees the teen body become the mature vampire body. The concept of bodily metamorphosis is a powerful one in the adolescent years and within the literature which is aimed at that age group. In *Evernight*, and in the wider literary sample, the variety of maturation or "puberty" on display sees young individuals become vampires. Of the many metamorphoses this thesis will detail and engage with over the coming chapters, the "vampiric becoming" is the most important and the most incontrovertible. This transformation marks the birth of the vampire, the instigation of abhumanity, and a move away from the human state.

Evernight is a narrative of transformation and this theme is foremost within the series novels. It operates in a fictive environment where bitten vampires, some centuries old, attempt to adapt to life in the postmodern world. These vampires do not age and are physically frozen in time at their moment of turning because their initial "vampiric becomings" are complete. For them youth has become eternal. The two principal characters, Bianca and Lucas, differ in that their "vampiric becomings" are active and ongoing. The inclusion of this range of experience is important because any YA reader, at any stage in their physical development, can read something of their own personal liminal crossings within the process of "vampiric becoming". The vampires who have undergone their transformations act as emissaries for the successful completion of the maturation process and as idealised role models for the reader's eventual admittance into adulthood. Vampires in the midst of this rite of passage can inform readers' previous physical becomings or imminent personal transformations.

The fluidity of these vampiric representations and the varied ways in which the vampire can be read go some way to explaining the overall malleability of the vampire as metaphorical signifier. In agreement with this Hurley notes that the vampire exists across many categories as an "interstitial creature" (2004: p.24) and thus acts as the perfect vehicle for the performance of physical maturation viewed through the lens of abhumanism.

Gray constructs unageing bitten vampires, and those who are born and age until they reach the puberty-like point of "vampiric becoming". The inclusion of these two kinds of vampires appears to be at odds in a climate where youth is prized. The contrary is in fact the case because the concept of the ageing vampire is never allowed to develop and so Gray adheres to culturally scripted ideations of youth. This is because the vampiric need to feed on blood to complete the becoming process arises from the teen's burgeoning interest in the opposite sex. When a born vampire partakes in heavy petting, the proximity to the throat and the associated emotional turmoil forces the unwitting compulsion to drink blood. Nascent, heterosexual, sexuality thus triggers a kind of bloodlust, which in turn sparks the beginning of vampire puberty or turning, much as puberty in real life is associated with sexual maturation (Coleman and Hendry 1999: p.22).

To describe "vampiric becoming" as a metaphor for puberty and the development of the teenage body may seem a rather limiting designation. After all, the total physical transformation which occurs when an individual becomes a vampire is much more farreaching than the mere maturation of secondary sex characteristics that occurs in human puberty. However, sociologists John C. Coleman and Leo B. Hendry (1999) argue that puberty is a physically all-encompassing transformation. They insist:

...this stage is accompanied by changes not only in the reproductive system and in the secondary sexual characteristics of the individual, but in the functioning of the heart, and thus of the cardio-vascular system, in the lungs, which in turn affect the respiratory system, in the size and strength of many of the muscles of the body, and so on. Puberty must be seen, therefore, as an event in the physical life of the body with wide-ranging implications (p.22).

An explication such as this delivers the transformations of puberty and the "vampiric becoming" as whole body metamorphoses into the same arena. What is more, descriptions of both biological processes could to some extent be interchangeable. Coleman and Hendry refer to puberty's marked bodily changes that affect the identity and act as a challenge in adaptation (1999: p.27), and these terms are equally apt for the vampire's turning.

The development of secondary sex characteristics may be the most visually obvious pubertal signs, but these are absent from *Evernight* because the teen bodies in question are created as adult-like as possible to avoid associations between the vampire and the child, as will be explained later in this chapter. As a result, puberty's less overt aspects are embodied in the "vampiric becoming". As in human puberty, vampires who begin the process of turning undergo a growth spurt of sorts whereby their levels of endurance and physical strength are improved (Coleman and Hendry 1999: p.24). They are able to run all night without stopping and gain the physical agility of Olympic gymnasts. It is noteworthy that while these vampires are described as "superhuman" (2008: p.240), their transformations are still recognisable to the reader and remain largely accessible as physical improvements to be found in the realm of human possibility. This extended realism is vital in maintaining the connection between the "vampiric becoming" and adolescent maturation. Full vampires or those in the process of becoming also develop "sharper hearing" (2009: p.48), improved eyesight, night vision, and an enhanced sense of touch; again these are all relatable to the human condition and mark the

transformation as somewhat anthropocentric. In true abhuman fashion, the body is defamiliarised, but does not experience the "violent reconstitution" (Hurley 2004: p.4) found in some other "vampiric becomings". Apart from the increased need to drink blood and the aversion to holy water, the Evernight "vampiric becoming" is almost pedestrian in comparison with other vampire narratives and is not so far removed from the adaptations experienced during human maturation whereby what has gone before is improved upon. For Stephen D. Arata, the horror of Dracula comes about not due to his destruction of the body, but from his appropriation and transformation of it (1990: p.630). The concept of a "vampiric becoming" may no longer be a true horror to the largely willing supplicants who vie for its eternal life and youth and who populate the pages of YA literature, but the process of physical transformation itself can still be a source of fear or unwanted physical upheaval. In relating the "general difficulties of transition into adulthood" (Butler 2013: p.24), Gray creates vampires who feel the same reluctance regarding their "vampiric becoming" as might be felt by readers experiencing the shift to the adult world. In fact, she is noted for the resistance her characters mount against turning, despite its being inevitable (Cummins 2016: p.90). These characters vacillate between the desire to turn and the wish to stay the same, between the pull of the adult world and the safety of adolescence. Protagonist Bianca, for example, protests "I don't have to become a vampire before I'm ready" (2008: p.151) and then goes on to lament the loss she feels once her becoming is slowed and her abilities return to their pre-vampiric state. Later she recants and equates transition to "losing something important about myself, maybe losing myself entirely" (2010: p.295). The duality of possibilities corresponds with the movement towards maturation or away from it. Or as

Hurley suggests: "a movement away from is also a movement towards – towards a site or

condition as yet unspecified – and thus entails both a threat and a promise" (2004: p.4). In Gothic terms of abhuman theory this could involve regression or evolution, both of which are unspecified and unknowable as they relate to adolescent maturation and the individual (Hurley 2004: p.57).

During a "vampiric becoming", much like puberty, the individual is neither one thing nor the other. Bianca and Lucas are neither fully human nor fully vampire during their transformations and instead exist in a Gothic state of hybridity. The hybrid state is comparable to that of the pubescent teen in real life, whereby they are neither fully part of the childhood or adult spheres. They neither occupy a child's nor adult's body, but exist in a physical form somewhere between the two.

In a similar manner, Bianca and Lucas experience a kind of outcast existence which separates them from their human or vampire counterparts and which fits the YA trope often referred to as "I'm not like other girls/boys", which situates the main character in an abstracted position in comparison to the novel's other characters. In this way these characters must learn to live with and love their differences and overcome their misgivings about their outcast status, and by inference their personal demons surrounding their own maturation. When Bianca and Lucas are not wholly vampire or wholly human, their outcast status is further exaggerated and confirmed and the "I'm not like other girls/boys" trope from the general YA genre becomes something very specific in this vampire sub-genre. The "vampiric becoming" and its physical transformation is written directly as a reference to puberty and the isolationist nature of physical maturation as private, as identity-creating and as individuating are compounded by the hybridity formula to produce a pronounced and very definite sense of vampiric difference. Bianca's uniqueness as a born vampire is magnified compared to the bitten

vampires she is surrounded by, particularly because born vampires are secretly part ghost. Equally, as an active legacy member of vampire hunting sect Black Cross, Lucas' transformation into a vampire is both dangerous and divisive. In addition, Bianca is a born vampire and Lucas is bitten, creating a division within their pairing. By way of explaining Lucas' differing evolution Bianca tells him: "You're not what I am. You're something else" (2008: p242). These becomings seemingly occur against all odds and the transformations in question act as a metaphor for the obstacles which must be overcome by readers to enter the adult state. This physical condition is represented in *Evernight* as the transition into the teen vampire. Significantly, the eternal teen is promoted as the end product of physical maturation and as an adult substitute. The narrative goal is not to become an adult as we would recognise it in the real world, but to complete a fictional rite of passage to become a type of pseudo-adult.

That death forms a part of the bodily maturation process may at first glance appear at odds with what is known about puberty and physical development. With vampirism as the context for that development, death becomes a natural aspect of the transformation of the embodied self. Transition studies critics Elizabeth Hallam, Jenny Hockey, and Glennys Howard confirm: "The body in death highlights the passage of time, the inevitability of physical transformation, and thereby acts as a powerful reminder that the self is subject to change" (1999: p.5). Thus the vampiric abhuman must forfeit life to attain full immersion into the immortal world. With that forfeiture, the notion of the aberrant, tragic, or untimely nature of dying young (Hallam, et al. 1999: p.55) is also forfeited, to a degree, because death is not the end point for a vampire and youth becomes immortal.

Gray deviates from final "vampiric becomings" for her two lead characters, and instead offers a variety of ongoing metamorphosis. Bianca starts to become a vampire, but refuses to kill in order to turn. As she progresses along this route it becomes obvious that her symptoms have changed into something unfamiliar and uncertain. She loses her need to drink blood and becomes weak, dizzy, and feverish. Eventually Bianca dies but her transformation continues because she becomes a ghost and then must deal with the physical developments and metamorphoses associated with this new condition. Lucas, on the other hand, becomes a vampire after being forcibly turned; "he hates what he is and can't get over it" (2011: p.207). This transformation continues as he struggles to acclimatise to vampiric life, the main aspect of which is learning to control his bloodlust whilst surrounded by humans – a type of continuing bodily mastery in itself.

This manner of becoming is neither final nor permanent for Lucas or Bianca. Bianca discovers a method to turn Lucas human and does so. She surmises that she too could be turned using the same principles, but delays the change. Now, were both characters to become human, in theory they could both be turned into vampires. Thus Gray leaves the possibility of a "vampiric becoming" open for the pair and plays with the notion of continuous transformation, set against a backdrop of vampire immortality.

3.1 Ambiguous Awakenings and Heterosexual Maturation

For Bianca and Lucas, "vampiric becoming" is very much part of the maturation and "Coming of Age" process as it relates to physical and sexual development and the gendered heterosexual feeding often ingrained in this genre. Whilst it is true that turning can result from hunger, or feeding from a human too much or too often so does not have to be

associated with gendering or sexual preference, the pivotal relationship between these two protagonists is both gendered and heterosexual.

Feelings of first love and sexual awakening and the consequences of those feelings are commonly found in the YA genre as a whole in the form of the "First Love" trope, which often plays a central role in achieving emotional and physical maturation. ¹² Here, the "First Love" trope mutates into something vampiric and becomes the catalyst for "vampiric becoming" because the first stirrings of love and the initial thirst for blood are mutable and inseparable in descriptions of Bianca and Lucas' becomings. This literary ambiguity is used as a textual mechanism to confuse the reader as to what the narrator is discussing and to add a sense of the burgeoning erotic, while at the same time dramatizing these newly stirred emotions associated with the maturation process. It also sanitises these subjects for young readers as even the characters concerned are not clear whether key moments are leading to the loss of virginity or the loss of physical inexperience as feeding. In essence, kissing leads to biting, which leads to vampiric becoming and transformation is the key point, not the sexual. Vampiric feeding is thus employed as a sanitised replacement for sexual arousal and sexualised activity and it is biting that is the culmination of physical contact, not an explicitly sexual penetration. A kind of censorship takes place because eroticised feeding is less of a sexual act than actual sexual acts, so more of an appropriate and acceptable subject matter for this age group.

However, feeding and the sexual act are interlinked and equally sexual and knowledge of the vampire genre as a whole only confirms this theory. When Bianca is having her first kisses with Lucas, her vampiric drives take over and she feeds upon him from instinct. Later,

¹² This trope will be analysed further in Chapter Three.

following another series of kisses, he agrees to be fed upon, amidst a discussion of when they will first have sexual intercourse - again the two subjects are often inseparable – for Bianca at least. When a first sexualised feeding does take place between Bianca and her vampire suitor Balthazar, the loss of her sexual virginity is certain to follow, but is interrupted.

Bianca's physical relationship with Balthazar is explicit in the second book, from the standpoint of intimate vampiric feeding leading to sexual arousal, and this allows the reader to reinterpret Bianca's relationship with Lucas as child and Balthazar as adult. Bianca's conundrum about the variety of "growing up" she will undertake, is represented through the medium of the vampire body, both her own and the bodies of the males she consorts with. Her initial choice of human boyfriend Lucas, as misunderstood Byronic hero and adultified teen, takes Bianca into the realm of denial about her "vampiric becomings". In choosing a human she goes against her community's perceived notions of what her mate choice should look like and by extension what her future maturation as a vampire will entail. As an indicator of the self-sabotaging nature of this choice, it is later revealed that Lucas is a member of a vampire hunting sect. Bianca chooses him as a way to avoid the uncertainties of joining fully-fledged vampire society and the accompanying physical maturation into a full vampire this involves. Unbeknownst to her, her choice only serves to speed up her turning because of the accompanying blood lust she experiences from intimate contact with a human. It also forces Lucas into the realm of vampire potentiality because she feeds from him and instigates his "vampiric becoming".

Balthazar is Bianca's other love choice. This stoic three-hundred-year-old teen vampire is representative of admittance into the "adult" world of experience and entrance into total acceptance of the vampire state. He is the most physically desirable amongst the male

vampire students and also a match favoured by Bianca's parents. As a "childified adult" of sorts (Postman 1994: p.126), Balthazar like all of the Evernight students, has much lived experience, more so than any fully adult human, but claims he is still at the mercy of the adolescent condition like the other teen vampires. The text argues contrary to this. Not only does Balthazar provide Bianca with adult knowledge her parents deny her, he is also the same vampiric age as her mother and as physically able as both of her parents. He is measured in his emotions and shows no signs of the adolescent petulance or pettiness common among the other students. What is more, his literary descriptors all read much like those of the adult vampires in the series and words like "powerful" and "muscular" define him.

A relationship with Balthazar is never under serious consideration because it is championed by Bianca's parents. More importantly, Bianca's flirtation with Balthazar corresponds with her flirtation with the possibilities of fully vampiric life after her becoming. She is attracted by the possibility of this becoming, but much like Balthazar himself, it is too much of an "adult" consideration for her and for the reader. The idea of connecting with a being who is, for all intents and purposes, an adult with some adolescent attachments, changes the shape of youth in question and shifts the primacy of that youth too far into the adult realm. Instead of choosing this "childified adult", Bianca opts for the "adultified teen" as enacted by Lucas who has just enough agency to fulfil teenage dreams of freedom but not enough to warrant anxieties of adulthood without boundaries or of the variety of reciprocal vampiric sexuality of which he could not partake without being a vampire himself. Therefore she chooses youth as represented by teen spontaneity, emotional turbulence and gentle and sanitised (vampiric and) sexual awakenings rather than adulthood as referenced by stoicism, romantic consequences, and openly erotic vampiric feeding leading to grown up sexual relations. Of course, the irony

of this choice is that it hastens Bianca and Lucas' vampiric becoming but they remain within the sphere of youth due to their inexperience, age, physical maturity and positioning as YA protagonists.

4. Immortal Youth: Vampirising the Other

It is unsurprising that YA vampire fiction is largely populated by adolescent vampires because genre paradigms and expected readership demographics dictate that this be the case. The vampire sets him/herself apart from other adolescent YA characters due to the trope of immortal youth. As definable terms, adolescence is broadly viewed by critics as the period between "the onset of puberty and adulthood", whilst youth is often seen as the time between leaving high school and entering the adult world of work (Jones 2009: p.11). These definitions provide the basis for the use of these two terms within this chapter, but the two are not mutually exclusive despite what critics like Gill Jones posit (2009: p.11). After all, an adolescent is both young and youthful, and not all youths are part of the adult world. The matter is further muddied by what Jones describes as the common usage, particularly in the USA, of "adolescence" to describe young people into their mid-twenties (2009: p.86). When the notion of "youth" comes to mind in relation to coeval Western culture there are two separate areas for consideration. Firstly, there is the idea of youth as a bodily phase in terms of the lifespan of an individual and all that that entails. Secondly, there is the almost obsessive desire and motivation within society to retain or regain youth with regard to physical appearance (Morris 2000: p.120). The "neoteric vampire" is the apogee of both of these ideations of "youth" both as the aesthetic representation of the adolescent and as the unageing, immortal teen.

The "neoteric vampire" is written in perpetual youth and his/her adolescence is never ending. Even the vampires within the study who age are only allowed to do so within the bounds of youth because the novels depict these characters whilst they are young. This is a vampire who connotes both eternal life and unending youth. Unlike previous incarnations of the vampire, the "neoteric vampire" seeks unending youth as the operative element of immortality, rather than questing for eternal life as its focus. In a society where remaining young, or at least retaining the appearance of youth, is highly sought after, the vampire's ability to occupy a juvenile body for eternity is the ideal, particularly as they stay "young and beautiful forever" (2010: p.274). In real life, consumers spend billions of dollars in the anti-ageing industry worldwide each year (Statistica nd) and seek out the latest wonder ingredients in scientific/pseudo-scientific cosmeceuticals. Anti-ageing ingredients such as sodium hyaloronate, ceramides, co-enzyme q10, and hydroxyl acids are lionised by beauty companies as quick fixes to fight ageing when the only true way to halt the ageing process has already been discovered: vampirism. Or at least this is the impression given by the fictional "neoteric vampire" due to his/her command of immortal youth.

Whilst real-world consumers are spending vast sums on anti-ageing treatments, the "neoteric vampire" holds sway over youth. Youth is an integral part of the characterisation of this being. It is *the* aesthetic trait, in conjunction with beauty, which is instantly noticeable and the physical characteristics of youth are most frequently remarked upon by authors in this subgenre and within this literary sample. The "neoteric vampire" body is one which is intrinsically youthful and therefore its physical appearance is dominated by the most desirous traits associated with the young body. These are bodies which are "trim" (2011: p.63) and "firm" (2011: p.33) with defined waists displaying "the sculpted beauty of the vampire"

(2011: p.55); they are pert; they have clear, unmarred skin; bright eyes; and lustrous, bouncy, thick hair (2011: p.63). To wit, they are the bodily manifestation of idealised, and perhaps unattainable, youth and the body is constructed as a direct visual metaphor of society's preoccupation with staying young. The "neoteric vampire's" retention of youth is effortless and their youthful appearance, no matter their number of lived years, is flawless. A vampire may appear to be sixteen years old, but could feasibly be sixty, six hundred, or six thousand years of age. Thus youth and its retention are rendered eternal and the ephemeral adolescent phase becomes permanent.

The "neoteric vampire" has no need for anti-ageing cosmeceuticals because s/he will never grow old. This vampire will "Look and Feel Gorgeous Forever", will "live younger for longer" and has discovered "A Revolutionary Approach to Living Younger, Healthier, Longer". These descriptions apply to the "neoteric vampire" and his/her relationship to perpetual youth, but they are actually straplines to just some of the many publications promoting anti-ageing lifestyles. ¹³ These quotations are offered by way of demonstrating the similarities between real-world desires for the conservation of youth and the fictional reality of the "neoteric vampire", who forever embodies that aesthetic.

4.1 Othering the Child

In *Evernight* and other YA vampire serial fiction, the teen is raised to prominence to the detriment of the child. This is demonstrative of the socio-cultural phenomenon mentioned in the introductory chapter, whereby the state of adolescence is emerging earlier in life as a

¹³ These taglines are from: *The Anti-Ageing Beauty Bible: Everything You Need to Look and Feel Gorgeous Forever* (2012); *Antioxidants: How to live younger for longer by finding the right nutrients for you* (2016); and *The Telomere Effect: A Revolutionary Approach to Living Younger, Healthier, Longer* (2017).

result of precocious physical and mental maturation. The physical appearance of the YA vampire is representative of the loss of childhood. By its very definition an adolescent is an individual in the transition from childhood to adulthood. The "neoteric vampire" does not carry the physical characteristics denoted by this manner of transformation. There are no traces of childhood in their aesthetics and no markers of neoteny in their appearance. Whilst they may be written as teens in their seventeenth, or eighteenth years, descriptions of their appearance relate more closely to those of an adult in the early stages of life. Some real world attendants to high school may look mature for their years and may more closely resemble adults than teens, but there would still be many students who do not (Coleman and Hendry 1999: p.28). These students are not represented in *Evernight* because childhood and its remnants are obscured. Instead these YA vampires are, quite literally, young adults. From a practical perspective, the "neoteric vampire" must live autonomously in the world for eternity with the ability to pass as an adult so childhood is excluded. These "children of the night" an apt phrase for the vampires under discussion, shun childhood whether it be their own or that of others.

Using Bianca as the sole example of a born vampire who matures before transforming, we see a variety of being who bypasses childhood and the potentiality of remaining in a child's body for eternity. As Bianca's particular bloodlust is dormant until she shows interest in boys, she is able to grow up in a very human-like manner with only the drinking of blood from the butcher as any indicator that she is unlike her human peers. Bianca's birth, childhood, and early teenage years occur outside the narrative so the reader is not privy to these normalised times of her life. As a born vampire, Bianca is often referred to as a "baby

¹⁴ This phrase originates with the Stoker Tradition and has become a popularly understood term to reference vampires, but it is used in *Dracula* (1897) to describe wolves.

vampire" (2010: p.61) or child in the early novels, and whilst her parents are eager to delay her transformation into adult and therefore full vampire status, everyone else is eager for her to leave her childish/childhood affiliations behind, repeatedly telling her to "grow up" (2008: p.51) or that it is time she "became a vampire like the rest of us" (2008: p.141). YA vampire literature is largely unconcerned with childhood or the "tween" years as a physical state because its teen characters tend to be of a similar age to the target audience or older. As such, readers of *Evernight* fall into the category of the adolescent and would have left concerns centred upon childhood in the children's literature they are graduates of.

In Consuming Children: education-entertainment-advertising (2001), Jane Kenway and Elizabeth Bullen argue that the expulsion of childhood identifications in youth culture takes place as a method by which adult identity takes shape (2001: p.86). Identity in Evernight is created via transformation and childhood affiliations are shunned or belittled by its vampires, because as Tim Morris states: "No one is more anxious about being a child than an adolescent" (2000: p.5). According to Hurley, contemporary anxiety is at the heart of the remodelling of the abhuman body (2004: p.6) and discussions of the coeval threat of unwelcome childhood certainly propel the "neoteric vampire" into the physical realm of the adolescent. In one telling instance where childhood is overtly depicted in this series, this kind of anxiety is revealed in a nightmare scenario featuring a child's bedroom filled with rows of dolls with watching eyes. The child-like dolls represents a threat to the fictional teens almost as if the ever-vigilant childhood state, and its accompanying somatic aesthetic, is watching and waiting to re-emerge, to the detriment of their newly-minted maturity.

Childhood is frequently Othered in YA fiction, and by extension the eternal child vampire is often written as monstrous in a return to the traditional notions surrounding the vampire. It is

worth noting that the monstrous child paradigm relates only to YA and select adult vampire fiction. The child vampire in children's literature predates his/her YA counterpart and is the protagonist, rather than the antagonist, in these stories (Kubiesa 2018). The perception of the child vampire in the YA genre is different. In Mary Hahn Downing's *Look for Me By Moonlight* (1995), five-year-old Todd's cruelty is encouraged as a marker of potentiality in a vampire child, whilst child vampire and serial killer Christopher is an adult trapped in a child's body in Annette Curtis Klause's *The Silver Kiss* (1990). More recently, Stephenie Meyer's vampires recount stories of voracious and forbidden immortal children who ravage villages, killing indiscriminately. In the adult vampire genre the Rice Tradition features child vampire Claudia whose mind matures whilst her body remains doll-like in its diminutiveness, and in *The Hamiltons* (2006)/*The Thompsons* (2012) film franchise baby vampires are caged because of their uncontrolled animal-like ferocity.

Evernight vampire Charity is a prime example of monstrous child syndrome. Charity is the youngest vampire in Evernight and was forcibly turned at fourteen years of age, but is written as much younger. She is created as mentally unstable, cruel, and vindictive, and is characterised by her inability to maintain her physicality with references to her dirty skin, body odour, and tattered clothing. The other accompanying bodily references all relate to her appearance of neoteny or the aesthetic remnants of childhood which inform her bodily condition. She is noted for her "girlish behaviour and appearance" (2009: p.59) and as being "[t]he youngest looking vampire I'd ever seen. Her heart-shaped face still had the roundness of…baby fat" (2009: p.52). The outward traits of neglect produce a bodily manifestation of the child vampire's monstrous nature, particularly when compared to the pristine appearance of teen vampires. According to cultural historian Tony Thorne, the "vampire was used as a

warning to children" (1999: p.4). In *Evernight* that warning still exists, however the paradigm has been inverted and the warning now relates to the child rather than the vampire. Now, the child is literally used as a threat to vampires, and by association, as a threat to the teen who is trying to escape childhood. In pursuance of this the notion of needing to rid oneself of childhood through the vanquishing of the Othered monster child is cemented, aligning it with Postman's thoughts on the disappearance of the childhood state as discussed in the introduction to this thesis.

In direct response to the perceived acceptable age boundaries which the "neoteric vampire" can occupy, Gray engineers a turning for her born vampire which cannot take place during childhood because it is predicated upon maturation and the embarkation upon more adult emotions, like sexuality. Equally, this ensures the born vampire will also not become *too* old because the triggers associated with his/her turning are those most likely to occur during the teenage years or youth. Therefore a truly youthful vampire is created who is neither *too* young nor *too* old to act as a YA protagonist. The same theory applies to the other turning which takes place within the narrative sphere at the same time as Bianca's. Bianca feeds upon her boyfriend Lucas Black on several occasions and as a result he undergoes a simultaneous "vampiric becoming", this time from the perspective of the bitten vampire. Again, he is of an appropriate age to become a vampire because he is roughly the same age as Bianca, whose age ranges up to eighteen years old at her becoming.

Overall, the child and his/her physicality are successfully removed or obscured from the *Evernight* narrative in line with teen interests. Furthermore, the "adultified child" (Postman 1994: p.126) or "precocious children" (Kinder 1995: p.77) who form part of the audience of

youth media and therefore part of *Evernight's* readership, and who wish to hasten their growth away from childhood (Kinder 1995: p.77) are also placated.

4.2 Substituting the Adult

The detraction of lived years from adulthood and their subsequent attribution to "youth", as explored as cultural contextualisation at the opening of this thesis, only goes part way to producing favourable conditions for the YA vampire. A fully successful enactment of immortal youth is only feasible once the removal and substitution of the adult is complete, known as the "Absentee Parent" convention. It is common practice in children's and YA literature to excise, undermine, or supersede the role played by adults in order to facilitate the agency of the child or teen characters at the heart of each narrative (Kenway and Bullen 2001: p.86). The same theory applies to YA vampire fiction, but in a more radical way. Cypher-like adult characters may exist within *Evernight*, but they are relegated to the background. This applies not just to parents, but to any authority figure or elder. As the former adult vampire has become a teen, so too has the once-adult vampire of the past learned to conform to and ultimately embody the postmodern adolescent societal construct. In addition, the earlier discussed lengthening of "youth" to the mid-twenties or even the midthirties has one further consequence. The adolescent phase of life might well be extended, but those extra years must have some origin. In this case those extra years, from seventeen onwards in this instance, are deducted from the overall lifespan of adulthood. Ergo adulthood is literally diminished in years by the additions made to "youth", it is figuratively excised by the rise of the "neoteric vampire" teen, and is metaphorically re-appropriated through the redesignation of the historical vampire body as adolescent.

The young characters in *Evernight* form the basis for the realisation of the plot and are the conduits through which the narrative unfolds. In contrast, the adult characters are less developed and almost perfunctory in their inclusion. In many cases these "Absentee Parents" act merely as foils for the plot or teen character development, particularly by way of betrayal of the teen to add conflict with authority figures or through their emotional or intellectual inability or unavailability in comprehending teen development, which only confirms the shortcomings of grownups. Kenway and Bullen confirm this common representation of adults as problematic in youth media and describe them as "disapproving, slightly ridiculous, unworthy of emulation and as being subjected to well-justified rebellion and rejection" (2001: p.73). This is precisely the case in *Evernight*, and each adult betrayal results in teen rebellion of sorts. It is also noteworthy that the older an adult gets, and the further away from the youthful state, the less use to society they become and the more expendable they are, to the point where the elderly are acceptably disposable as a first meal for the juvenile vampire. It is true to say that young people are at the heart of *Evernight* and the other sample literary texts in this thesis, whilst adults are side-lined or substituted. The adult state is replaced with that of the teen "neoteric vampire" as the final phase in physical transformation and an indicator that maturation has been reached. This maturation is not exemplified by the attainment of the adult state as traditionally seen in rites of passage texts and the bildungsroman or by the construction of adult identity posited by Kenway and Bullen (2001:p.86), but by the final crossing into the bodily domain of the eternal "neoteric vampire" as youth or pseudo-adult. This goes against what Mary Kellett, Chris Robinson, and Rachel Burr discuss as youth's lineal experience as a movement from child to adult (2007: p.176), a

sentiment echoed two years later by Gill Jones who describes "the central dynamic in youth"

being "the transition into adulthood" (2009: p.84). In *Evernight*, that is a transition which never takes place, because adult status is removed and subsumed by immortal youth.

The influence of the adult, and more particularly the adult body, is absent from Evernight and from the creation of teen vampire bodies. The "parental role" of vampiric birth is instead largely propagated by "progenerative vampire" teens (Ramsland 2002: p.89). Of the creations referred to in any detail, nineteen-year-old Balthazar turns his fourteen-year-old sister Charity, Charity in turn transforms teen Lucas, and of course a large portion of the narrative is given over to Lucas' potential accidental turning by Bianca. The "neoteric vampire" has usurped this reproductory trait formerly held by the adult individual, both human and vampire, and now has no need of adult intervention for the reproduction of its fellows. Just as the period of life given over to the young adult has been increased by the removal of years from the adult state, so too has the youthful vampire learned to increase its own numbers to the detriment of the usefulness of the adults of its kind. Thus the consuming and progenerative state of youth in the real world is aptly reflected by the consuming and progenerative "neoteric vampire" in the fictional world, who not only substitutes its fully adult vampiric kin, but moves between literary genres imbibing their generic conventions and turning them to its own advantage as consumables rife for vampirization in service of its continued literary successes.

It is perhaps surprising that adult readers now buy 55% of YA books (Bowker 2012: np).

This is the case according to the biannual study *Understanding the Children's Book*Consumer in the Digital Age produced by Bowker Market Research. Here we see a fascinating trend in changing readerships, because whilst these books might be intended for a YA audience, they are in fact being consumed by adults in large quantities. The adult may be

deliberately removed or obscured within these texts in favour of the teen, but in the outside world adults are making striking moves to recapture the narrative and take the place of the teen as the eventual reader of these books. In a way the "neoteric vampire" may have figuratively consumed the adults, both vampire and human, within the pages of YA fiction, but the adult reader is consuming the "neoteric vampire" in the real world producing a paradox whereby the substituted adult is now substituting the teen.

It is important to note that these particular "neoteric vampires" are inducted into the world of the teen by Gray, who was thirty seven years old at the time of writing the first book in this series and was forty one years old in the year the final book was published. Therefore these are vampires who are created by an adult author, whose experience of the teenager is mediated through her adult perception of contemporaneous youth and coloured by her own experiences of adolescence gained almost twenty years previously (Morris 2000: p.10). What is more, the fictional human teens this vampire learns from are also Gray's creations and thus face some of the same removes from youth culture that the vampire does. In a way, the "neoteric vampire's" already mediated youth, both as an authorial product and as a refugee from the adult genre, is further diluted by adult intervention and the teen is again substituted.

The adult narrator of the traditional bildungsroman would find no home in this sub-genre because s/he constitutes an unacceptable remove from the youthful experience of the YA vampire, this notion is cemented by the preceding discussions on the substitution of the adult. An adult character within the narratorial sphere recounting experiences of youth highlights an uncomfortable disjoint between these two phases of life and produces an overt focus upon adult mediation. However, that same mediation outside of the novel is expected by readers and yet not often considered as the same manner of adult intervention.

The ability of these books to cross into the world of adult readers is partially demonstrative of distinct levels of maturity in YA literature, and partially attributable to the group known as "childified adult[s]" (Postman 1994: p.126), who form part of the audience for youth media (Kinder 1995: p.77). The appeal of youth cannot be denied in reading these texts, nor can the "deep-seated responses" they evoke in adult readers wishing to revisit that portion of their lives (Morris 2000: p.10) or "retain their youth" (Kinder 1995: p.77). The diminishment of adulthood resonates with these readers because it is something they seek out in the fictive world. It also speaks to shifts in the concepts of "youth" and adulthood in the real world. Almost half of the adults buying these YA books are classified as being over eighteen, a category which could fall within the extended age categories for "youth" as elucidated previously (Publishers Weekly 2012: np). Whilst these readers may still fall within the auspices of "youth" it could be argued that they occupy adult bodies from a physical perspective. The remainder of the adult audience buying YA books, and the largest represented group, are aged between thirty and forty-four years old (Publishers Weekly 2012: np). This age category would comfortably accommodate the much publicised Twilight Moms phenomena discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis.

Evernight's "neoteric vampires" achieve pseudo-adult status by completing their "vampiric becomings" and living independently "to function as adults in the twenty-first century" (2008: p.28). As teens/youths their maturation as we understand it outside of Evernight's fictive universe is stunted and the "neoteric vampire" is confined to his/her juvenile body to "act like teenagers, even when they're centuries old" (2008: p.207) because "Those of us who died young – we'll never wholly be adults" (2009: p.137). S/he may hold adult responsibilities whilst maintaining a teenage appearance and may be the answer to today's

obsession with youth, but the question of whether a bildungsroman without full physical (or mental) maturation can be possible must be raised. When a centuries-old vampire is forced to inhabit a teenaged body for all time, it is also feasible that they are teens in their mental capacities and emotions too. A "perpetual adolescence" from this point of view seems inconceivable when accompanied by the prospect of never growing up (2008: p.208). In this case, never physically growing old may be the ultimate goal of the contemporary Western consciousness, but never reaching one's mental and emotional potential has many other consequences.

This topic never merits more than the briefest of mentions in *Evernight*, but does feature in other vampire stories where the lack of maturation is problematized, for example in the YA *The Reformed Vampire Support Group* (2009) or to a greater degree in *Let the Right One In* (2004) by John Ajvide Lindqvist and the subsequent film adaptations. ¹⁵ In *Evernight* vampires are sometimes said to act like the teenagers they were, but there is no real evidence of the adult mind being eternally locked inside a teen body or of a retardation of the emotional or mental abilities, outside of those already discussed with regard to the character of Charity. The fact that vampires remain in the same state eternally after being turned, both physically and mentally is alluded to but is mediated because these vampires have young faces "but their centuries showed in their eyes" (2009: p.51). The overall avoidance of the subject, I believe, is what attracts both teen, child, and adult readers to this series. Without the consideration of these issues, the "neoteric vampire" is free to be the idealised vampire pinup and can conform to the wish-fulfilment of any given reader. Teens will not feel their personal maturation is lacking because they do not meet given standards of mental or

¹⁵ Let the Right One In (2008) directed by Tomas Alfredson and Let Me In (2010) by director Matt Reeves.

emotional development and adults can live through these physically young characters with full adult agency, without the jarring effect of noticeably lacking maturity, either from a literary standpoint or in terms of individual characters.

When the Whedon Tradition began twenty years ago, its initial intent was for the teen vampires to be negatively representative of youth, as Spike actor James Marsters explains: "The vampires were supposed to be metaphors for the challenges of adolescence. They were supposed to be ugly and easily overcome." (Salmon 2010: p.27) This vampire quickly morphed into the archetypal teen idol when vampire character Angel was introduced. "Angel became way more popular than expected," Marsters adds (Salmon 2010: p.27), and the very thing which was meant to repel viewers actually attracted them. The vampire found a way to invert the intentions of its creators and become popular, desirable, enviable, and rather than representing the "ugly" challenges of adolescence instead promoted youth (Salmon 2010: p.27). An entire industry of youthful vampire heroes was born from this revision in the Whedon Tradition and the "neoteric vampire" was created as a result. Similarly, the intention of the "neoteric vampire" may be to eliminate childhood and adulthood to attain immortal youth, but s/he has actually attracted those demographics as readers.

5. Conclusion: Becoming Vampire

When a fictive individual is becoming a vampire or "lives" with the implications of that transformation, their manner of survival orients around that physical metamorphosis. The "vampiric becoming" literally shapes their physical appearance, bodily abilities and habits, and emotions. The same can be said of the youthful reader and their maturation into the adult

world and the physical developments they undergo along the way. That the "vampiric becoming" of the YA novel be compared to or inspired by the real life metamorphosis undergone by the imagined reader in the target age range is no coincidence. This view is strengthened when considerations of the shifting state of "youth" are taken into account with its encroachment into childhood and adulthood and its historical reinventions. It could even be posited that the postmodern youth has undergone a far greater transformation than the abhuman vampire him/herself.

Laurence A. Rickels asserts that the contemporary vampirism of childhood is a product of the "Teen Age" (1999: p.263) and this is certainly true in YA fiction. The same theory applies to the vampirism of adulthood and these two poles of human development, which are parenthetical to adolescence, are consumed or vampirised. The child is created as the "archetypal form" of otherness (Morris 2000: p.9), whilst the adult is "the negative other" (Kenway and Bullen 2001: p.77) and the teen/"neoteric vampire" not only exists within this positive space, but thrives there on numerous best-seller book lists. Thus the adult, and by extension the adult vampire, is forced into the narrative background and the child, and therefore the vampiric child, is demonised. According to critical studies expert Marsha Kinder, youth media has a

dual audience of infantilised adults and precocious children. These subject positions seem to provide an illusory sense of empowerment both for the kids who want to accelerate their growth into consumerist culture and for the adults who want to retain their youth by keeping up with pop culture's latest fads (1995: p.77).

Evernight, like the other series within this study, pays fealty to lionised adolescence. Ergo, Kinder's "illusory sense of empowerment" common to both of these age groups is just that because they are both subject to excision in the texts. Conversely, since one group wants to

accelerate their growth into the realm of adolescence and the other desires to return to it, then both demographics find comfort in the mediated youth on offer in *Evernight*. Furthermore, as the luxury of childhood and the indulgence of adulthood as indicated by these "precocious" and "infantilised" (Kinder 1995: p.77) individuals is indigenous to the West, then the societal positions they represent are also symptomatic of the Western world in the same way that the "neoteric vampire" is.

On one hand the "neoteric vampire" defies the physical constraints of eternal youth, if they can be described as such, in a contemporary era obsessed with anti-aging and consumerism, and on the other s/he conforms to them because these vampires are, in fact, eternally youthful within the narrative sphere. This is because these teen characters never grow up and mature. They exist forever in the state in which they are written and their creators never write them as adults. As a result, this abhuman is always in a state of flux. This is a creature whose transitory youth is eternal, whose body represents fixity but whose bodily developments are never complete, and whose liminal metamorphoses Gray constructs as reversible and perpetually shifting so that they are always on the verge of becoming something else.

Youth has many socio-cultural facets and this causes an uneasy relationship between its disparate elements, which in the contemporaneous cultural climate and within the novels, creates a tension around this construct and adds an even greater degree of uncertainty when coupled with the figure of the vampire. Youth is a natural human state as it relates to the body as a transitory stage of the early part of the human lifespan. It is a lived bodily experience for those who are experiencing that developmental state in terms of the changes that occur during maturation. Oppositionally, it is also a medical and pseudo-medical experience as it relates to beauty and the attainment or retention of idealised physical appearance might state that

beauty is the optimum aesthetic, but in this case "beauty" is more precisely a synonym for "youth". Finally, it is also a cultural construct, whose length, nature and characteristics are manufactured and determined by coeval society. Thus what begins as a natural, transient human state, is vampirised by consumerist culture into a highly manufactured, saleable and profitable entity. As such it is highly appropriate that this life stage be appropriated by the "neoteric vampire" construct, who not only vampirises this already preyed upon state, but rejoices in that state as a transformative mechanism by which s/he will regain social popularity and ultimately sell books. As a result the societal goal of achieving eternal youth is achieved and the vampire's ultimate objective of attaining unending life is mutated into something more fitting for contemporary readers.

This chapter began by breaking down the constituent parts of the phrase "Young Adult vampire" to illustrate the importance of the components of "youth" and "vampirism".

Following the foregoing investigation it has come to light that since the vampiric element is a constant within this thesis, then it is rather the "young" and "adult" portions of the phrase which offer greatest insight into the figure of the "neoteric vampire". For whilst linguistically its intension encompasses both "youth" and "adult", it would appear that the "neoteric vampire" is both and neither at the same time, having its roots in the denial of the adult and the Othering of the child. In true abhuman fashion, s/he is defined by these dual characteristics and is fully relatable to neither, being a body in transition, much like the real-life adolescent.

An investigation of the "neoteric vampire" in YA literature and its persistent adolescence could easily lead to research into the burgeoning and newly-created genre of New Adult literature, which has a target age range of eighteen to thirty years old and which sees the

youthful vampire travel into the realm of the adult to a greater extent subsuming it further. Created in 2009 by St. Martin's Press, New Adult or NA fiction is intended to bridge the gap between YA and adult literature and deals with more adult themes than its YA counterpart (Naughton 2014: np, Kaufman 2012: np). Whilst, in theory, its target audience begins where that of the YA ends, in practice as we have seen, age divisions for this type of literature are actually unrestricted. For this reason it would be fascinating to see what kind of vampire is presented within NA fiction and what manner of life transition its "vampiric becoming" represents. In terms of opening up academic discussion and creating new avenues for original research, the field of NA literature is a prime location for further research into the development of the "neoteric vampire" and its potential becomings.

Chapter Two

Conversions and Resurrections: Religion in *House of Night*

1. Introduction: The Vampire and The Church

The "traditional vampire" fears religion as evinced by religious paraphernalia such as holy water, crucifixes, and the Host, and the probability of bodily harm these talismans could render. Whilst religion may seem an unlikely subject for discussion with regard to the "neoteric vampire" body and contemporary society, it plays an important role in vampiric conventions and is central to the four salient vampire traditions. It is also significant in the world of the "neoteric vampire", however, more by omission than conscious and overt inclusion as an apotropaic or anathema. Rather than suffering from cruciphobia, the vampires in the sample texts display either an indifference to traditional Christianity or dismiss its restrictive powers as belonging to the world of *Dracula* myths.

The notion of religion, or more precisely Christianity, providing protection from the evils of vampirism is related to the vampire of folklore and thus to the inspirations for the fictional Count. Laurence A. Rickels notes that during the Middle Ages a working definition of what it meant to be a vampire already existed because it had been invented by the Church (1999: p.2). Bob Curran further expands upon this point by explaining: "The spread of structured and organised religion – Christianity, in particular – brought about profound change in how the living viewed the returning dead" (2005: p.8). With the advent of these new beliefs came, Curran (2005) suggests, the concept that souls could be sent to purgatory and released by paid

masses and prayers or, if these prayers went unsaid, the "vengeful dead" could return to attack cattle and drink familial blood (2005: p.8).

To prevent this and other unwanted returns from the grave, "life could only go on by virtue of the thin, breakable line of priesthood, which was the only tangible authority powerful enough to keep the dread figure of the vampire at bay" (Copper 1973: p.36). So whilst it is true that both the folkloric vampire and the concept of returns from death pre-date Christianity, the Church actively positioned itself as a line of defence against such creatures and could be said to promote their existence via its new beliefs and required death rituals. Therefore, it is complicit in the creation of the vampiric convention with regard to the protection afforded by religion and its iconography.

This chapter will open a dialogue between the religion vampiric convention and the way in which religion is dealt with by the "neoteric vampire" from a cultural perspective. It will deal with *House of Night* (2007-2010) by P. C. Cast and Kristin Cast, a series set in modern day Oklahoma where teenage vampires are called fledglings. The series is notable because rather than disparaging religion, its vampires have constructed a complex theology. This series will be read alongside the theories of Anti-Clerical, Faux Catholic, and "Spiritual" Gothics and cross-disciplinary cultural analysis from the field of sociology.

2. Atheist Vampires

The dismissal of the vampiric convention of religious iconography as an apotropaic is an important one because the "neoteric vampire" has moved away from the bodily restriction originally imposed upon his/her forebear in folklore and away from what Victoria Nelson

(2007) cites as Gothicised faux Catholicism. Nelson notes that this valorisation of Catholicism is a relatively new development in the Gothic movement and points out that readers of eighteenth century Gothic would be more familiar with its anti-clerical roots, in a period "generally regarded by its critics as the first Western literary genre operating implicitly in the vacuum left by the departure of religious belief". (2007: p.90) Since that time Faux Catholic Gothic, where the tools of Catholicism are used as apotropaics, became the *modus operandi* in the sphere of vampire films and literature. However, Nelson explains that more recently Gothic has moved firmly into the realm of "Protestant anti-Papism" and makes reference to titles such as the underground classic *The Last Days of Christ the Vampire* (1990), where the Vatican strives to hide Christ's origins (2007: p.93). Bentley Little's *The Summoning* (1993) also falls into this category, with a vampire who appears as Jesus to recruit a church congregation into offering human sacrifices. Thus the original Anti-Clerical Gothic has been replaced by Faux Catholic Gothic and while this version was prominent in recent memory, it too is slowly being subsumed by Anti-Catholic Gothic in an environment similar to that of the original Gothic tradition.

As a creature of infinite adaptability for re-invention, the "neoteric vampire" has adapted to the real-world diminishment of organised Christianity in Western society and has moved away from the restrictive vampiric conventions associated with it. Sociologist Stephen Hunt (2004) notes: the "long-term disintegration" of institutional religions; the decline in adolescents within the Church; and "evidence to suggest the major tenets of the faith are weakening" in the real world (p.59, p.94, p.94). In turn the religious hold over the fictional vampire has also weakened as this cultural contextualisation of the issue will explain.

There are two theories on the aetiology of the religion vampiric convention. The first and most transparent is that the Church is extremely powerful and has the ability to save the populace from the evil vampire. The second is a theory that has been raised by authors of vampire fiction, notably by Fred Saberhagen in *The Dracula Tape* (1975) and Scott Westerfield in *Peeps* (2005), that religious paraphernalia only holds power over the vampire as an anathema because s/he followed that religion during human life and held those beliefs. If either or both of these theories are true, the state of religion in the "neoteric vampire's" cultural sphere is quite revealing. If the former is true, then the reason the convention does not apply must follow that either the Church is no longer powerful, no longer has the ability to save the populace, or the vampire is no longer evil. If the latter is true, then it must follow that the vampire was not religious in human life or, more specifically, that the author did not write him as such. In all of these scenarios, the Church loses.

According to official research figures, there has been a noticeable decline in people describing themselves as religious in recent times. ¹⁶ This loss of Church is carried one step further with the advent of New Atheism or Militant Modern Atheism, a belief led by proponents biologist Richard Dawkins, philosopher Daniel Dennett, neuroscientist Sam Harris, and the late journalist Christopher Hitchens, collectively dubbed the "Four Horsemen of New Atheism" (Gribbin 2011: np). The manifesto of New Atheism, whose followers

¹⁶ In research carried out by NatCen Social Research (2011) the British Social Attitudes Survey's 28th Report said that between 1983 and 2009, the number of people who described themselves as "non-religious" had risen from 31 per cent to 50 per cent, whilst the number of people aged from 18 to 24 years old who had affiliations with a religion was only 36 per cent (p.173). Comparatively, in the USA a Pew Research Centre poll (2012) has shown that people citing themselves as having no religious affiliation has risen from 15 per cent in 2007 to just under 20 per cent in 2012. Included in this figure was one third of US adults aged 18 to 29 who are "much more likely to be unaffiliated than previous generations were at a similar stage in their lives" (Pew Research Centre 2012: np).

Hitchens named "antitheists" (Mayer 2007: np), involves attacking religion and disproving it.

Or in Dawkins' own words:

Imagine with John Lennon, a world with no religion. Imagine no suicide bombers, no 9/11, no 7/7, no Crusades, no witch-hunts, no Gunpowder Plot, no Indian partition, no Israeli/Palestinian wars, no Serb/Croat/Muslim massacres, no persecution of Jews as 'Christ-killers', no Northern Ireland 'troubles', no 'honour killings'. No shiny-suited bouffant-haired televangelists fleecing gullible people of their money...Imagine no Taliban to blow up ancient statues, no public beheadings of blasphemers, no flogging of female skin for the crime of showing an inch of it (2006: p.1).

This description comes in the wake of the Islamic attacks on France in 1995 and 1996, New York in 2001, Spain in 2004, and London in 2005, and in a climate when:

...groups of people seek to interfere with the private lives of others because those targeted are allegedly violating divine commands, and when important discoveries about the world in which we live are questioned, or even denied, because they are supposed to be incompatible with authentic messages from the deity, it is easy to think that things have gone too far (Kitcher 2011: p.1).

With such feelings about traditional religion seemingly on the increase, it is no surprise that the "neoteric vampire" is no longer fearful of the religious iconography which once held him/her to ransom. The antitheist of today is more likely to suffer from cruciphobia than the literary vampire, and the vampire's renowned distrust of religion has jumped from the pages of vampire fiction and into reality. Hence the archetypal battle between the vampire and the Church is now non-existent, with the vampire joining the ranks of New Atheists in an "advanced capitalist system which is inherently atheistic" (Eagleton 2009: p.39). Thus the vampire now resides in an environment where the Church is no longer a threat.

This discourse is blatantly represented in *HoN* through the negative portrayal of the Christian church the People of Faith. They are depicted as judgemental individuals who prize self-advancement over all else. Their racist views and open hostility to vampires is a key indicator of the vilification of organised religion. This church is created as the antithesis of vampire spirituality and is found lacking in all aspects where the vampire religion of Nyx is elevated. Whilst the People of Faith isolate members from their support networks and are heavily allied with the acquisition of material wealth, the vampire theology is the polar opposite. And, of course, it is telling that this church is mediated through protagonist Zoey's atheist viewpoint. This presentation of organised religion appears to echo P.C. Cast's own beliefs, which are known to be spiritual rather than traditionally Christian. Unlike the extensive analysis that exists with regard to *Twilight* and the espousal of author Stephenie Meyer's Mormon beliefs and those of Anne Rice in the Rice Tradition, P. C. Cast says she prefers to keep her thoughts on religion private (2008: np). Despite this Cast has written a book dedicated to the spirituality of the *HoN* and does appear to espouse these beliefs.

Another display in support of atheism comes in the form of a religious hate crime directed at the House of Night and perpetrated upon the body. Two vampire professors are found dead, crucified outside the school, with a wooden stake through the heart and scripture nailed above them. This parody of the archetypal battle between the vampire and the Church combines crucifixion with staking, the popular method for killing cinematic vampires. Each professor has also had their heads impaled on spikes in a move reminiscent of the legends of Vlad the Impaler, named because of his practices involving impaling victims. This scene is set up by those wanting to frame the People of Faith and start an inter-species war. Keen to avoid the "Burning Times" where vampires were hunted by humans and burned at the stake rather than

being stabbed by it, the vampires seek to protect themselves (2008a: p.102). Thus, the *HoN* world is just a step away from a religious war and the kind of issues found in real-world terrorism carried out in the name of religion.

Critics of New Atheism are in agreement that this form of atheism is itself on a level footing with the extremes of zealotry it is trying to fight. Kitcher explains: "Militant modern atheism, so viewed, is itself akin to the fundamentalism it opposes: intellectually simplistic, aggressively intolerant, and dangerously polarizing" (2011: p.2). Vampires and the People of Faith are on opposing sides in a doctrinal debate. The People show aggression towards any outside group, religious or not, and vampires are targeted as the embodiment of the Other. As naturally placed adversaries, vampires try to live alongside the People but do act to defend themselves. This emulates the real-life cultural conflict between New Atheists and religious groups. As "new atheists" the vampires take little heed of these in-text religious extremists because they are in a minority within a modern world where Christianity does not play a prominent role and thus holds no real danger. This kind of religious conflict must be tempered by something positive and that positivity appears in the form of Goddess Nyx and vampire spirituality.

3. "Spiritual Gothic" in The Consumer Age

Not only do "neoteric vampires" not cower at the sight of religious, and more particularly Christian, iconography, they have taken to wearing crucifixes as a fashion statement. Taking this a step further, some have found religion in a time when the populace has lost the need for religious protection from the vampire. For example, in the *Blade* films (1998-2004) the

eponymous vampire is a Buddhist and in YA series from this period The Last Vampire (1994-2013) by Christopher Pike, the titular vampire is portrayed as having Hindu connections. What is more, the vampire has even found his way into the service of God in films such as *Life Blood* (2009) and *The Reverend* (2011).

However, in the place of historical religion, the "neoteric vampire" of *HoN*, just like his real-life human contemporary, has fashioned his own religion amongst the consumer-age pick and mix religiosity or spirituality turning the confused consolidation of Faux Catholic Gothic and Anti-Catholic Gothic into something which can be termed "Spiritual Gothic". Sociologists studying religion agree that a cultural shift in the way religion is practised has taken place, which has moved the site of much contemporary "religion" into the realm of the personal rather than the organised and into the arena of the eclectic rather than the denominational. In his ground-breaking work *Jesus in Disneyland* (2000), David Lyon explains that in an age when someone can attend cyber church or be ordained online, it is perfectly acceptable to "claim some fairly conventional religious position and cheerfully add on other elements, Feng Shui, yoga, mysticism, astrology, Shiatsu, Reiki, and the rest" (2000: p.74). This choice, or voluntarism (2000: p.76) as Lyon describes it, includes what Stephen Hunt terms as new age religions, "self-spiritualities and implicit or quazi-religions" which are "manifestly new, or newly discovered or invented forms of religiosity which are frequently said to be of increasing significance in this spiritual market place" (2005: p.147). He adds:

The fact that there is an overlap between many practices and beliefs arguably adds to their appeal for the religious 'consumer' by providing a mix and match religiosity that is frequently manufactured for contemporary requirements (2005: p.147).

In this vein, the manufactured and multi-faceted *HoN* theology, which is always termed more as spirituality than religion, is a mix and match of religious ¹⁷, spiritual, and mythical elements which can be said to define "Spiritual Gothic". Religion is central to the plot and character development of this series, which portrays a matriarchal theocratic society; and just as women are given a more visible position in this storyverse, so too are they more visible in these new spiritualities, and thus these spiritualities are more attractive to women than men (Hunt 2005: p.157), just as these books are more attractive to female rather than male readers.

The "Spiritual Gothic" of *HoN* can be read as anti-patriarchal in this sense because unlike the patriarchal governance of traditional organised religion, men in the church of Nyx perform a supportive, and secondary, function to their High Priestesses and to their female congregants who are more likely to be gifted with affinities by the Goddess. Inline with this vision, a version of positive female-focused Christianity is also included near the end of the series, in the form of a Benedictine Abbey and its nuns. This version of Christianity is mentioned here as it represents an extension of the *HoN* theology and an antidote to the bigoted patriarchal

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¹⁷ The *HoN* storyline is punctuated with the casting of Pagan circle rituals as the vampire equivalent of a church service, in worship of the Goddess Nyx, herself borrowed from the myths of ancient Greece. Nyx is described in the terms of a triple deity as seen initially in Celtic worship and later in Christianity, amongst others, and more particularly as "mother, maiden and crone", as associated with Neo-Paganism (2007a: p.124). Cherokee tribal practices also form a central element of the religion once Zoey joins the church and adds her personal rituals to the curch. The foundation of the series itself is similarly built around a combinatorial approach to religiosity with reincarnation as featured in Hinduism and Buddhism made a reality and with all vampires being "Marked" on the forehead with a crescent moon shape, which the authors term a "tattoo". It appears in the position of the Third Eye from Hindu tradition in the colour of the Ajna Chakra. Use of Christian belief is also made with the fallen winged immortal character Kalona, portrayed as "a shining angel" with echoes of Christianity's Lucifer (2009: p.307). The concept of Nyx's Otherworld is itself taken from Druid beliefs, Kalona's children the Raven Mockers are broadly a product of Native American myths and his favourite son Rephaim's name is taken from the Bible with reference to the race of giants fathered by unions between angels and humans. Scottish and Irish tribal tales also make an appearance in the form of Cruithne myths.

People of Faith church. Goddess Nyx is drawn as having many incarnations, including that of the Christian Mary. Those who worship Mary are, by extension, also worshipping Nyx, thus Catholicism and its progressive and open-minded nuns are portrayed as a newer offshoot of Nyx's religion. This is emphasised by the fact that The Vampire High Council, the vampire equivalent of government, is based in a former cathedral where "the stained-glass window scenes of the original cathedral had been changed from blood Jesus on the cross and a bunch of Catholic saints to a representative of Nyx" (2009a: p.295), mirroring the replacement of traditional male-centric religion with new age spirituality and the supplantation of original Anti-Clerical Gothic with "Spiritual Gothic" and an anti-patriarchal and female-centric stance.

3.1 Consumption and Sacrificial Blood

One aspect of the mix and match consumer spirituality which is prevalent in the *HoN* theology is the use of ritualised blood. A part of religions across the globe since prehistory, blood sacrifice seems an unlikely topic for a YA series. However, when considered in the light of a narrative on fictitious vampires, it becomes more understandable. Blood sacrifice is included in the religious circle casting ceremonies in a practise reminiscent of the Catholic Eucharist. During the Eucharist metaphorical blood is administered and the individual becomes sanctified. A similar sanctification occurs in the text whereby wine, wine mixed with blood, or unadulterated blood is offered to participants. Rather than being metaphorical blood or a representation of Nyx's body through Transubstantiation, congregants knowingly drink real blood. Just as the Eucharist memorialises someone at the precipice of death and the cusp of eternal life, so too does the vampiric Eucharist mimic this tradition for fledglings facing the potentiality of dying from not completing the Change or the possibility of living

for centuries. The drinking of blood is a potent symbol of both death and life and acts as a reminder that the body's divinity can be reinforced with its admittance or destroyed with its removal.

Fledglings new to the vampire life do not yet need to consume blood and previous (human) associations with the qualities of blood as abject remain until they mature. Rituals are said to cleanse, so it could be argued that the possible abjection caused to the body by ritualistic blood drinking is purified during ceremonies. In her seminal work on abjection, Julia Kristeva remarks upon the process of a holy man eating food and becoming polluted by the tainting nature of what was external to the body being introduced into it (1982: 75). This holy man becomes less pure once food is consumed and one assumes prayers must be said to reestablish levels of physical, and by extension, spiritual cleanliness. The vampire priestesses and congregation in HoN consume blood as a source of nourishment and as a religious rite. Not only is this substance external to the body, it originates inside another's body. In many ways this practice is reflective of eating any animal product, however that this blood comes from a human or fellow vampire shifts the territory of abjection from consuming external organic material that is unlike the vampire's, to the imbibition of a substance that is exactly like that found within the vampire's body. Thus, to use Kristeva's terms, "the natural" substance of the food source that is entering "the social condition of man" (1982: 75) is directly derived from that same social condition and produces a physical dilemma whereby what was once inside another's body, is now actively sought out and consumed by the vampire body intensifying the nature of bodily pollution.

Within the text the idea of pollution is linked to any blood that leaves the body through injury or the teenage rejection of the vampiric state, which results in all of the body's blood

involuntarily flowing from the facial orifices. While this blood is recognised as attractive at its core, this attraction is mediated by the circumstances of the blood's ejection from the body and its status as abject. This abjection is only enhanced by the subtext that not surviving the Change carries a religious judgement, as exemplified by the evil nature of some of the Red Fledglings.

As this narrative is one featuring vampires who drink blood to survive, this notion of abjection largely falls to the aforementioned polluted blood rather than the blood taken as part of feeding or religious rite. The latter is instead labelled as restorative, nourishing and capable of providing physical and mental well-being and community. Vampire spirituality is imbued with the same properties and thus the two aspects become parts of the whole vampire identity. Blood communion, like vampire spirituality, represents religious purity because only vampires drink blood and only vampires follow Nyx. Thus the connotations of the abject and impurity do not apply in this scenario.

Blood sacrifices which result in death form a part of the adult world of vampirism for those at the higher echelons of worship and take place three times in the series. Significantly, none of these sacrifices occur in the name of Nyx and her reputation is thus untarnished. Blood sacrifice ties the observance of religion to the vampire myth more closely and is demonstrative of the trope, in literal form, of consumption related to religion. Thus Lyon's (2000) belief that postmodern consumers try new religions in the same way they try on new clothes or identities is extended here to the YA vampires acting out a new form of spirituality, trying on the role of adults in a ceremony normally led by mature vampires and performing as the ultimate consumer in drinking the blood of fellow students. Hence the role of traditional religion, via "Spiritual Gothic", has been converted into mix and match

consumer spirituality. This is even true in the real world, where consumers and converts to Nyx can purchase *HoN* divinity cards in order to "trust your intuition and make powerful decisions about your life" (*Amazon* nd) with the guidance of the vampire Goddess Nyx. Thus a fictional theology is transposed into a real-life spiritual practice under the auspices of brand merchandising and this supposed naturalistic philosophy is transformed into consumer fodder, which is ironic considering the spiritual nature of the in-text belief system and the consumerist mentality of pick and mix religiosity which it represents.

The jarring juxtaposition of spirituality and consumerism continues throughout the series with the ingrained rhetoric of shopping and brand consumption. Shopping is shown as a hobby for some characters and mentioned regularly, but is not out of place in a teen narrative. However there is a regular and almost insistent embedded marketing of real-world brands from fashion designers, to coffee shops, breakfast cereals and bottled water, the like of which is not found in any of the other series in this sample. It is clear that the authors are aiming to position the narrative in its particular time period and by mentioning real-life consumer brands are attempting to engage their vampire world in a dialogue with the real world.

This practice is reminiscent of the Whedon Tradition and its familiar interjections of popular culture references from film, music and television, all positioned within the lexicon of contemporaneous teen speech. However, in *HoN*, these references form neither context nor subtext and instead the incongruity of real-world brands being interjected into the spiritual world appears more as the product placement one might find in the film or telelvision sphere, linking reading habits to the familiar territory of the screen that the imagined reader would be well versed in. Thus Stephen Hunt's "religious 'consumer'" (2005: p.147), becomes someone who consumes religiously both within the context of the novels and within the real world.

3.2 Sexual Consumption and Religious Experience

Blood drinking and spirituality are created as innate aspects of the vampire's existence and both are universal. During a religious ritual blood is drunk from a goblet and the participant's whole body is invigorated and desirous of more as if the need for blood is linked to the addictive desire for more spirituality. While religion is hardly ever related overtly to sexual desires, drinking blood brings a sensual whole-body sensation that is chemical and hormonal and is most definitely connected to sexual feelings. Drinking blood directly from another person, regardless of their sexual orientation, activates the sex receptors of both parties producing extreme sexual sensations not felt outside of blood drinking. Young vampires newly developing a taste for blood find it incredibly difficult to turn from blood once exposed to it and are almost compelled to drink it, to a much greater degree than in *Evernight* in the previous chapter.

This almost violent need to consume blood is highly problematic when considered with the accompanying feelings of sexual gratification which are equally compulsive. These overwhelming physical sensations are much greater than those felt when fledglings have actual religious experiences with Nyx and are virtually portrayed as religious experiences in their own right due to the levels of sexual feeling achieved. It is almost as if these teens are victims of their sexual desires rather than permissive participants in them because their will to refuse sexual relations is removed once blood is involved, whether they are consenting or not. Thus individuals are pushed to levels of sexual activity they would not undertake without the added influence of blood. This is exampled by Zoey losing her virginity to her teacher and by her repeated feedings and sexual interactions with her ex-human boyfriend who cuts himself every time she tries to terminate their relationship, knowing she cannot resist the blood.

Throughout the series sexual shaming and open sexual commentaries on appearance are commonplace. Including the traditional vampiric blood-drinking-as-sexual trope in this new guise as removal of free will is an authorial mechanism to include titillating details whilst absolving the characters of perceived sexual misconduct and avoiding sexual shaming. However, this removal of consent sends alarming messages about sex to readers about these discourses of negativity, normalised sex shaming and sexual compulsion as religious experience within an environment which is essentially a religious or faith school, thus producing an uneasy relationship between religion and sexual negativity. Zoey herself provides evidence of this when she is seemingly unable to distinguish between the normal teenage experience of passionately kissing her boyfriend and the sexualised relations she finds herself in with three males concurrently, including her teacher, when two of those males are using blood to coerce sexual acts. She berates herself equally about these experiences as if they were comparable in some sense. The extent of this sexual negativity is only confirmed when dark magic is involved and sexual relations become publically non-consensual.

The relationship between sex and religion at their intersection with blood is a powerful one, but also one which harks back to notions of religion as anathema to vampires. In this instance teen sexuality is represented as unbidden and uncontrolled and individuals are incapable of saving themselves from it and the harm it causes to them. While Nyx intervenes to help or warn Zoey when she is in spiritual danger, she is conspicuously absent when Zoey is in sexual peril. During these occasions the anti-patriarchal stance of "Spiritual Gothic" is emphasised because the men in Zoey's life use sex and blood as tools with which to manipulate her to regain sexual control and these levels of sexual misconduct only increase with the levels of spiritual power Zoey manifests. She finds herself in a downward spiral of

romantic and sexual subjugation against an upsurge in spiritual fulfilment and gendered power, showing readers that women can be simultaneously empowered and disenfranchised. In a way, some semblance of the religion as anathema paradigm remains through the negative consequences of sexuality as overwhelming and destructive.

4. Conversions

The concept of conversion in the religious sense was commonplace in the Victorian world of *Dracula*, where:

Chained bibles were to be found on railway stations; sermons were regularly printed and sometimes became best-sellers; huge and highly popular efforts were made to bring Christianity to the heathen, especially if they lived in the British Empire, and missionaries like David Livingstone became household names (Evans 2011: np).

Little wonder, then, that Dracula himself shared such zeal in conversion, this time in turning his human love Mina into one of the undead. As with the religious conversions to Christianity of the time, a kind of Eucharist was involved. Rather than the body and blood of Christ, this one involved the blood and then the body, in the transformative sense, of the vampire. In his vampire novel, *The Radleys* (1995), Matt Haig terms the transformation from human to vampire as a "conversion", echoing the religious connotations of the act.

In the realm of the "neoteric vampire" conversions still exist, however their tone reflects more the traditional attitude of the subject of the conversion rather than the bestower of it — one of reluctance. In *HoN* the conversion is a forced one and comes in the form of a strand of junk DNA which activates during puberty. Thus a human teen genetically becomes a vampire fledgling — something which is both unbidden and extremely unwelcome.

In tandem with this comes the forced conversion of the teen into the spirituality of Nyx, which all vampires follow. Allying this conversion with historical forced conversions into Christianity, Zoey can either "turn into a vampire, which equals a monster in just about any human's mind...[or] My body rejects the Change and I die. Forever" (2007: p.7). This unwelcome conversion appears to mirror the authors' beliefs on religion. P. C. Cast comments: "I do not adhere to the ideology that says I must foist my beliefs on others, and/or insist others believe that same way I do" (2008: np). As a metaphor for religious conversion, the concept of vampire birth reveals a significant shift in attitudes towards faith. As a catalyst for all kinds of transformations, being Marked brings enormous changes and heralds the beginnings of a series of conversions. Initially the teen is branded with a vampire crescent Mark upon his/her forehead, akin to wearing a religious symbol. After her conversion Zoey moves from human being to vampire fledgling, from atheism to a convert to Nyx, from an unhappy patriarchal home to a supportive matriarchal society, from anonymity to fame, from virginity to being sexually active, from no responsibility to the world of adult responsibilities, and from a mortal existence of around 80 years to a vampire life span of up to 500 years.

In contrast to the vampiric conversions in the Whedon Tradition, where anyone bitten by a vampire turns, the *HoN* conversion would actually appear to be less random than the authors would like to admit. In common with beliefs on the conversions of folkloric vampires, which were thought to target those on the margins of the community and consequently create a "double exclusion of whatever is already on the margin", this genetic conversion appears to be targeted (Rickels 1999: p.2). Several of the main characters who are Marked are saved from unhappy lives and from the margins of their own communities, but rather than

becoming doubly Other and doubly excluded, they find acceptance in their new world and affirmation with the reader from the popularity of their exploits. Zoey leaves behind a home life where she is the only atheist in a religious family, her friend Damian finds acceptance of his sexuality away from his parents who "were cool with him being Marked...They were not okay with him being gay" (2007a: p.3), Neferet becomes a high priestess after being sexually abused by her father. Therefore, these forced conversions do result in happy endings for the majority of the fledglings, even though they must leave their old community and religious beliefs and go through a period of physical transition and readjustment in order to be resurrected.

5. Resurrections

An investigation of religion and vampires would not be complete without a discussion on the mutually important topic of resurrection, and whilst there are several dying-and-rising gods, Jesus is both the most well-known and the most relevant to a discussion on vampires. Unlike most vampire narratives, the occurrence of resurrection in *HoN* is more complex than the straightforward process of a human dying, being buried, and "surviving death" as a vampire. In fact, the "neoteric vampire" is never buried. This is significant because it dispenses with the popular (and folkloric) image of the vampire clawing from its grave and dispels one of the most well-known vampiric conventions.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines resurrection as "The rising again of Christ after His death" or "The action or fact of rising again" (1989). In *HoN* there are a series of transitory physical resurrections. The first kind of resurrection takes place with the genetic changes

which trigger the genesis of the human's transformation to vampire fledgling. This fit of coughing, severe headaches, and nausea, which according to folklorist Michael E. Bell (2001) are symptoms of TB and which New Englanders in the eighteenth century would recognise as the early stages of becoming a revenant, marks the death of the human teen and the resurrection into the vampire fledgling. This resurrection begins under the mantra "thy death will be thy birth" and with the revelation of the Mark, which can quite literally be seen as a birthmark, and will only be completed after specialised medical treatment from a vampire healer and following the induction to a vampire school where the teen can remain in the vicinity of adult vampires – a condition which ensures their continued health (2007: p.4).

The second kind of resurrection begins when a fledgling has "completed the Change" and become an adult vampire (2008: p.247). It involves the metaphorical death of the fledgling in a process which is both painful and terrifying. Fledgling Erik Night's Change is the first shown in the series, he: "was on his hands and knees groaning in pain...Heat radiated through his shirt, as if his body was burning from the inside" (2008: p.245). This is followed by: "Suddenly Erik screamed, his body curling in on itself as if something inside his chest was trying to claw its way free" (2008: p.246). Following this "death", which features symptoms akin to those of the initial resurrection, a vampire's crescent moon tattoo will be filled in and joined by an intricate sweeping tattoo. Resurrectees must then undergo a private and secret religious ritual, which could represent a living funeral, in order to complete the process and be fully reborn.

Not all fledglings survive the transition to adult vampire. There is no knowing who will be strong enough to cope with the genetic changes of becoming a vampire but the school takes precautions such as providing healthy food and regular physical activity to strengthen the

body. All fledglings must remain in close proximity to a coven of adult vampires and any extended period without this contact will result in certain death for the absent fledgling. This death, whether from absence or weakness, initially cruelly mimics the start of either the first or second resurrections but soon also includes a

bloody cough...hacking and spitting and gagging...bloody tears...and blood was running from his nose like it was a faucet someone had left on. When he turned his head... I could see that there was a red stream coming from his ear, too (2007: p.295), and death follows swiftly. The body is taken away and no further mention is made of the deceased fledgling. While this rejection is said to be random, *The Fledgling Handbook* (2010), a real-life version of the textbook used by students, controversially suggests that some people believe Nyx chooses who "to gift with the Change" based on their closeness to her (2010b: p.29). This means only the most moral fledglings Change, but also only the most spiritual, reinforcing the connection to Christianity where resurrection was only for the chosen faithful. This mimicking of Christian beliefs whereby only the devout are welcomed to return from death also mimics its assumptions about good and bad returns, and the horror caused by the returns of the original folkloric revenant.

In a twist on this natural process and in a perversion of the vampire religion, high priestess-turned-witch Neferet uses magic and resurrects dead fledglings as red fledglings. This third type of resurrection sees the creation of an undead vampire "turned into some kind of horrible vampire cliché, the monster humans have been calling us for centuries" (2007a: p.337, p.326, 2008: p.45, p.108). This mindless revenant is the perfect soldier for Neferet's civil war and is the genesis of a new breed of undead vampires, harking back to unwelcome returns from

death. As a result the "neoteric" vampire is shifted into a pseudo-Christian positioning as the adversary to the traditional revenant-type, a role originally enacted by the priesthood.

The fourth and fifth varieties of resurrection concern red fledglings. They can be transformed into something resembling their old selves with the retrieval of their humanity, but they must constantly strive to be good or face reverting to their base Other self. The fifth kind of resurrection involves the Change from red fledgling to red adult vampire, where a fledgling chooses either good or evil. This kind of resurrection is closely linked with the Resurrection because it contains all four of the Atonement themes of sacrifice, victory, moral example, and forgiveness. In each of the positive transitions where good is chosen, the resurrection occurs because all four of these criteria are met.

The multiples of resurrection, as recorded above, reveal the contiguity between the notion of religion and the vampire mythos. The integration of these two belief systems is shown to be deeply enmeshed through this one trope, however, *HoN*'s departure from the simple death and rebirth of the "traditional vampire" to the complex system of resurrections also demonstrates a further departure from the link between the vampire and traditional religion. S/he is no longer governed by the rules attributed to folkloric or "popular" vampires as originally assigned to them by the rhetoric of whichever denomination of religious Gothic they were at the mercy of. With Spiritual Gothic, as with contemporary spiritualities, there is more freedom than ever before to choose which aspects of any given belief system one can follow and the resurrection trope is representative of this voluntarism transferred into the literary sphere as not one manner of rebirth, but as many rebirths.

None of these rebirths occur after burial and the avoidance of burial is significant. In the times before red fledglings, a fledgling who died after rejecting the Change disappeared from the narrative completely. Any other kind of death results in their bodies being publically burnt on a traditional funeral pyre. The only burials or entombments that take place within the series are for non-vampires. Perhaps the reason for this lies with their deity and spiritual leader Nyx. Nyx explains that she has been known by many names including Changing Woman, Gaia, Grandmother Spider, and Kuan Yin. Author Karen Mahoney (2011) notes that these are all earth goddesses. Thus the folkloric belief of the vampire being spewed from the burial ground because s/he is unnatural does not apply here because, in fact, the opposite is true in terms of the religiosity and nobility associated with the HoN vampires, in terms of the bond they share with their earth goddess Nyx, and finally in terms of the affinity for the element earth some fledglings and vampires have, bringing them even closer to nature and the planet. What is more, as Patrick Mooney notes, apart from Jesus, the notable dying-andrising gods are vegetation gods which means their life cycles follow that of plants, i.e. death followed by regrowth (2005: np). Thus these earth-centric vampires are never evicted from the soil, because they belong to it as natural entities.

5.1 Vampire Stigmata

Closely allied with the premise of Christ's resurrection are the holy wounds. Initially these wounds existed on Jesus' body as a result of the crucifixion and were later displayed on the bodies of the faithful in the form of stigmata. These wounds, named after the Greek word for mark, form a parallel with the Marks found on the fledgling and adult vampires in *HoN*. These Marks, like stigmata, appear on the bodies of those faithful to goddess Nyx as a physical representation of their devotion to the deity and as a marker that they belong to her

church. As with the Folkloric Tradition, such physical marks on the skin identify a person as a being set apart from the norm and as someone who will turn into a vampire and become an outcast from regular cultural life. As with stigmatics, the fledgling/vampire is then welcomed and honoured within the community of the Church/House of Night, even though they may be shunned or targeted by non-believers. In his book *Stigmata* (1994), Ted Harrison explains:

Sometimes whole communities are thrown into a state of extravagant religious enthusiasm by a stigmatic emerging in their midst. Sometimes personality cults grow up around the stigmatic and there are rumours and claims of miracles and healing (p.3).

Firstly, the vampires of *HoN* do have these kinds of miraculous powers, which are more than a matter of rumour. They include healing powers, levitation, prophetic dreams and elemental afinities. Secondly, whilst being Marked throws the general community into an uproar of the negative kind, at the House of Night this is a regular occurrence and the normal state of affairs. The "personality cult" Harrison mentions does occur, however, outside of the narrative in the real world where the "neoteric vampire" is hero worshipped and given a god-like persona amongst avid fans.

Vampires and fledglings may be rewarded with additional tattooing if they please Nyx, just as the holy wounds exhibited as stigmata have been recorded to change and been attributed as an increased display of the stigmatic's devotion to include wounds which correspond with the crown of thorns, etc. This happens in the case of Zoey, whose tattoos expand several times during the series as a visible representation of Nyx's pleasure and divinity and as signification of the YA literary trope of the "Chosen One", also called the "Fated Saviour". In this way, a person's affiliation with, feelings about, and standing within their religion is literally written all over their face.

The "Chosen One" trope manifests as an individual who is specially selected by a diety or higher power, much as a stigmatic is thought to be. This individual is tasked with a particular job, such as saving the world or defeating an evil. Zoey is chosen to defeat the rising forces of dark magic using her innate and goddess-given powers. She appears to be superficially aligned with the "I'm not like other girls" trope because of her special affinities and markings, but it soon becomes apparent that this goes much further into the realm of spirituality. The "Chosen One" trope is used in "...just about every religious scripture, Arhturian legend, most mythologies, and seems to permeate our modern day media, from fantasy books to anime, video games and popular tv shows" (Dickinson 2009: np). However, it is significant that such a well-used and powerful trope only appears with regard to religion in the literary sample employed for this thesis. In discussing this trope, Margaret Owen notes the power engendered by the idea that a single person can effect great change in a climate where many individuals feel isolated and powerless (2020: np). The strength of this sentiment resonates especially with teen readers, many of whom may feel this way about their lives or futures and may entertain the wish fulfilment fantasy of being this "Chosen One". The "Chosen One" in question may not be affiliated with a religion or spirituality, but by attaching these qualities to a spirituality within the novels, the notions of effecting change and ridding oneself of loneliness and powerlessness become more attainable and available by association with a real-life spiritual entity which exists in the contemporaneous world. By extension, a vampire with physical markings ordained as a saviour by a diety becomes more realistic once allied with real-world spiritual practices where anything is possible.

Discussing this, Jana Oliver notes: "The moment you place a mark on your body you acknowledge yourself as a member of one tribe or an outsider to others – you are making a

social statement about who you are and where you belong" (2011: p.39). In this sense, Marks act as a way to bring attention to the body as a religious tool and to bring the body to the forefront of the narrative on spirituality. Here the body works as a vessel where morality is permanently visible and while the body is related to other aspects of physicality, such as desire and hunger, it is in spirituality that it finds its true relevance as a signifier. The budding spirituality of the fledglings as embodied in their Mark can be covered with special make-up when they are away from campus, but adult vampires always display their Mark, and thus their fully formed religious attachment, as a matter of honour.

Initially Zoey has the normal crescent forehead tattooing, which could be said to represent a crown of thorns stigmata and which, according to Harrison (1994: p.52), is the usual shape for the stigmata representing the lance wound in the side. Her marks are added to with designs on her palms reminiscent of Christ's nail wounds, across her whole back and shoulders, in a representation of the holy wounds of flagellation, and marks across her chest reminiscent of the location of Jesus' lance wound to further compound the similarities between the most rewarded follower of Nyx and the most devout stigmatics.

Such comparable physical marks between a fictional spirituality and a real-life religious occurrence cannot help but draw comparisons and the question arises as to whether the fictional manifestation of the marks is merely a literary ploy to show divinity in a recognisable way or something more profound. The locations of these marks are anatomically specific enough to relate to the holy wounds. However the form they take, of a series of intricate, naturally arising tattoos, is purely aesthetic and more aligned with the physical standards of beauty expected of the YA vampire. Perhaps these marks are simply the contemporary consumerist equivalent of stigmata for the YA audience, or perhaps they too

represent a combinatorial approach to coeval beliefs mixing Roman Catholic stigmata, tribal religious tattooing, and forehead markings from a range of beliefs incorporating sentiments as wide-ranging as the recognition of mortality to the beginning of life.

5.2 Reincarnation

Each of the previously discussed resurrections is actually a reincarnation of sorts because they each result in a change of form, whether this is from human to fledgling, from fledgling to red fledgling, or from some kind of fledgling to some kind of vampire. Each of these resultant forms represents a new physical incarnation as the transition to a new species or to a mutated adult form.

Reincarnation as a religious concept is often confused with resurrection; one features prominently in Hinduism and Buddhism, and the other in Christianity. The two have the elements of dying and rebirth in common, however reincarnation sees the spirit or soul reborn in a different body with no (or largely no) residual memory. As already explored, resurrection features prominently in *HoN*, however there are also references to reincarnation with the more general notion that souls meant to be together will find each other in the same or another life. Two characters are reincarnated and the predominant of these is a Native American girl called A-ya. A-ya is termed as a golem by the Casts and is created from clay and endowed with the best qualities of the wise women who make her using their blood.

Zoey is the reincarnation of A-ya, meaning "me" (2008a: p.266) The second occurrence of reincarnation takes place when human Heath is reincarnated into a literal golem body. A golem, originally a creature from Jewish folktales made from clay or earth, was produced by a rabbi. It was used for a particular task such as revenge, labour, or protection. The wise

women who created A-ya can be said to be close to their goddess and create A-ya to protect their village, while Neferet is certainly in favour with the dark forces when she creates her golem for revenge, in the only avenue open to her for procreation. Here the golem is a recoding for the transition from revenant to "neoteric vampire". The golem of tradition, as Mikel Koven points out

is us, but without a soul – which many commentators note is only God's to give. Part of the meditative aspect of the golem legend is understanding how monstrous we would be without a soul (2000: p.5).

With this understanding it is easy to see how "monstrous" the folkloric revenant was, living on the margins of society, an outcast from religion with no redeemable soul – things most feared by the rural communities they inhabited. The Casts use their variation of the golem, fully formed beings complete with souls, to represent the figure of the "neoteric vampire". Both golems in question are created by blood sacrifice, something true of the vampire in one form or another. As with the vampire, they are both something other than human, and like the "neoteric vampire" they are created with souls. Thus, if these golems are created with god's favour then it follows that so too is the vampire in question.

5.3 Cultural Rebirth

Including the life-after-death scenario as both a resurrection and reincarnation reveals much about the audience expectations of this series and about the cultural view, with or without religion in mind, that there must be something more than this life and some way the contemporary wish fulfilment fantasies often associated with this new breed of vampire can take place, even after "true death" as it is sometimes called in vampire tales. Thus the reassurance that there are many ways to be resurrected as a vampire and then limitless ways

to be reincarnated as other beings offers some comfort to individuals, who perhaps would wish for more from this life or for teens hoping for a successful adult life before their years.

Using both of these dying-and-rising frameworks offers countless plot possibilities for the writers and endless opportunity for the reintroduction of dead characters. It also embeds something of the seriality of these novels into their core storytelling because each one returns afresh after its ending to begin another novel.

Personal growth, rebirth, or new beginnings are highly valued in the contemporary Western world. In the religious sphere the Born Again Christian movement began gaining adherents in the 1960s as a kind of religious conversion to a new spiritual life and it is still popular today. It is noteworthy that of the thirteen tenets of belief listed on the *Born Again Christians* website (Gordon nd: np), three of them are related to resurrection. However, the concept of rebirth is much more widespread in the cultural sphere as a whole. In an age of self-help "bibles" promising paths to "a new you" via life changes or reinvention, the vampire is the ultimate figurehead for "revamping" one's life-path and represents the ultimate in wish fulfilment. After all, what could be more dramatic and fulfilling than changing from an awkward teenager in a world ruled by adults, to a powerful, beautiful, desirable, and successful adult vampire? It makes sense that a creature like the vampire who reinvents himself and has the ability to be resurrected would gain popularity from a cultural standpoint.

6. The Numinous Experience and the Vampire as Christ-figure

This popularity, in conjunction with earlier discussions on the decrease in organised religion and recent academic research using declines in religiosity to predict that religion may become

extinct in several countries (Palmer 2011: np), can be taken to its logical conclusion with the introduction of anthropomorphism and the numinous experience. The new-found superhuman powers of the "neoteric vampire" as "Chosen One" represent deity incarnate. Each of these creatures performs the role of the dying-and-rising god to transmogrify into a vampire. In common with the physical remains of some saints, their bodies are found intact after death (Harrison 1994: p.51), some have superhuman powers which could be described as miraculous, and they certainly fill the "God-shaped gap" described by Dawkins as a psychological need for an "imaginary friend, father, big brother, confessor, confidant" (2006: p.347). As the ideal friend, protector, saviour, and contemporary, the "neoteric vampire" as deity is a perfectly viable and acceptable face of religion, particularly in the pick and mix age of spirituality. As Hitchens states: "there is no cult or religion before or since, from Osiris to vampirism to voodoo, that does not rely on some innate belief in the 'undead'" (2007: p.142). These particular undead creatures have come a long way since being staked into their graves by Medieval villagers; evolving from the enemy of the Church into an upholder of spirituality and perhaps into the guise of god him/herself.

In *The Vampire as Numinous Experience*, Beth E. McDonald cites the "traditional vampire" as a negative numinous experience which inverts the sacred with the profane and makes the reader and/or the other characters undergo an assessment of their spiritual beliefs (2004: p.23). While it is true that the "neoteric vampire" does cause the reader and the characters to analyse their spiritual beliefs, "the character" in question here is the vampire himself. When McDonald says: "If the numinous were manifested as a positive figure or event in the Gothic, the existence of the divine would be reinforced and not challenged", she is actually correct

with regard to the "neoteric vampire" (2004: p.35), however, not because this positivity is the work of "the divine" but because the vampire himself is now divine.

In her book exploring the biblical connections in *Twilight*, Sandra L. Gravett (2010) represents lead vampire Edward Cullen as Jesus, his mate Bella as Eve/Mary and his creator Carlisle as God because she says vampire legends "connect in tangible ways to Jewish and Christian claims about the properties of blood as the source of life" (2010: p.5). The race of vampires in *HoN* can similarly be read as Christ-figures. They are the children of Goddess Nyx (one of whose incarnations is the Virgin Mary), they are resurrected after death, and they display physical signs of the holy wounds in their tattooing.

The *HoN* characters are themselves directly related to deities by author Yasmine Galenorn. Rather than utilising the trope of the Christian trinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Galenorn uses the novel's own triple deity of the Maiden, Mother, and Crone. She explains:

Zoey Redbird is the Maiden – young, learning her place in the vampire world, discovering her new abilities and potentials...At least at first, Neferet serves as a mother figure for Zoey...[and] Sylvia Redbird – Zoey's Grandmother – can be seen as the Crone. She is the font of wisdom, the elder who has seen great dangers before in her life (Galenorn 2011: p.162).

I would argue that the role of the Maiden could be filled by any female fledgling as they are all in the same spiritual position. The only difference between Zoey and the others is that she is most notably favoured by Nyx and that she is the series protagonist, otherwise red fledgling leader Stevie-Rae or Nyx's prophet Aphrodite could equally fill the role. Sylvia Redbird is the obvious choice for the Crone as she is the only older person represented in the novels and

she does provide knowledge, wisdom, and support to her granddaughter on many occasions. Listing Neferet as the Mother stretches this analogy a little. She is the other strong female character within the narrative and is probably the most sexual, but her motherly support of Zoey is short-lived, and other females such as Scottish queen Sgiach, and Sister Mary Angela provide a more nurturing environment for Zoey. The other key aspect of the Mother analogy, which is fertility, encounters a problem here as all of the potential candidates for this role are incapable of or have chosen not to have children. Vampires cannot procreate as due to their "rising internal body temperature...females will stop menstruating" (2010b: p.25), so none of the female vampires are eligible for the role; Sister Mary Angela in deciding to become a Catholic nun has chosen not to give birth; and Sylvia Redbird, although she has had children, is now beyond her fertile years. However, while the assignment of the trinity to individual characters appears to fail, the general notion of the vampire as Christ-figure with regards to the whole vampire race still stands.

If this attribution of a trinity must take place, it is more fitting to name "Chosen One" Zoey as an earthly personification of Nyx with the subversion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit or Mother, Maiden, and Crone configuration as Mate, Consort and Warrior. As a high priestess Zoey has all of these and they each form a part of her divine whole. Erik Night is her vampire mate and plays the role of her intellectual and physical equal bonded by love; Heath Luck is her human consort whom she Imprints with after drinking his blood to form "a connection that originates in the blood and is ruled by the basest of our emotions: passion, lust, need, hunger and pain" (2009a: p.68); while Stark is her warrior, is able to sense her emotions, and is connected to her via his Warrior Oath and an entwined spirit in a bond which is "more intimate than an Imprint, and more lasting than even that of a relationship with a mate"

(2010b: p.29). Thus it is this trinity which is most relevant within the narrative and which combines to form a whole.

While the vampire as Christ-figure archetype may be a classic one, it is more relevant today than ever before when read in terms of the "neoteric vampire" and this series based on firsts and becomings. In times when *Twilight* fanfiction *Fifty Shades of Grey* is replacing the Gideon Bible in hotel rooms (*Telegraph* 2012: np) and when Christian scholars have adopted the "neoteric vampire" for use in bible study programmes despite its condemnation by the Vatican as a "deviant moral vacuum", Christians have embraced these "neoteric vampires". There is now a healthy industry of Christian vampire fiction 1920 in an age when traditional religion is itself in decline (Pisa 2009: np). As Victoria Nelson asserts: "The gradual departure of the Christ figure from the category of the divine leaves room for something else to move in and take its place" (2007: p.106); that something else is the "neoteric vampire". This is evident in the themes and narratives of *HoN*. Nelson aptly sums up her argument by adding:

In Western societies today, and especially in the United States, not places of worship or seminaries but dog-eared paperbacks and the Web are the true early warning signals of religious upheavals to come (2007: p.107).

¹⁸ Titles include *Touched by a Vampire: The Hidden Messages in the Twilight Saga* (2009), *Glitter in the Sun: A Bible Study Searching for Truth in the Twilight Saga* (2011) and *From Twilight to Breaking Dawn: Religious Themes in the Twilight Saga* (2010).

¹⁹ Christian vampire fiction is written by a Christian author using reference to Christian beliefs in a narrative featuring a vampire character. Titles include *The Judging* by Ellen C. Maze (2012) and *Thirsty* by Tracey Bateman (2009).

²⁰ Something I discuss in more detail in "New Vampires and Religious Gothic" (2018) for the *International Gothic Association Postgraduate Blog*.

While this series features the most overt spirituality of the sample, it serves as a perfect example of how religion and faith are represented in the consumer-led contemporary West and how this is reflected on the body of the vampire.

7. Conclusion: Consuming God

In a world where membership of and belief in traditional religion is decreasing, the "neoteric vampire" has followed suit with the loss of the convention of fear or hatred of the symbols of the Church. What is more, not only has the "neoteric vampire" discovered the modern age's pick and mix spirituality, but s/he has embraced it wholeheartedly. This can be seen in the manner of his/her disdain for historical Christianity in line with New Atheism; his creation of a vampire theology to rival those traditional forms of religion; and in his replacement of Christianity with older "lost" tribal traditions which were themselves originally subsumed by the Church.

In the ultimate step in the refusal of the famed religion anathema, the "neoteric vampire" has him/herself taken on the physical characteristics of Jesus Christ to create a divine being. S/he displays holy wounds and stigmata, manifests miracles in the form of increased physical powers and abilities, and has attained rebirth with a complex series of dying-and-rising cycles akin to resurrection.

Ultimately, the "neoteric vampire" has moved from the interstitial realm of fictive monster to garner a mainstream audience as saviour and protector. In a time when the popularity of the Church is in decline, the creature it once used for its own ends to further its new faith is more popular than ever. Thus the "neoteric vampire" as Christ-figure has come to supersede the 104

original Christ-figure in the minds of many young adults. Whilst research has shown a decrease in traditional religious beliefs from this particular age group, interest in the "neoteric vampire" has so far shown no signs of abating. It could be argued that not only has religion, and Christianity more particularly, been recognisably recycled, subsumed, and vampirised by a more popular version of their own figurehead in the form of the "neoteric vampire", but that this individual has actually consumed the "Christ conventions" and transformed them through the body of this vampire into the contemporary equivalent of the ultimate "consumer" version of mass spirituality.

Chapter Three

Le Petite Mort: Sexuality in Twilight

1. Introduction: Sex and the Vampire

The vampire of Western folklore was a creature associated with voracious sexual appetites and was thought to return home for exhaustive nightly intercourse (Browning 2011: p.17), and to feed on blood or sexual fluids (Curran 2005: p.10). This vessel for and proponent of male desire was little transformed in his early poetic appearances in *Der Vampir* (1748) and *Lenore* (1790), but almost a decade later the most common vampire had become a maiden intent on victimising young men and women²¹ largely through seduction, with motives ranging from pre-marital rejection to losing a mate. This dominant trope of female vampirism, which persisted for almost a century until the publication of *Dracula* (1897), as damsel in distress, and as the product of male abuses was tellingly interspersed with male vampires who carried out the kind of seductions these females were railing against. Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), Rymer's *Varney the Vampyre* (1845), and Nizet's *Captain Vampire* (1879), all texts cited as inspiration for *Dracula*, created a dialogue with the avenging wronged female vampire.

The dialogue between the vampire and his/her potential victims and future fellows continued with the films of Universal and Hammer, becoming more sexually explicit as censors would

²¹ Texts include *The Bride of Corinth* (1797), *Christabel* (1798), *Lamia* (1820), *La Belle Dame Sans Merci* (1820), *Ligeia* (1838), *The Family of the Vourdalak* (1843), *The Vampire Countess* (1856), *The Mysterious Stranger* (1860), *The Last Lords of Gardonal* (1867), *Carmilla* (1872), *She* (1887), and *A Mystery of the Campagna* (1887).

allow. The next transformation in the sexual maturation of this being developed in the 1970s with the vampires of Anne Rice and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro, for whom feeding became a sexual act. This development was soon followed by the vampire's ability to have sexual intercourse and a new breed of sexually active vampire populated the page and screen in offerings like *The Hunger* (book 1981, film 1983), and people went to the cinema not to be frightened but to be turned on (Beck 2011: p.91). By 1987 the sexually active vampire had become a teenager in *The Lost Boys* and *Near Dark*, foreshadowing the sexual activity in the Whedon Tradition. Here the young, attractive vampires had sex with others of their kind and with humans.

As sexuality and its codification moved from covert to overt, the vampire began to change. With films like the innovative *Vamp* (1986), followed by *To Sleep with a Vampire* (1993), *From Dusk Till Dawn* (1996), and the lesser known *Vamps: Deadly Dreamgirls* (1996), the vampire moved into the realm of the strip club and a new incarnation of his/her sexuality was born. Now s/he was not merely the private midnight visitor to the bedroom, but the representative of consumer sexuality and victims were the customers. The once thinly restrained sexuality of the vampire has developed as a result of changing times and popular demand, to become a flagrant eroticism which is big business in today's consumer/consummation society, from the Mills and Boon style vampire romances like Katie MacAllister's *Sex and The Single Vampire* (2008), to the erotic fiction titles and vampire pornography in film.

The nascent vampiric sexuality in YA fiction has felt the effects of these cultural shifts and has responded to them. This topic will form the basis of this chapter with regard to the *Twilight* series, where a more sanitised version of sexuality is present in opposition to the

open sexuality common to the vampire genre as featured in the other sample texts, albeit in a slightly diluted form for the YA market. This reading of *Twilight* sexuality, both in terms of sex as a physical act and as gender, will be viewed through the lens of gender studies and sexology, which is the scientific study of human sexual behaviour using fields including biology, medicine, and psychology. These approaches will be used concomitantly with Postfeminist Gothic theory to shed light on *Twilight's* unique responses to both cultural shifts in sexuality and to the vampire's sexual history.

2. <u>Virgins and Vamps</u>

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact moment in the vampire genre when the revenant became indelibly interlinked with the figure of the virgin. It is true that vampires were connected with virgins in early poetry, but that link relies more on vampires feeding on maidens, i.e. those who were young and without male protection, rather than any particular interest in virginity *per se.* Yasmine Galenorn notes:

The word "virgin" comes from the Greek/Latin word "virgo", which means "maiden". Originally sexuality was not an aspect of the word. Virgin was, in fact, a term of power, applied to women who live "apart" from men. The definition did not necessarily only include women who hadn't had sex. It referred to women who were not bound to a brother, father or husband. Only later did the word "virgin" take on a sexual meaning (2011: p.159).

Since that point the vampire/virgin pairing has proliferated in popular literature and film and the vampire has been delineated as searching out the virgin for reasons as wide ranging as lifting the curse of vampirism²² to retaining youth²³. Such pairings are so prevalent and

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²² A narrative element found in *Embrace of the Vampire* (1995).

popular due to the portrayed sexual polarity – that of the experienced, voracious vampire lover in contrast with the innocent virgin. That relationship within the YA market is usually depicted as a burgeoning teen sexuality meeting an experimental adult sexuality without limits. The teen side of the equation is normalised through the representation of a human virgin and a variety of safe sexuality represented by eternal love and gentle sensuality. On the other hand, the adult portion of the pairing is seen with the eternal, highly-sexed vampire breaking societal taboos. The virgin figure here is read as a metaphor for the safety of childhood and the ephemeral nature of that virginity is representative of the ephemerality of childhood and its inevitable forfeiture as discussed in Chapter One. The vampire represents more adult themes and in a way foreshadows what the teen virgin will become once s/he succumbs to teenage desire, which in *Twilight* is figured as "inherently dangerous" (Taylor 2012: p.32). Thus the vampire, and teenage sexuality, consumes virginity, and childhood affiliations, just as he (for the vampire in question is usually male) consumes the victim's blood as the ultimate symbol of the consummation narrative for a consumer age.

Unlike earlier narratives of the imbibition of virgin blood ensuring youth, in this instance the sexual consummation of a human/vampire union removes both virginity and the vestiges of childhood from the human partner and inflicts the "curse" of vampirism upon them rather than instigating its removal. Thus the human virgin succumbs to the dangers of burgeoning sexuality becoming both Othered to their formerly virgin selves and their previous child-like existence by advancing across an irreversible somatic boundary between childhood and adulthood. Once this danger has been enacted, it is inevitable that that sexually Othered being

²³ As featured in *Once Bitten* (1985) and *Fright Night 2: New Blood* (2013).

becomes vampiric because once such a boundary is crossed in Meyer's world, it leads directly to much worse things.

Moves to preserve virginity attempt to retain the integrity of the body against what Julia Kristeva would describe as the loss of the body's borders as an act of abjection (1982: p.4). The vampire is known for his/her border crossing and innate ability to feed upon cultural or gender dynamics. The YA vampire has fed upon his/her predecessor from paranormal romance to become a mainstream, YA bestseller. In turn this paranormal character cannibalised the Gothic hero and the traditional vampire of horror to become a romantic protagonist (Bailie 2011: p.141-2). This process of appropriation and interdisciplinarity makes and remakes discourses of culture and gender to blur boundaries between genre and between bodily conventions as they relate to patriarchy, masculinity and femininity as seen in each of their successive generic incarnations.

That composite then is the creature seeking the termination of virginity and in turn the removal of the bodily border that denotes the virgin state. In discussing the loss of such borders, Kristeva notes the disruption caused when what was once inside no longer occupies its position (1982: p.4). This abjection applies both to the loss of virginity and the manner by which it is removed. Sex acts as the ultimate in bodily border crossing as one's vulnerable borderless points of access/egress are challenged by an alien body, from the kissing mouth all the way to the erasure of the hymen. Now what was once inside is lost and what was once outside is inside, resulting in the irretrievable loss of virginity and disruption of bodily boundaries.

In *Twilight*, traditional consummation is inverted; firstly the male vampire, Edward Cullen, is a virgin and secondly it is the female human virgin, Bella Swan, who is labelled as "sexually rapacious" (Taylor 2012: p.41) and placed in the stereotypically male role of sexual coercion. Therefore the series is set firmly within the realm of the Postfeminist Gothic, operating in a world where femininity is reshaped to question its affiliations with chastity and innocence (Genz 2007: p.69) and where masculinity is both present and bereft (Brabon 2007: p.58).

In Virgins: A Cultural History (2007) Anke Bernau states that virginity is:

the beginning of the story, before everything goes wrong. Or it is the ending, when all is resolved...the resolution of stories about virgins tends to involve either marriage or death. Closely associated with both life and mortality, the virgin elicits desire and fear (p.71).

This is precisely the case with *Twilight* where the chaste couple marry and lose their virginity to resolve the story as vampires. The combination of desire and fear arises through the couple's complex feelings around consummating their relationship, with Bella secretly fearing the loss of her virginity and Edward fearful of killing his partner during the act. As Danielle N. Borgia notes: "The literal murder of Bella that Edward's barely controlled vampire nature yearns for symbolises, as in most vampire fiction, his desire to deflower the young virgin female" (2014: p.158). Where the story disagrees with Bernau's virginity theory is that once Edward and Bella are no longer virgins, that signals the beginning of their eternal life as a couple and marks the start of their journey as fellow vampires through the YA "Soul Mate" or "Forever Mate" trope. This trope is created to forge unbreakable bonds within a literary couple, to make indisputable their predestined match no matter the circumstances and, in this case, to ensure the rightful and acceptable loss of virginity.

It is crucial that the joint state of virginity is only abandoned once the series comes to a close, because *Twilight* is a virginity narrative and pays homage to that idealised state currently much prized in the West as "The ever-increasing number of clinics offering 'hymen restoration' attests" (Bernau 2007: p.26). Edward is a virgin and has protected his chastity for more than a hundred years; he fights off Bella's sexual advances before marriage and rebuffs fellow vampire Tanya Denali's attempts to ensnare him romantically. Thus he fends off the attentions of two "traditional voluptuous vamp[s]" (Kokkola 2011: p.174), in the sexual sense, and successfully retains his virginity as Postfeminist Gothic male in negation of man's traditionally ascribed sexuality as promiscuous, virile, and aggressive.

In contrast, the presence of Edward's masculinity is marked by his role as protector of Bella's virginity because not only does he prevent her from having sexual intercourse, he also saves her life on numerous occasions, thereby preserving her virgin state and ultimately acting to stop her vampiric becoming by rendering her body unchanged. Significantly, these occasions involve the use of his body as a barrier to shield Bella from potential danger. For example, when a runaway van is about to crush Bella, she feels "something solid and cold pinning [her] to the ground" (2005: p.47) as Edward uses his body to shield her, and when she cuts herself at a party the scene is repeated as he protects her from vampires. So whilst Edward is protecting Bella's virginity and thus her body, he is doing so by placing his body against hers, which puts a fascinating spin on the notion of protecting her virginity with the very thing which would take it away. This repeated trope of pressing his body to hers could be avoided to conform to Meyer's beliefs on chastity²⁴. The abstinence from sex and the retention of the virgin body are in a way symptoms of a much greater need to control Bella's form and to

²⁴ This subject not discussed in depth here because readings on the religious aspects of Meyer's work are prevalent elsewhere.

prevent its vampiric becomings. Ultimately Edward, and Meyer, fail because it is the relinquishment of virginity which leads directly to Bella's vampiric transformation.

Similarly, when Bella saves Edward from being killed by vampire royalty The Volturi, she places herself between Edward and his attackers. Not only does she save his life, she also preserves *his* virginity through the use of her body. She repeats the paradigm when she cuts herself in battle in *Eclipse*, referencing Edward's earlier protection of her life via her scarred arm:

I raked the point of the shard up my arm, yanking my thick sweater back to expose the skin, and then pressed the sharp tip to the crease at my elbow. I already had a long scar there from my last birthday. That night, my flowing blood had been enough to catch every vampire's attention, to freeze them all in place for an instant. I prayed it would work that way again (2007: p.488).

The preservation of virginity on her part is perhaps more incidental than Edward's as she would willingly relieve him of his chastity. Bella's individual vampire power is that she is "a shield" (2008a: p.552), that is, she can block people from reading her mind and mentally produces a physical barrier which protects those within it from harm. It is only once she becomes a vampire, and after she has lost her virginity, that this ability becomes apparent. Once her body loses its own protection in the form of the hymen, Bella is able to offer that protection to others as an invisible membrane which she can push away from her body. It could be argued that this ability comes about due to her vampire state, but equally this ability, which is rooted in her existing ability to shield her mind, is released once the virgin state is abandoned as a way of continuing the virginity narrative. As such virginity, and its associated purity, becomes the thing which saves her family from physical attack by The Volturi.

If "The virgin is frequently compared to the coming of light – the dawn, in particular, but also to the whiteness of snow, the sparkle of jewels...the glow of the moon", (Bernau 2007: p.86) then the very essence of *Twilight* is predicated upon virginity and virginal symbolism. The title of the second book *New Moon*, resonates with Bernau's links to virginity, particularly with its introduction of and subsequent concentration on the teenage werewolves and their folkloric associations with the full moon. Futhermore, in Edward's absence werewolf Jacob becomes the object of Bella's wounded affections and her thoughts turn to a possible future with Jacob, and the associated loss of the pair's virginity together. Whilst the final book, Breaking Dawn, can be viewed with the emphasis of the loss of virginity in its title and a narrative centred around that loss and the very serious consequnces attached to it – possible punitive death and vampiric becoming amongst them. *Eclipse* features battles in snow, which viewed metaphorically can be read as battles for the protagonists' virginity, not merely human virginity but Edward's vampiric chastity which he lauds as his only remaining virtue and the only chance that his soul might be allowed access to heaven after his death. Notions of chastity are firmly enmeshed with ideas of purity, both religious and physical, and maintaining the purity of the soul through sexual blamelessness is propounded as sacred, above even committing murder or the preservation of one's life. That Bella and Edward are willing to die in the symbolically snow-covered ground and that this is much less offensive to the author than premarital sex says much about Twilight as a whole and about the status its virgins are afforded. All Meyerist vampires have skin which sparkles in the sun, when viewing this in terms of Bernau's points, it can be argued that these vampires always retain an element of the virginal and thus this series about vampires is in fact a series about virgins.

3. Abstinence

The "refusal to 'feed' has become an important development in the conventions of the sympathetic sub-genre of vampire fiction" and a signifier of innocence according to Milly Williamson (2005: p.43). The "vegetarian" (2008a: p.27) status of the Cullens in Twilight coupled with major themes revolving around sexual abstinence and battles against human feeding, have led critics to highlight its abstinence message. Noting Williamson's assertion of vampiric innocence as a precursor of this denial cements the notion of blood abstinence as virginity, thus further strengthening its sexual connotations. In support of the concept, Edward reveals he has fed from/killed humans in a "bout of rebellious adolescence" (2005: p.298) in resentment at having his appetites curbed (2005: p.298). The admission easily falls into the arena of sexual metaphor and in the films this point is elucidated to become a wedding night confession akin to admitting sexual promiscuity before marriage. In this particular case death is used as a metaphor for sex, as in the Meyerist world death is a more acceptable subject matter than pre-marital intercourse. In the entire series there is scant reference to sex before marriage, and yet there are many deaths. ²⁵ In addition, the lesser act of feeding from animals has been defined as a kind of masturbation by critic Anthea Taylor. She asserts that Edward's "pent up sexual tension" caused by his inability to feed from or sexually consummate his relationship with Bella is lessened by feeding from animals, meaning he is safer for Bella to be around (2012: p.38).

²⁵ Characters Harry Clearwater, James, Laurent, Victoria, Bree Tanner, Riley Biers, the band of fledglings, and numerous unnamed victims die during the series. Others die outside the narrative.

Sexuality in *Twilight* can be perceived in the duality of sex and death, it can also be read as both a reflection of and a reaction against contemporary attitudes and practices in teen sexuality. With *The New York Times* (Lewin 2010: np) reporting an increase in teenage pregnancy and abortion rates between 2005 and 2006 in America; a rise in teenagers having unprotected sex in the USA, France, and Britain from 2008 onwards as reported by news agency Reuters (Baghdjian 2011: np), it is easy to see why a series focusing on more conventional beliefs would be written and why it would be well received by its audience, particularly amongst conservative Americans looking to solve the problems posed by teen sexuality and the accompanying issues of STDs and unwanted pregnancy. The Rockdale County sex scandal of 1999 only serves to highlight this problem. In the small town of Rockdale, Georgia, an epidemic of sexually transmitted infections amongst teens as young as thirteen at three local schools was uncovered in a documentary entitled "The Lost Children of Rockdale County". The epidemic of syphilis, genital warts, herpes, and gonorrhoea brought to light practices of casual sex with up to one hundred partners and extreme sexual behaviour (*impropaganda* 2013: np).

Such behaviours are diametrically opposed to Meyer's Mormon beliefs and she has said she will never write about pre-marital sex due to her religious convictions (Felker Jones 2009: p.48), including adherence to the Law of Chastity, which outlaws sex before marriage and sexually inappropriate thoughts. Consequently, she even denies her vampires the paradigm of fangs, traditionally seen as phallic symbols. The absence of fangs, and therefore penis substitutes, corresponds with Benjamin A. Brabon's thoughts on Postfeminist Gothic masculinity and what he terms the "spectral phallus", as "the signifier of the paradoxical shape of masculinity in contemporary society" (2007: p.58), whereby a separation occurs

between male potency, aggression and patriarchy as represented by the phallus and man's actual position in society. Meyerist vampires have teeth with which to kill their prey, but they lack fangs; they hunt to survive, but abstain from human blood. They are thereby consigned to the uncertain fate of being "emasculated and whole, impotent and virile" (Brabon 2007: p.58). As protagonist and romantic lead, Edward provides a curious example of this "emasculated and whole" male. He is filled with sexual desire but unwilling and unable to execute those desires because Meyer disallows the unmarried Edward the use of his genitalia. This demasculinisation of Edward in the Postfeminist Gothic mode results in the literal realisation of the theoretical "spectral phallus", whereby Edward's genitalia can only be used in eternal matrimonial relations and without those his desires lay dormant. Without Bella and the "Forever Mate" trope and Bella's ability to bring Edward's genitalia into use, its existence remains a ghostly possibility, the workings of which are questioned by his family due to his inability to find a mate. Intrinsically, Edward needs Bella to complete him and without her to bring his genitalia into use he is seen as less-than-male and less-than-vampire. All of his vampire family are paired off and sexually active, something denied to him because of Meyer's religious beliefs on chastity, so he is consigned to dormancy until his "Forever Mate" appears in the text.

Despite this, the traditional trope of the "vampire's kiss" viewed as a "coded representation of sexual intercourse as bloodsucking" (Nayar 2010: p.62) is still present. Utilising this line of thought sees the vampire's teeth breaking the skin of his victim and the subsequent blood loss as an allusion to the forfeiture of virginity and overcoming of abstinence. In the *Twilight* novella, which is more violent than the other instalments, one incident of feeding is related as "a wet tearing sound as the woman's screams cut off. Probably them ripping her in half"

(2009: p.5), a disturbing scene given the virginity perspective. Continuing the idea, vampire James can be seen to deflower Bella when he bites her in the first book of the series, although this occurrence is scarcely detailed. Similarly, when vampires bite one another's necks during battles it becomes "like a caress...he could have been kissing her" (2007: p.490); it creates an unsettling picture of sexual violence with connotations of the enforced loss of virginity.

Meyer negates this bloody potentiality between vampires by creating creatures whose fluidless, granite-like bodies produce "sounds of rock being ripped" (2007: p.490) when injured to
conform to the sanitised abstinence theme. Only in the novella does the feeding on humans
occur within the narrative view as a distinct attack on chastity. Here these killings are carried
out by newly-turned vampires, in the same rebellious and uncontrollable position as Edward
when he first killed humans, echoing his own struggles with both metaphoric and actual
sexual control. This vampire army is created to kill Bella, to glut itself on her blood and to
realise Edward's dreams of deflowering her. The magnitude of such a threat, with dozens of
vampires written to enact the feeding-as-sexual intercourse trope, all sent into a frenzy by
Bella's scent stolen from her bedroom, speaks to the enormity of the task of safeguarding
Bella's virtue and also to the levels of violence associated with its loss.

The denial of actualised pre-marital sex and the importance of virginity, in line with Meyer's religious beliefs, are made clear throughout *Twilight*. And whilst Bella is vilified to a degree for her sexual yearnings for Edward, she is still a virgin when they marry, however it is important to remember that Bella's death is actually a consequence of married sexuality. This narrative carries the implication that sex "is potentially damaging, even within marriage" (Taylor 2012: p.42). Married sexuality is presented in an unhealthy manner from the Meyerist viewpoint - Bella and Edward's first marital sex act is omitted from *Twilight*'s pages – there

are no sanitised YA euphemisms or metaphors for the act, it simply stops in the reader's view. Married vampire relations are written as a compulsory act which must be carried out with regularity, vigour and abandonment. Anything less forces judgement from other married parties concerning the appropriateness of sexual interest between the couple or even brings into question their essential vampire nature if they are not seen to be having sex in the expected way.

Whilst unmarried couples are forbidden from sexual congress, married ones must abide by "appropriate" levels of sexual enthusiasm or face uncomfortable outside scrutiny. Even this sexual enthusiasm is bound by Meyer because it must come at night when vampires do not sleep and there are repeated reminders about it not intruding on daytime pursuits. The skewed view of pre-marital sexual desires, which must always be mitigated and contained, continues after marriage with a different set of rules which are equally restrictive and which still involve the withdrawal from sexual feelings once they are set in motion in a very controlling and almost punitive way, much like the ways human Bella has her desires habitually curbed by vampire Edward. If the controlling and delineation of expected and appropriate sexuality is regulated both before and after marriage and if this control is not specifically related to Edward's need to be gentle with the Bella's fragile human form, then the regulations must be Meyer's because the reasons proffered for such control, i.e. to protect Bella's fragility or to conform to Meyer's religious beliefs, become moot once those mechanisms are bypassed by the plot. Even when the conditions of marriage and vampiric turning are met, more conditions are added because as a newborn vampire Bella is stronger than Edward so now she must be mindful of his physical fragility. It seems these characters can never be left to their own

sexuality and must always have limitations, physical disparity and outside judgement to govern their desires.

Bella's only real rival for Edward's affection is Tanya Denali and since she has had "thousands of successful conquests" (2008: p.25) with human men outside of wedlock, she clearly is not a virgin and therefore not under consideration to be Edward's mate. This follows a much-used trope in the YA vampire genre of sex leading to a kind of punishment. In the Whedon Tradition, once Buffy has intercourse with vampire boyfriend Angel he loses his soul and becomes evil. In *HoN* every sexual encounter in the series, except one, leads to some form of disaster for one partner. Overall vampiric abstinence is championed, whether covertly or overtly and teenage sex can only result in unhappy endings.

According to critics Mormon or LDS beliefs are rife in *Twilight*. Lecturer on film and religion Angela Aleiss has noted instances where the books' narratives allude to these religious views, from the belief in eternal companions to the idea that angels are "resurrected beings of flesh and blood" (2010: np). Adding the Mormon concept of blood atonement, where sins concerning sexual morality are punished, provides an interesting insight here. In this ritual sins "can only be atoned through the shedding of the sinner's blood" (Hales 2013: np). Bella's blood is shed most of all in the novels when she is attacked by James, injured at a party, falls from a motorcycle, and when she cuts herself in battle. Rosalie Hale also succumbs to this rule when she is gang raped by her suitor and his friends and beaten until she is close to death. Both females fall victim to blood atonement, Rosalie in punishment of her physical vanity and her participation, however unwilling, in pre-marital intercourse, and Bella, presumably, for her sexual desires. Hence blood atonement is used to punish potential or actual breaches of abstinence.

3.1 (Abstinence) Porn

Twilight's vampires are written without fangs, the standard vampiric convention associated with sex. They also do not have to be invited into the home as a covert reference to sexual consent and they are not killed by a phallic stake through the heart. Whilst historically and traditionally the vampire was defined by his eroticism; the modern vampire is announced or revealed by his sexuality. Angel in the Whedon Tradition and the Salvatore brothers in The Vampire Diaries (2009-2017) reveal their true vampire faces when aroused and the vampire inhabitants of Alan Ball's True Blood (2008-2014) sprout fangs when sexually excited.

Twilight appears to be the exception, however, it can be argued that these "neoteric vampires" are also revealed by their sexuality but in a slightly different manner. Critics of Twilight have attacked its anti-sex stance and labelled it as abstinence or virgin porn. Discussing Meyer's sexualisation of abstinence, journalist Christine Seifert, declares:

The *Twilight* series has created a surprising new sub-genre of teen romance: It's abstinence porn, sensational, erotic, and titillating. And in light of the recent realworld attention on abstinence-only education, it's surprising how successful this new genre is (2008: np).

In *Pornification* (Paasonen et al 2007), pornography is defined as sexually explicit, lacking content, and intended or having the ability to arouse. (p.1) *Twilight* can be said to have at least two of those characteristics, so Meyer succeeds in promoting what she refutes with her celibacy message, or as Seifert articulates it: "Abstinence or virgin porn teaches readers that 'self-denial is hot'" (2008: np). Chastity advocate Hayley DiMarco, writes: "Chick flicks and romance novels: female porn. They do the same things to us that porn does to guys" (2006: p.77). Other arousal-inducing pre-marital acts include: "feeling him up, staying the night, him feeling you up, making out in public", plus long slow kisses, "looking longingly into each

other's eyes", holding hands, lying down together, and spending time behind a closed bedroom door (DiMarco 2006: p.26, p.78, p.135). Meyer's beliefs from Chapter 39 of *LDS Gospel Principles*, which forbid lubricious actions before marriage, concur with these points (*The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints* nd: np) and yet these things all occur in *Twilight* in staggering abundance. In one example:

[Edward's] fingers traced slowly down my spine, his breath coming more quickly against my skin. My hands were limp on his chest, and I felt lightheaded again. He tilted his cool lips to mine for the second time, very carefully, parting them slightly (2005: p.279).

Certain of Edward's kisses take on another dimension, from a vampiric perspective, as they occur on pulse points where blood can be felt and heard rushing through Bella's veins most comprehensively. He kisses her wrists, the inside of her elbows, and her neck and throat.

These kisses become doubly sexual as both amorous and as a marker of his unsatiated blood lust. In one episode Bella describes:

He pulled my wrist up to his face, our hands still twisted together. His eyes closed as his nose skimmed along the skin there, and he smiled gently without opening them. Enjoying the bouquet while resisting the wine, as he'd once put it (2007: p.15).

Such kisses represent an embryonic form of the "vampire's kiss" and act as a coded introduction to forbidden, traditional vampire erotica alongside the equally prohibited world of realised sexual intercourse.

Another proffered petting avenue develops with the couple's almost obsessive sniffing of one another to illicit sexual excitement, which I will term "aroma arousal". Viewed via non-Western tribal traditions, this becomes what anthropologists in sexology refer to as the "oceanic kiss", whereby one participant puts their face to the mouth or cheek of the other to better smell their personal odours (Tiefer 1995: p.78). If, as for some non-Western cultures,

the act of sniffing is in fact their version of the French or "soul kiss" (Tiefer 1995: p.77), then the number of kisses Edward and Bella share must surely be tripled. Furthermore, Bella literally swoons over the "exquisite scent" (2005: p.168) of Edward's sweet breath and body odour and he becomes addicted to her "hideously appealing scent" (2008: p.14) as the smell of her blood is said to sing to him as a more powerful enticement than any other. Bella's fixation is attributed to Edward's inbuilt aromatic prey lure but it also fits with sexological scent attraction research whereby bodily smell determines female mate choice. Research conducted by Brown University (Kerner 2011: np) has shown that for women, smell is the most important sense in choosing a lover, whilst exposure to male pheromones can also increase female fertility (Meston et al 2009: pp.5-6). Mate preference trials in 1995 and 2005 also found that women were attracted to chemical scents in male perspiration as a marker of genetic compatibility for reproduction (Mister Two Yaks 2009: np). "Aroma arousal" not only brings the possibility of an added unconscious sexual element for female readers, but also further draws the narrative attentions to the physical form as a site of excitement both for the protagonist and the audience. In so doing it genders the readers as heterosexually female both from a standpoint of the genetic scent research as feminine and from a sexual perspective.

Meyer omits blatant sources of vampiric sexual convention, but she introduces and faithfully sustains the romantic staple of the hardness of the male body. Throughout the novels Edward's "marble hard" lips and body are emphasised at every conceivable point, with descriptions particularly arising when the couple's bodies are pressed together (2007: p.38). Bella describes this as being "welded to his stone figure" (2005: p.317). Meyer adds the oft used romantic literature trope of male hardness as an extension of the phallic to established

vampiric conventions (Taylor 2012: p.38); thus Edward's body becomes an allusion to and a substitute for references to his sexually excited state.

4. Sexual Fantasy

Critics and reviewers alike have frequently described *Twilight* as a tool for wish fulfilment (Nolan 2012: np), a mechanism by which readers' desires and fantasies are satisfied. Varying kinds of reader fantasies have been associated with the series, from the idealised romance promoted by the earlier mentioned "Twilight Moms", to the reading of the books as an ode to Christianity as detailed in the previous chapter. Sexologist Susan Block notes the six most common types of sexual fantasies, five of which are featured within Twilight: the perfect lover; more than one perfect lover; power and surrender; voyeurism; and angels or animals (2013: np). Edward and Jacob conform to the perfect lovers fantasy; werewolf Jacob meets the animal criteria; the sections which follow detail the power relationships within the narrative; and Edward is often depicted as watching or following Bella. Block's description of fantasies relating to angels explains: "You might fantasize about an Eros angel with wings to take you flying. Dreams of flying are often considered symbols of orgasm" (2013: np). Due to Edward's great strength, speed, and agility he is able to fly through the air with Bella on his back and he does this on a number of occasions, what is more, Bella frequently refers to her inamorato as an angel (Borgia 2014: p.157). Interpreting flying as symbolic of orgasm firmly roots these episodes in the realm of sexual fantasy.

Not only do fantasies play a significant role in the world of the *Twilight* reader, they also act as an instrument for revealing the true desires of the protagonists within the books because as

psychotherapist Michael Bader asserts, fantasies are manifestations of what a person would secretly like to do in real life (2003: p.8). Bella and Edward's "constant fantasising" (Kokkola 2011: p.166) about each other results in feelings of pleasure and these are fantasies which they maintain and either actively reinforce or deny for reasons of gratification or guilt. These fantasies could be termed as sexual fantasies, which have been defined in *Segens* Medical Dictionary (2012) as an "erotic yearning or constellation of mental images that evoke sexual arousal" (np). The fantasies of both parties can be viewed with sexual overtones, especially as sexual fantasies are always "playing hide-and-seek with your perceived realities, whispering wild ideas into your inner ear, showing movies in your mind, stirring your passions mysteriously, yet so powerfully" (Block 2013: p.1). From a psychological viewpoint, as will be discussed in depth later, Bella's sexual motivation manifests as a wish for dominance over her partner and an attraction to the dangerous mate(s) she has courted. Her fantasies of Edward in New Moon materialise as hearing his voice, prompted by dangerous real-life situations such as approaching adult men outside a bar, riding motorcycles, and cliff diving. While he materialises as a kind of protector or an independent conscience, he is indelibly linked in her mind with danger, both as a cause of it and as protection from it. When he abandons her she takes control of the situation by conjuring internal apparitions or a "constellation of mental images" (Segens Medical Dictionary 2010: np) of him to bring herself pleasure and to create a kind of emotional, and sexual, high. Each time her "wish fulfilment" brings "gratitude" (2006: p.100), "relief" (2006: p.101) and the "soft, velvety echoes" (2006: p.162) of her beau.

Each incident involves inferred sexual danger; the first is a reconstruction of Edward saving her from a potential gang rape. The second involves riding a vibrating motorcycle which

"snarled beneath me. It sounded angry *and* hungry now" (2006: p.161), resulting in the symbolic feeling of flying (2006: p.164) and sensations of tingling, hair pulling, and adrenaline release until the bike is "shivering" (2006: p.164) between her legs before it "landed on top of her, roaring loudly" (2006: p.164). The third occurrence sees her jump off a cliff to secure "the long fall that would feel like flying" (2006: p.315) only to be repeatedly battered against the cliff face by waves until she reaches unconsciousness. While each of these fantasies use Edward as a force of forewarning, they each end with injury or potential injury in the same way any kind of sexual relationship with Edward himself would. Both the attempted rape and its reconstruction could have resulted in sexual injury or death for Bella, while the motorcycle and cliff diving fantasies both result in physical injury with pseudo-sexual connotations. In both of these situations Bella is saved by Jacob Black, her Edward substitute.

In contrast Edward's fantasies involve killing Bella. In the fantasies we are privy to in *Midnight Sun*, which partially retells the story of the first book from his viewpoint, Edward toys with the notion of killing Bella and/or her classmates in order to get greater pleasure from feeding on her. His fantasies are predicated upon his violent intentions towards Bella and his need to drink her blood. The act of a vampire feeding on a human has traditionally been used by writers as a metaphor for sexual intercourse and a substitute for it, so in this matter the link to Edward's sexual fantasy is one which is well established, particularly considering that the shedding of blood traditionally marks the end of the vampire sex act as a trope for ejaculation. In Edward's fantasy he penetrates Bella by "sinking my teeth through that fine, thin, see-through skin to the hot, wet, pulsing—[sic]" (2008: p.14). His fantasies are much less metaphoric than his future mate's. In one he states: "I made it through...imagining

the best ways to kill her. I tried to avoid imagining the *act*. That might be too much for me" (2008: p.16). In another as he dreams of kissing her, he says: "My lips to her lips, cold stone to warm, yielding silk…[sic] And then she dies" (2008: p.229). Here sexual feelings and descriptions are conflated with acts of vampiric feeding to consolidate the twin notions of sex and death, with death equating to orgasm.

In their separate psychosexual worlds, one is the victim and one the aggressor. Bella's fantasies function by placing her in real physical danger, which in turn means fantasy Edward loses his position of power over her because she is the instigator forcing him into the weaker position of reactor. He must then plead with and castigate her to wrangle for her compliance to heed his warnings on her safety. Contrastingly Edward's fantasies work by initially making Bella the victim and he the aggressor, but quickly the roles are reversed and his fantasy moves from feelings of satisfaction to guilt when he imagines the reactions at the discovery of his indiscretion. Thus he moves from being the instigator to the reactor, aggressor to victim.

These thinly veiled sexual imaginings act as an introduction to a more advanced form of fantasy in the final novel. Bella's conjuring of mental images of Edward through recreation of a potential rape scenario and Edward's pseudo-sexual fantasy attack on Bella provide a parallel with and an introduction to realised sexual scenes between them in what are known as rape fantasies.

4.1 Rape Fantasy

In *Masochistic Men and Female Vampires: A New Approach to Rape Fantasy* (2011), Burcu Genç investigates the tradition of the passive male and the sexually aggressive female

vampire in classic vampire texts like *Dracula* (1897), *Christabel* (1800) and *She* (1887). Genç associates the characters', and in some cases the authors', desire to be sexually dominated by a vampire within the narrative with the notion of the rape fantasy. Whilst this idea is not well developed within the book, the overall concept is an engaging one and adds a new dimension to the study of *Twilight* with the introduction of the rape or consensual force fantasy, which reinforces the vampire's status as "the focus of all our most graphic and repressed fantasies" (Pirie 1977: p.6). The enjoyment of said fantasies relies on the imagining of being forced into sexual activity and the aggression associated with such a coupling, and it finds an easy ally in vampire literature since "the very notion of "devouring" and "eating" someone is redolent of sex (and, in some cases, rape)" (Backstein 2009: p.38).

Bella is by no means aggressive towards Edward in her pursuit of a sexual relationship. She cajoles and attempts to coerce him into sex using seduction, bargaining, and mental manipulation positioning him as victim. In agreement with Genç's use of the rape fantasy in vampire literature, Bella takes on the predatory role while she is still human, foreshadowing her physical transformation into a vampire at the end of the series. Edward's role also falls in line with this theory, as like the males in the study, he willingly accepts "pain (physical or emotional) to get to a higher form of pleasure – true love/sexual satisfaction" (Genç 2011: p.43) and exhibits the "utmost masochistic desire to perish" (Genç 2011: p.41) to save Bella's life by giving up his own. Conversely, the rape fantasy manifests itself physically once Bella and Edward are married and begin their sexual relationship when "Edward's physical threat to Bella materialises" (Borgia 2014: p.162). Bella still holds the position of coercion but she now also takes on the role of victim within the rape fantasy. Edward's great vampiric strength proves too much for her human body as the aftermath of their sexual liaison attests:

...large, purplish bruises were beginning to blossom across the pale skin of my arm. My eyes followed the trail they made up to my shoulder, and then down across my ribs...So lightly that he was barely touching me, Edward placed his hand against the bruises on my arm, one at a time, matching his long fingers to the patterns (2008a: p.82).

The realisation of the sexual act establishes Edward's physical dominance and Bella's physical submission. As a meeting of vampiric flesh, denoted as rock-like throughout, and Bella's human body, announced by its fragile qualities, the outcome seems certain. This notion is cemented when considering the forfeiture of virginity because: "levels of violence accompanying defloration may differ, depending on context or genre, but pain and blood are required nonetheless" (Bernau 2007: p.103). The levels of pain or blood experienced during intercourse for either partner are left up to the imagination as Meyer removes this particular scene from the narrative. She does, however, describe the damage to Bella's victimised body in great detail, rendering this the operative element of intercourse rather than the actual act. As such, the reader is left with the normalisation of violence equalling sexual contact and of Bella's acceptance and enjoyment of it as: "I tried to remember...pain...I only remembered wanting him to hold me tighter, and being pleased when he did" (2008a: p.82).

As an extension of their sexual wish fulfilment, the pair willingly participant in the rape fantasy and their intercourse acts as the culmination of the consensual force relationship they have established during the series. These roles closely relate to the gendered male and female positions within Postfeminist Gothic. The feminine is drawn as "victim and perpetrator, subject and object" (Genç 2011: p.75) and Bella is exactly that, as virgin and vamp, and later vamp and victim. Edward, on the other hand, fills the role of Postfeminist Gothic masculinity with his "spectral phallus" which operates outside of narrative view, almost as if it does not exist (Brabon 2007: p.58), in conjunction with his fang-less and impotent bodily hardness as

metaphoricised erection. He unwittingly portrays "an aggressive masculine identity and lack thereof" with the injuries he inflicts upon his wife during sex and his guilt about the event after the fact, not to mention the violent sexual fantasies that conflict with his love for Bella (Brabon 2007: p.58).

The link between *Twilight* and rape fantasy has not gone unnoticed by fans, and fanfiction writers have followed the obvious connections to unsettling levels (Kubiesa 2019)²⁶. A *Google* search (2018) of *Twilight* fanfiction featuring rape generates almost half a million results. Each scenario created by the novels which has rape as a possible, but avoided, outcome (and there are a surprising number) is taken up in these stories which include Bella being raped by the men Edward saves her from in Port Angeles (ChubbyxChick 2010); by Edward when he loses control sexually (the rebel 2011); by Jacob when he takes the forced kiss from *Eclipse* too far (kittkatt123 2008), and by James as an inevitable outcome of his kidnapping of her (The Maiden Amorisa 2008), which critic Karen Backstein ascribes a "sexual element" (2009: p.39). Describing the series as a "breeding ground for victims" one pop culture blogger continues:

With that foundation, it's no wonder that inexperienced fic writers – fans who simply have a whim of an idea and write it, figuring "anyone can do it" – will step in and create stories with Bella as a damsel in distress, escalating it further and further to the point where raped/beaten Bella is the norm. They continue to up the ante, exaggerating the core canon (Amber 2012: np).

Thus the "core canon" and its links to abuse are confirmed (Amber 2012: np).

²⁶ A topic I investigate in book chapter "Violating the Vampire: Twihard Fan Fiction as Rape Fantasy" (2019).
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5. Abusive Romance

First and foremost *Twilight* is renowned as a love story to its fans²⁷, rather than a vampire story with romantic elements²⁸. Elements of love, romance and sexuality are central to the series novels. Scholars have been drawn to these themes and readings of *Twilight* as a romance abound, however a smaller if more vociferous group of critics offering polar readings, including Feminist and psychoanalytical interpretations, espouse their dislike of the books and the dangerous and abusive nature of the relationships they feature. The notion of abusive relationships with vampires is not a new one (Baddeley 2010: p.170), and these "romances" have previously featured in the YA vampire sub-genre. *Look for Me By Moonlight* (1995) is one of the earliest teen vampire novels and its plot centres upon a violent grooming scenario between an adult vampire and a teen human. Whilst in *The Silver Kiss* (1990), the human partner convinces her vampire boyfriend to commit suicide following her feelings of disgust at their relationship.

The "neoteric vampire" is created as the dream date and erotic ideal, s/he is young, attractive, independently wealthy, eternally faithful to his/her "Forever Mate", and depicted as the epitome of the teen spouse. S/he is the romantic lead in novels and on the large and small screen and has heartthrob status amongst fans. Detractors of the "neoteric vampire" argue s/he is too tame to be a "real" vampire and does not conform to paradigms associated with the "popular vampire" of horror.

²⁷ Author Meyer admits she based the first book on romantic classic *Pride and Prejudice*, the second instalment on *Romeo and Juliet*, the third on *Wuthering Heights*, and the fourth on *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and/or *The Merchant of Venice* (Kirk nd: np, Twilight_News nd: np).

²⁸ Discussed in book chapter "Breaking all the Rules': Team Twilights and Cross-Generational Fan Appeal" (2016).

On analysing *Twilight*, a slightly different picture of the vampire emerges, particularly with the character of Edward. Rather than being the perfect boyfriend, Edward is actually an abusive partner. In his own words he is "An obsessed, vampire stalker" (2008: p.75) and "sick peeping tom" (2008: p.106). He breaks into Bella's house, disables her car and uses his mind reading gift to follow her "all day through other people's eyes" (2008: p.116). He isolates her, and is possessive and jealous. Such traits have even led to his definition as a "compensated psychopath" (Merskin 2011: p.157).

In YA genre studies these traits of toxic masculinity can be broken down into the traditional "Bad Boy" and "Over-Protective Boyfriend" tropes. The "Bad Boy" trope encompasses such negative behaviours as manipulation, coercion, rejection and mental or emotional abuse committed under the guise of love, by a character who is espoused as mysterious, brooding and dangerous and yet wounded in a way that only his chosen mate can heal. Similarly, the "Over-Protective Boyfriend" trope is also lionised as a product of true love. This time the resultant over-masculinised behaviours of this character include jealousy, possessiveness, obsession and aggression targeted at love rivals. Often the girlfriend herself suffers accidental harm after becoming embroiled in this violence. In both of these tropes, the instances of negative behaviour escalate until the result is a mis-treated and often controlled girlfriend, and yet the boyfriend in question, or the compensated psychopathic vampire in this case, is dangerously normalised and welcomed. These aspects of toxic masculinity describe the YA vampire lover perfectly and Edward Cullen is written to this standard. The foregoing description of these tropes could easily be a plot summary of Twilight. Far from being the idealised boyfriend and "tame" partner, this vampire as hyper-masculine in his behaviours and actions, is in fact made for this role.

Bella has been branded as a masochist (Taylor 2012: p.33) for her enjoyment of such behaviour. Their unhealthy relationship has been termed as "co-dependent" (Borgia 2014: p.153) and sadomasochistic (SM) (Nayar 2010: p.70). These descriptions are a far cry from the accusations of *Twilight*'s vampires as tame and sanitized for teen reading. In fact, these revenants are actually closer to readings of "real vampires" than many realise and fulfil many of the sexual tropes associated with original Gothic literature. Pramod Nayar confirms this:

First, Isabella is under the threat of pain (actual physical pain) due to her relationship with Edward...She is here the teen of traditional Gothic, her sexuality drives the male insane with lust and she is in serious danger of being 'hurt'. Edward, we are told, spies on her, comes to secretly watch her while she is asleep, all suggesting the stalker theme of the traditional Gothic where the heroine is chased through labyrinths and lonely rooms. But – and this is important in the gendered reading of the tale – Isabella consents to the pain and the threat, thus making the relationship smack of SM. Unlike the heroine of the traditional Gothic with little agency of her own, Isabella volunteers herself to Edward's supposed brute masculinity (2010: p.71).

Whilst Bella volunteers, the parallels between their interactions and those of real-life abusive relationships are apparent (Felker Jones 2009: p.37). This effect can be seen in the real-world use of the term "vampire bait" meaning a person who is "just screaming for a vampire to come after them" (Sanguinarius 2006: np) in a feeding and ultimately sexual sense. Taken from the American term "jail bate", which refers to sexual interest in people underage, "vampire bait" is often used in a derogatory sense to objectify an attractive male or female "asking" to be attacked by a vampire. There even exists a regular feature on the teen-aimed *The Vampire Diaries* website where celebrities are chosen as "Vampire Bait Of The Week" (Theo 2012: np). The objectification of a person, whilst seen as female in Postfeminist Gothic, covers both genders in real life, and in *Twilight*, and contributes to the glamorisation of such abuses as not only tolerable, but desirable.

In an American study on heterosexual relationships featuring thirty young women in their late teens and early twenties published in 2000, gender studies expert Lynn M. Phillips found some disturbing results: "90% of the women described at least one encounter that fit the legal definition of rape, battery, harassment. Only two of the women described these as abuse" (2000: p.7). In addition, Phillips found these young women were taught what she calls the "normal/danger dichotomy discourse" where "normal" boys who were "middle class, friends, church goers, nice boys" were espoused as safe choices and "dangerous" boys, the "stranger who jump[s] out of bushes", were to be avoided (2000: p.65). This left these young women open to abuses at the hands of the "normal" boys and accepting of violent behaviour as the norm. Taken to the extreme, anthropologists Margo Wilson and Martin Daly note: "Despite the contemporary scourges of serial killers, rape-murders, and homicides in the course of robbery, most murdered women are killed by their mates" (2003: p.257). Such patterns can be seen in *Twilight*; "normal" Edward "drives a sporty Volvo, wears elegant clothing, and his father is a doctor" (Merskin 2011: p.157), but he is also a controlling vampire, a serial killer, and the person who poses the most risk to his girlfriend.

In addition, Phillips notes a complex network of competing and contradictory discourses concerning heterosexual relationships that the young women in her study were exposed to from the media, parental advice, and romance novels. These included the "pleasing woman discourse" which Phillips says was "readily apparent in...teen and women's magazines" where a woman must ignore her own desires in favour of modesty, self-sacrifice, and a passivity to men, whilst also assertively satisfying their needs (2000: p.39). In romance novels read by the participants, this was taken a step further with the notion that a woman's desire is fulfilled "as they, passive and demure, are ravaged by strong and lustful men whose 134

passion they have aroused through their impeccable femininity" (Phillips 2000: p.42). Pleasing Woman Discourse was seen alongside the "male sexual drive discourse" which promoted the normalisation of male sexual aggression to the point of valorisation (Phillips 2000: p.59). The conflation of these two discourses leads to what we see in *Twilight* both from the viewpoint of the heroine and the mostly female readership, that is:

that many young women would be taught to interpret men's aggressive sexual overtures and objectifying behaviour as not only threatening or inevitable, but simultaneously as flattering, seductive, confirming their desirability and hence their "success" as women (Phillips 2000: p.61).

This success results in the inherent victimisation of the female. *Twilight*, then, it would seem provides a potent mix of the kind of idealised sexual relationships featured in romance novels where male dominance/aggression is highly favoured and promoted, with the kind of experiences of real-life young women unsure how to react or feel when faced with the maelstrom of gendered sexual discourses. Thus the female world of *Twilight*²⁹ and its "female-centred narratives that strive for audience identification with the heroine" (Backstein 2009: p.38) are complicit in certifying and replicating these negative discourses, which are particularly notable after the initial sex act when Bella appears as a battered wife when she says:

I'd definitely had worse. There was a faint shadow across one of my cheekbones, and my lips were a little swollen, but other than that, my face was fine. The rest of me was decorated with patches of blue and purple. I concentrated on the bruises that would be hardest to hide (2008a: p.87).

Whilst Backstein may argue the positives of identifying with Bella's "strength, her extraordinary capabilities, her status as an object of desire", several critics have disputed that

²⁹ "Twilight – both the book and the film – is the product of women: novelist Stephenie Meyer, screenwriter Melissa Rosenberg, and director Catherine Hardwicke" (Backstein 2009: p.38).

objectification and Meyer's use of Postfeminist Gothic (2009: p.38). Its "nostalgic return to the inscription of gendered dynamics" (Taylor 2012: p.32) where the abuses of male violence and female surrender are normalised (Borgia 2014: p.157), and even championed as not just desirable but utopic (Borgia 2014: p.155, Franiuk et al 2012: p.14) are found to be problematic. Scholars have also argued that the female protagonist is endowed solely with talents for cooking and ironing (Merskin 2011: p.158), merely appears as a cipher (Brooker 2011: p.45), and is the "prototypical 'damsel in distress'" (Franiuk et al 2012: p.18) who is constantly in need of rescuing by a male figure. The traditional YA "Damsel in Distress" trope might be somewhat outdated, but it certainly finds purchase in this series. It is true that the section featuring Bella with no male attention is skipped entirely and replaced by almost blank pages³⁰ (Borgia 2014: p.164), and that while there is a "Team Jacob" and "Team Edward" to champion their romantic (and perhaps sexual) causes amongst fans, there is no "Team Bella" (Harding 2009: np, Lucianovic 2010: np). Edward reinforces this theory when he refers to his girlfriend as being created as "his reward" (2008: p.217), almost as if she is his own personal golem.

5.1 Power Struggle

Bella is complicit in the SM elements of this unhealthy pairing, but rather than being victimised by it, it is the site of a complex play for power with both spouses intent on taking control and where sexuality represents the core site for such a struggle in a stereotypically gendered Postfeminist Gothic sense. Edward faces a "contemporary crisis in masculinity" (Brabon 2007: p.56) which clashes with Bella's actively pursued feminine subject position (Genz 2007: p.74) to produce the fractured *Twilight* romance. Author Margot Adler explains:

³⁰ Each of these pages carries one word: "October", "November", "December", and "January" (2006) to indicate missing months in Bella's life.

It's conventional to talk about vampires as sexual, with their hypnotic powers and their intimate penetrations and their blood-drinking and so forth. But most of these modern vampires are not talking as much about sex as they are about power (2010: np).

Edward's abuses of Bella are set into relief by the power struggle which occurs between them. Edward's control is embodied in the restricted physical intimacy he shares with Bella as the arbitrator of the level and duration of any skin-to-skin contact such as kissing. He moves away from these embraces and controls the degree of seriousness they reach, much to Bella's disappointment. Considering "Edward had spent most of his life rejecting any kind of physical gratification" (2008a: p.23) and has refused physical contact with all but his vampire family, this form of control is ingrained and pervasive and makes for some uncomfortable scenes.

The idea he is punishing Bella for her desire with the withdrawal of physical contact is moot, as he repeatedly reveals in the unpublished and lesser known *Midnight Sun* ³¹ that he would sincerely like this contact to be allowable. Hence the denial must be Meyer's rather than Edward's and she acts to limit the intimate scenarios readers are subject to. This is a dominant and oft repeated control mechanism throughout the series and Bella reacts against it to manipulate and impose her will upon her mate in an enactment of the perpetrator/subject opposition of the victim/object dichotomy of the Postfeminist Gothic female. Edward recognises she has "unconscious power" (2008: p.18) over him from their first meeting and this increases throughout the series with Bella gaining more confidence with each victory over him to become a person who "had no limits when it came to what they wanted" (2007: p.373). Largely these manipulations are related to sex and end in Edward's "surrender"

³¹ Published as a full novel in 2020.

(2007: p.398), but they escalate to become about power rather than intimacy when Edward agrees to her sexual demands, but she recapitulates. At this point Bella's currency of hurtful words and emotional abuse result in her wining the power struggle with her "newly discovered weapon" (2007: p.405). After one hurtful comment she reflects:

I didn't look up to see his reaction, afraid to know how much pain I was inflicting. I did hear his sudden intake of breath followed by the silence that followed...wishing I could take the words back. But knowing that I probably wouldn't. Not if it worked (2007: p.372).

The warring pair enter a kind of ceasefire at their wedding, which Edward had long insisted upon and Bella had resisted. Here the power struggle is labelled in the *Twilight* lexicon when Edward is described with adjectives like "triumphant" and "victorious" (2008a: p.45) and Bella is categorised as "winning too" (2008a: p.45). From this point on, every victory is Bella's, the most notable being the decision not to abort the couple's half-vampire child.

6. Conclusion: Sexing the Vampire

"Vampirism is all about sex...such a statement of the obvious – that it's practically redundant" (Baddeley 2010: p.7), however, the relationship between vampires and sexuality is a multifaceted one and the Meyerist vampire is no exception to that rule. In concluding this chapter, it can be noted that the vampires of *Twilight* are created in a fictive world where their sexuality has been confined within the YA genre, sanitised by LDS beliefs, and mutated according to Mormon traditions. It has been staunched with virginity and abstinence narratives and arrested with mechanisms of control and power. And yet the sexual drive of the vampire has survived and flourished in this environment in spite, and because, of these

factors. The abstinence and virginity elements, whilst celebrated and lionised, have become the nascent pornography of a new generation of vampire and romance fans. The very notions of the erotic and teen sensuality which Meyer has tried to deny are being affirmed. She offers an idealised virgin state, and yet couples it with enticing sexual fantasies; she acts as a proponent for chastity and yet off-sets it against prurient petting scenes and ineluctable "aroma arousal".

Like his folkloric counterpart, the "neoteric vampire" still feeds on sexual fluids except rather than literally imbibing them, s/he finds pleasure (and pain) because of them and the acts from which they stem as an all-consuming part of his/her existence. Looking to the virginity and abstinence narratives, the combination of the two represents an overarching narrative of consumption. With the concentration on the unconsummated in sexuality and the unconsumed in blood drinking, the narrative serves to prioritise what is lacking rather than what is present, i.e. the desire to consume, whether this focuses on consuming virginity or human blood. Thus, again, the opposite of what Meyer intended comes to the fore thanks to the desire for the forbidden as epitomised in these books.

The forbidden and monstrous sexuality as originally displayed in *Dracula* becomes the abusive teen romance in *Twilight*. The elements of monstrosity are provided by "dangerous" teenage sexuality and heightened during intimate moments, becoming fully manifest with sexual consummation because the vampire's "natural urges to kill…are particularly strong during sexual intimacy" (Franiuk et al 2012: p.24). It is at these junctures when the true face of the *Twilight* romance is revealed, both in somatic interactions and in mental fantasies.

Unlike Dracula, who has been described as "a sexual monster with no possibility of redemption" (Pirie 1977: p.54), the teen lovers in *Twilight* are redeemed once they are both 139

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vampires, thus the redemptive qualities of vampirism act to re-designate and re-shape their previous behaviours into something acceptable for the LDS faith and the books' author.

Prior to this sexual normalisation, the vampire body acts as a site of gendered sexual conflict and abjection where traditional gender scripts are enacted and distorted by Edward and Bella in accordance with Postfeminist Gothic as being a "pro-patriarchal, anti-feminist stance, a backlash against feminism and its values" (Brabon 2007: p.x), whilst also being seen "to denote a postmodern and poststructuralist feminism that discredits discursive homogeneity and a unified subjectivity" (Genz 2007: p.1). Edward as vampire and Bella as vamp enact the mutually inverted rape fantasy depicting teenage (and therefore unmarried) desire as dangerous and physically abusive and written upon the body in physical injury. The notion of submissive and dominant sexual partners is borne out in the unhealthy relationship shared by Bella and Edward, and is emphasised with the play for power we see within the series. Returning to Galenorn's early definition of the virgin adds a new dimension to the virginity narrative present in Twilight, uniting the elements of sexuality and power to produce a struggle for supremacy between a male virgin vampire and female virgin vamp. As a product of the SM-vampire-and-victim-scenario Edward and Bella swap roles, being alternately sexual predator and prey. This is also seen in the Whedon Tradition where slayer Buffy and vampire Spike's oft analysed, violent sexual encounters invert those same roles creating an abrasive relationship affecting both human/vampire and male/female, just as the original dialogue between the revenge-seeking female and sexually predatory male vampires of early poetry did.

Reading the novels in terms of gender with Bella as human and female, and Edward as vampire and male, then the human (and therefore female) is subordinated to the vampire (and

therefore male) body. The human/female coupling as inherently fragile and biddable is imprisoned and contained by its own form and by the superior body of the vampire. In opposition, the vampire/male body is exulted as powerful and dominant and created as the natural superior to its inamorata. The connotations linked to the gendering of the physical continue and are expanded upon in the realm of the sexual where the material differences between the vampire/male and human/female corpus soon become apparent, as one is rock-like and enduring, whilst the other holds the potentiality for rape, blood atonement, and victimisation. It is not until Bella becomes a vampire that these physical restrictions are lifted and her shifting form is allowed to become the equal, and in reality the superior, to her husband. As a vampire Bella has all the qualities of her mate, and thus as associated with the vampire body gendered as male, and thus this strictly heteronormative narrative unwittingly allows vampiric transgendering. Her vampiric becoming is further enhanced because she is a newborn vampire and will initially be physically stronger than Edward. It could be argued that as she leaves behind her human/female body and her ability to menstruate and give birth, she enters the world of the vampire and a gendering as male.

Pursuant to this, Bella joins the ranks of the Postfeminist Gothic female in "inhabiting" (Genz 2007: p.69) and enacting femininity as a performative role and, in fact, becomes what Jeffery Weinstock associates most closely with the cinematic female vampire as "more womanly – more attractive, more seductive, strangely more *alive* – than any real, living human female" (2012: p.8). She becomes much like one of Weinstock's early film vamps who appropriate masculine agency and turn the masculine into the coded feminine (2014: p.24). Correspondingly, Edward too is part of the vampiric transgendering as he performs his Postfeminist Gothic masculinity as a "reconfiguration of the female Gothic heroine – relying

on his performance of male gender identity to act as a substitute for the "real thing", he becomes the victim of his own masculinity" (Brabon 2007: p.66). The demasculated, or even feminised, male is not "re-membered", to use Brabon's term (2007: p.66), until he is allowed vampiric consummation with his masculinised female mate in the ultimate in co-dependancy and abjection.

While this analysis centres on the relationship of Bella and Edward as protagonists, further investigation might be made into the relationships of the other vampire couples to see if this formula is transferable to other interactions.

In investigating sexuality within *Twilight*, this chapter has dispelled the myth that it is a "sexless text", it has answered the question surrounding the legitimacy of the vampires under scrutiny, and has provided evidence as to the levels of abuse, female victimisation, and sexuality on offer in this YA title. It has unearthed inter-play in gender roles and stereotyping, and has firmly sited the "neoteric vampire" as both ideal partner and abusive spouse. Most of all it has documented the persistence of vampire sexuality within a series of novels that tried to inhibit and contain it. As a "triumph of sex over death, of flesh over spirit, of the corporeal over the invisible" (Pirie 1977: p.6), the sexuality of the revenant is irrepressible and not even curbed by death. The French expression *le petite mort*, literally meaning "little death", used as a colloquialism for orgasm seems strangely appropriate here.

Chapter Four

Monstrously Beautiful: Beauty in Darke Academy

1. Introduction: The Changing Face of the Vampire

Two conflicting characters emerge when describing the appearance of the fictive vampire. For people above the age of fifty, the vampire they grew up with would most commonly be middle-aged, ashen-faced, with fangs and an opera cloak. Those below that age category would more likely recall a young, brooding, attractive vampire. These two variations of the vampire account for the "traditional vampire" and the "popular vampire" types and their differing aspects occur because the appearance of the vampire has changed dramatically over the past twenty or so years, as the title of Deborah Wilson Overstreet's book on more contemporary vampires *Not Your Mother's Vampire* (2006) suggests.

This physical change is demonstrated most comprehensively by focusing upon the screen vampire as an introductory note before moving onto a more in-depth discussion of his/her YA literary counterpart in the body of this chapter. As explained in the introductory section of this thesis, the filmic vampire represents a salient marker in the development of the vampire "super genre" as a whole, and is particularly pertinent to the YA audience because of this generation's familiarity with this televisual medium (Weinstock 2012: p.126). The reason for citing the screen vampire here is two-fold: firstly, as a purely visual medium the screen is uniquely situated as an indicator of physical appearance, and secondly, as historian Lisa Hamilton asserts, for every person that read *Dracula* (1897) "hundreds more would see the

film" (2014: np). There is greater accessibility to cinema, television, theatre, and online viewing platforms than ever before and this proffers the opportunity to truly see the vampire's physical manifestations and to witness what those manifestations mean first-hand for any given cultural moment.

Initially, and up until fairly recently, the vampire of cinema was a man of middling age or older, an inhabitant of the distant past, cast for his ability to scare the audience with his imposing screen presence and terrifying appearance. This figure from the horror genre signposted traditional vampiric conventions in terms of physical appearance and was portrayed by actors such as Max Schreck in *Nosferatu* (1922), and the "default film images" associated with Bela Lugosi and Christopher Lee (Day 2006: p.xi). Whilst their portrayals contained elements of the erotic categorised as forbidden, they also became contemporary idols with legions of female fans (Baddeley 2010: p.182, p.171). Lugosi has been labelled as a "Gothic sex symbol", whilst Lee is noted for his animal magnetism and sexual savagery (Baddeley 2010: p.169, p.171). The well-known male screen vampire may not appear handsome for modern viewers, but was considered attractive by contemporary female audiences. In contrast, his leading lady and vampiric counterpart has exhibited notable beauty, creating a gender division between the early standards of beauty for the screen vampire.

The ideational physical beauty within these films originated not with the male vampires, but with their female victims (Burnham Bloom 2010: p.146). The novel-dwelling pre-Stoker vampires³², and those who were to follow chose victims, both male and female, who were handsome. In the cinematic sphere the females were celebrated for their beauty, albeit a

³² Such as Paul Féval's Countess Addhema from his 1860 novel and Marie Nizet's *Captain Vampire* (1879).

beauty set within paradigms of an imagined past. In the forerunning literature, Stoker had allowed those female victims to become vampires and Lucy Westenra and Mina Murray/Harker joined the ranks of the female undead already populating the pages of literature, such as the eponymous Carmilla from the 1872 novella, the maidens from early vampire poetry, and Paul Féval's Countess Addhema from *Le Chevalier Ténèbre* (1875)³³. Thus the resulting female victim, and then vampire, of the screen was created with a heritage of beauty spanning hundreds of years.

One of the most notorious links between the female vampire and beauty occurs in the personage of Elizabeth Bathory, "the sixteenth-century Hungarian noblewoman who was renowned for murdering female virgins and using their blood to preserve her beauty" (Thorne 1997: p. xi). Arguments have been made to posit Bathory as inspiration for Count Dracula because "he enhances his youthfulness by drinking human blood", however, this debate is hotly contested by the majority of scholars (Thorne 1997: p.7). Surprisingly, the pre-Stoker Countess Addhema, who is a skeletal waif until she dons scalps stolen from young female virgins to become beautiful, has not been linked to Bathory as prominently.

In marked contrast the modern or "popular vampire", who has been beautiful in both male and female incarnations since its birth, first arrived on film from the early 1990s onwards, and almost twenty years earlier in the sympathetic vampire sub-genre of literature that appeared during a period of "experimentation with generic conventions that challenged and helped redefine traditional vampire mythology" (Abbott 2006: p. 125). This move signalled the end of the vampire as a figure of terror and instead marked him out as a viable love match

³³ Translated as *The Vampire Countess* (2003).

and a vampire "honey".³⁴ The actors who portrayed the vampire also changed and became Hollywood pin-ups. Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise personified the Rice Tradition in *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), whilst Jude Law portrayed a vampire in *The Wisdom of Crocodiles* (1998). These A-list actors took on the role of the vampire, who, as David Pirie asserts "is not far removed from the giant fantasy figures presented by the film companies as 'stars'", and cemented stardom and attractiveness as concomitants of the fictive vampire (1977: p.6).

The Whedon Tradition was born in 1995 when actors David Boreanaz and James Marsters became the aforementioned vampire honeys. The vampire's visual cues shifted to become attractive and human-like in appearance, as Deborah Wilson Overstreet confirms:

Vampires have always been seductive, smart, powerful, immortal predators. Now, they are also usually young, beautiful, intellectual, angst-driven beings who have evolved from their folkloric revenant roots to an ultrahuman status (2006: p.3).

The "ultrahuman" status of "popular vampires" from the sympathetic sub-genre is most clearly indicated by extreme levels of attractiveness. The tropes of facial beauty and physical perfection were the norm for the vampire from the year 2000 onwards and s/he proliferated in screen productions like *Underworld* (2003-present), *Twilight* (2008-2012), Alan Ball's *True Blood* (2008-2014) and Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec's *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-2017). The YA literary vampires of the period reflect this change and beauty becomes not merely a physical attribute, but a central tenet of existence.

Nowhere is this more prominent than in the Darke Academy series by Gabriella Poole, which deals with an elite international boarding school for the children of the rich and powerful. The school is a facade for a secret race of immortal vampire spirits who meld with intelligent and

³⁴ A term of endearment from the 1990s used by teenagers to refer to an attractive boy or girl or to a boyfriend or girlfriend. It became well-known in the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* for its use with reference to vampires in episodes including "The Pack"(1997), "Dead Man's Party" (1998) and "Something Blue"(1999).

attractive human teenagers to live as one throughout an extended human lifespan. The pair become even more beautiful once fused and that beauty is sustained via the feeding of energy from unknowing humans. Such a notable transformation will be investigated in this chapter in conjunction with reference to John Paul Riquelme's theory of Aesthetic Gothic (2000) and the study of beauty and art known as the philosophy of aesthetics. *Darke* provides an unusual position for analysis from an academic standpoint because there is currently no scholarly research on it.

2. Beholding Beauty: Framing and Body Focus

In beginning to elucidate the concept of aesthetics in *Darke*, the manner in which the body is represented to the reader on both a linguistic and a literary level is important. The notion of framing is highly relevant here and provides a valid starting point. John Paul Riquelme notes the inclusion of perspective and the idea of a "stable, resolving point of vantage" in his theory of Aesthetic Gothic (2000: p.616), something which can be transposed to the "resolving" viewpoint offered by Poole. The technique of framing a narrative acts to focus aspects of a novel, just as a camera frames a cinematic scene. In *Body Works* (1993), Peter Brooks notes how *Frankenstein* (1818) utilises tales within tales, the veiling of visual elements, and the literal framing of scenes using voyeuristic techniques, with reference to the body and more particularly to mark its absence or its need to be hidden (pp.199-220). Similar strategies are employed in *Carmilla* (Botting 1996: p.144) and in *Dracula*, which is famed for its "fragmentary narrative" (Botting 1996: p.147). *Darke* too employs this framing technique, initially by splitting its novels into multiple books, just as television series are divided into seasons.

This division helps to focus the narrative framing on one story and could be called "episodic framing" if not for this term's existing use in media studies. Here episodic framing as defined by Shanto Iyengar "depicts issues in terms of individual instances or specific events" and focuses upon "dramatic visual footage" (2005: p.6) with no general context. Thus the term meshes well with Poole's treatment of the multi-volume narrative, because the story is handled in a very similar way to Iyengar's definition: it is made up of a series of instances and is created in a similar fashion to the referenced "dramatic visual footage". *Darke*'s dramatic elements are indeed framed to keep the reader's attention and the narrative moves multiple plot dilemmas along at a fast pace.

To return to Brooks' concept of voyeuristic framing with the blocked view of the body in *Frankenstein*, where physicalities are obscured with blindness and the shielding of the eyes (1993: pp.199-220), we see a narrative where monstrosity is being hidden from view. Riquelme cites this kind of impediment of vision as confusing and disorienting (2000: p.610). In *Darke* the opposite is true and vampiric beauty is revealed for all to see, illuminating the Gothic body for the audience and resolving any questions as to its representation. The narrative tool most commonly used to achieve this is the concept of protagonist Cassie Bell as voyeur. On multiple occasions in each book she finds herself watching or literally following important plot events centred upon the body.

Cassie follows vampire Keiko and sees her watching her human roommate. The scene is illuminated for her by "light from a wall sconce [which] fell on the pair" (2009: p.95) to frame the action and to highlight that the watcher is being viewed by the narrator, who is relaying the information to the reader. Here the focus on the body introduces the key idea of the vampire and its prey and the notion of illegally feeding on humans to procure beauty,

because in this mythos a vampire becomes more beautiful after feeding. In another example, Cassie is spying on someone walking down a corridor lined with "rows of small alcoves, each one occupied by a classical bust" (2009: p.46). As she watches her quarry, the marble heads, which look "scarily real", watch her with their "blank eyeballs", again doubling the voyeuristic nature of the episode (2009: p.46). Each of these framed scenes represent crucial plot developments and introduce mystery. Requelme's resolving viewpoint where what is in focus can be deciphered, as represented by these multi-faceted voyeuristic elements, acts to strengthen anticipation surrounding these mysteries and to show resolution, to some degree, until the next mystery is framed and re-framed in the same manner. This notion of visual focus not only shepherds the protagonist and the reader towards the author's signposted narratorial intrigues, it also commits the body of the vampire into the visual sphere because throughout this series the vampire is shrouded in mystery and its paradigms are only revealed gradually across the series' three novels. Outside of these instances of framing, the vampires' monstrous sides, for the majority of the *Darke* vampires are positioned adversarially to the protagonist, are hidden. This conforms to Brooke's theories on the shielded view and the resultant confusion noted by Requelme. However, one aspect never shielded or denied is beauty and its descriptions abound.

Poole directs reader attention to framed nefarious episodes as part of her resolving viewpoint where her signposting of rich vampires can be read as commentaries on the lifestyles of their beautiful real-life counterparts. Throughout the series beautiful vampires are portrayed as being only marginally more unpleasant than the beautiful human students at the academy, and intolerance for underprivileged scholarship students like Cassie is clear. For Poole the commodification of beauty as represented by these vampires and their need to obtain and

maintain attractive hosts is also a discussion of consumerism, class hierarchy and wealth. In Darke the beautiful body is enhanced by the addition of expensive designer attire and shopping is depicted regularly. Anything less than designer wear marks the body out as inferior. Beauty has an unbreakable bond with consumerism, both as a requirement for its existence through its need to feed and through its almost addictive need to be clothed in the latest and best fashions to mark it as superior to others. For Poole then, beauty within Darke and in the real world is yet another consumer commodity, something to be traded and improved upon and only the very richest of individuals can be truly beautiful. Feeding and shopping have a directly correlative link, these consumer actions are undertaken to enhance appearance no matter the cost and it is almost as if the correctly clothed body is an entity in its own right. Feeding is largely non-concensual and each assigned human "life-source" is drugged and fed upon every few days. Officially most vampires try to treat their "lifesources" kindly, but the concensus is that humans do not remember what happens, so any negative effects are ignored. With shopping too the emphasis is on abundance and designer wear becomes fast fashion for these super-rich individuals. No thought is given to the fashion industry's environmental or employment practices, and again any negative impact from this need to consume is ignored because beauty comes first.

Darke vampires have mental powers which they use upon the minds of others and this is a common vampire trope.³⁵ When a vampire is looking at a human or another vampire, the focus of that attention experiences a physical sensation on the skin as if the gaze is palpable. Poole turns the practice of being observed into something tangible and therefore intensifies the concept of framing. She makes the act of being observed an experience which is both

³⁵ Contemporaneous examples of this variety of mental ability include the "glamour" in *True Blood* and "compulsion" in *The Vampire Diaries* television series.

physical and mutual, if uncomfortable, emphasising the pellucid importance of appearance to both the viewer and the subject. By concretising viewing as a physical sensation the viewee is always aware of the scrutiny of others and by extension is continually being made aware of their own appearance as relayed to those viewers. Physical appearance shifts from representing a marker of the self as the body's exterior and instead becomes a physical barrier which is continually probed by the mental-as-physical contact of outsiders scrutinising the body's borders and reinforcing the need for beauty as protection against unsolicited examination.

This vampiric ability translates into a salient preposition when discussing the framing concept and acts as a kind of third-person perception. The focus of vampiric attention becomes a conduit for viewing the narrative and creates an additional point of view for voyeuristic framing. Therefore, whenever a vampire is depicted as watching someone, the reader receives this information via the narrator, through the surveilling vampire, to create layers of framing in this narrative of extreme voyeurism which aptly responds to and reflects the viewing experiences of screen-savvy YA audiences versed in the practice of visual layering commonly found in the cinematic and televisual realms .

In furtherance of this point, the narrator naturally performs the role of voyeur in relating the story to the reader, that story is itself doubled in its voyeuristic nature owing to the manner in which the events are related, as "Cassie watched, horribly fascinated, from the darkness of the bathroom", and the act of viewing is made palpable (2009: p.177). Furthermore, the audience performs the role of voyeur during the act of reading to become the counterpart of the narrator (Riquelme 2000: p.615). These layers of voyeurism focus primarily on the body in varying states of action. The one constant amongst the vampiric bodies, which are

empowered or victimised, teen or adult, satisfied or hungry, is beauty. All of these bodies are portrayed as being beautiful and beauty is the primary and unifying trope throughout the novels, which acts as the central focus for framing.

Thus, any salient actions which are meant to occur behind closed doors are related in full narratorial view, almost as if there is no privacy in this series and therefore no avenue for the vampiric body to operate in without the full force of the visual scope. Here we have an environment where physicalities are fundamentally and deliberately exposed in the service of the revelation and promotion of beauty. Continual references to beauty and the ranking of physical appearance occur throughout the series and are not solely relayed by the words of the narrator; they are also affirmed with comments from and conversations with other characters, with overheard snippets of dialogue, and with retellings of beauty in the form of second- or third-hand observances. For example, on one occasion "every boy in the hall was surreptitiously ogling [vampire] Katerina", on another a vampire couple kiss and all "eyes were turned in their direction" (2009: p.62, 2010: p.71). Synonyms for the concept of "beauty" are used more than sixty times throughout the series. These declarative retellings of beauty at the linguistic level serve only to draw attention to the body and maintain it on the literary level, until it becomes a multiplicator in its own right.

3. Beauty Doubled: Multiples of the Vampiric Self

The double is a staple element of Gothic literature and of Aesthetic Gothic and it features prominently both in the timeline of the vampire and in *Darke*. The plot for *Darke* is produced by book editors and then Poole, whose real name is Gillian Philip, ghost writes the novels

(Schmidt 2010: np, Before It's News 2013: np, Philip nd: np). Thus *Darke* is the product of dual origins and is doubled in a very pragmatic manner from the outset. Within the text too doubling is prominent. The vampires are innately twinned as a composite of a human body and mind combined with an immortal vampire spirit to form a whole. Thus the doubled *Darke* vampire is the product of a dual writing process and a doubled composition and is truly a character borne of and with duality.

Traditionally the vampire's own double in the form of his reflection or shadow is absent (Copper 1973: p.29) and provides irrefutable proof of vampirism. In the Stoker Tradition Dracula has no reflection or shadow (Burnham Bloom 2010: p. 146) and this trope continued up until relatively recently, most notably in the Whedon Tradition and in BBC television's *Being Human* (2009 to 2013), where vampires lacked reflections, and did not appear in photographs or video footage.

The "neoteric vampire" does not share this predicament and the reasons behind it can be squarely positioned in the arena of beauty; after all, there is little point having immense beauty if you cannot admire your reflection or recorded image. This fondness for mirrors firmly situates this vampire in the realm of human vanity. For social health experts Bill Bytheway and Julia Johnson the concern with appearance and the act of looking at one's reflection denotes "a kind of confirmation of who we are" (1998: p.243); the same affirmatory result applies to the vampire and his/her use of the mirror. For the first time s/he can view his/her visage, which is now one of beauty, and can confirm his/her existence and physical attractiveness via his/her mirror-self. This carries a number of implications for the "neoteric vampire". His/her double is present in the form of a reflection and therefore Wilson Overstreet's "ultrahuman" beauty of the vampire is magnified two-fold, once in the original

and once in the double (2009: p.88, 2006: p.3). Thus the importance and presence of beauty is emphasised and Riquelme's notion of concurrently "aesthetiz[ing] the Gothic and gothiciz[ing] the aesthetic" comes into play (2000: p.10). Such an apt sentiment can be further honed by describing it as a process of aesthetizing the vampire and vampirising the aesthetic to produce the "neoteric vampire", whose Gothic body absorbs coeveal notions of extreme beauty and vampirises it until that beauty only finds its equal in its reflected double.

The theory that the "soul is identified with the shadow or the reflection" (Barber 1988: p.179) is significant in terms of the aforementioned doubling of the vampire body and spirit and brings to mind the idea that the two were "long regarded as in some sense spiritual doubles" (Herdman 1990: p.2). The soul or spirit is something separate from the body (Llewellyn 1991: p.47) and almost exists as a non-corporeal copy of the physical self. It gains its corporeality when viewed in shiny surfaces but these surfaces come with inherent dangers of the loss of the soul, and therefore the loss of beauty and the doubled self. Thus the mirror can be both something wondrous and something fatal for the mirror-self.

The same principles apply to the *Darke* vampire spirit, which represents the soul of the immortal vampire, and by extension its reflection or shadow as one of the "foremost characteristics of Gothic" (Botting 1996: p.32). As a mirror-self the spirit or visitant (Webber 1996: p.48) occupies its host body, chosen expressly for its physical attractiveness. This manoeuvre brings the visitant a corporeal form and the ability to be viewed in the mirror, thus imbuing it with a reflection and a tangible representation of its doubleness. The vampire visitant can be killed by a reflective, metallic surface akin to a mirror, which in this case is a special knife imbued with magical powers. Once the knife penetrates the vampire's flesh, s/he and the host body die and thus the soul is lost to the reflective surface of the knife, in

accordance with folk beliefs relating to shiny surfaces. The idea that the vampire's beautyobsessed soul, and therefore body, could be lost to a mirror resonates with the contemporary reliance on vanity at the cost of other aspects of the personality.

The loss of the soul or other self in shadow form could be fatal according to Romanian myths which pre-date *Dracula*. In 1888 Emily Gerrard wrote about the country's "shadow-traders", practitioners who stole people's shadows resulting in their deaths within forty days (pp.17-18). As a representation of the shadow, the vampire visitant's removal also brings death to its host. Once the Estelle spirit leaves the aged Estelle body, the previous host dies, "crumpled to the floor in a dry, dead heap", leaving only a husk which is quite literally a shadow of its former self (2009: p.232). Similarly, when the link binding Keiko's visitant to her body is severed with the knife, the same fate befalls her.

Previous incarnations of the vampire may have lacked reflections, shadows, and by definition souls, but today's vampires have all three. In fact, rather than simply owning the shadow or reflection, the "neoteric vampire" embodies both. To answer this point in terms of the philosophy of aesthetics requires explanation from the fields of psychotherapy and psychology. In psychotherapy the Jungian shadow or shadow-self equates to the unconscious part of a person's mind, linked to base desires and to the notion of demon possession (Diamond 2012: np). In *Darke* that possession is a reality rather than a notional construct. The shadow-self, or "shadow-side" to use an earlier Victorian term, is in point of fact, an immortal vampire spirit whose base desires are set firmly in the realm of the conscious,

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³⁶ The idea that the vampire is a spirit or demon which has entered the body appears throughout the vampire genre, including the Whedon Tradition, and in folklore.

beginning with the selection of a beautiful body to inhabit in order to assuage its vanity (Herdman 1990: p.3). This brings the argument into the area of psychology and the mirror test, which evaluates a creature's ability to recognise itself when looking into a mirror (Gallup et al. 2002: p.9). As the vampire visitant joins with and becomes the new vampiric body s/he inhabits, his/her use of the mirror to confirm and assess physical beauty requires that same self-recognition used within mirror tests and a performance of the Lacanian mirror stage³⁷ in true double fashion (Webber 1996: p.33). This recognition is not just of the self, but of the mirror-self.

Hence the shadow-self and the mirror-self form two parts of the whole, just as the body and the spirit make up the *Darke* vampire. The shadow-self aligns itself most closely with the vampiric spirit, whilst the mirror-self has close links to the vampire in its physical incarnation. One represents the desire for beauty and the other a bodily representation of it, with the two in tandem equating to the fulfilment of a physical ideal of attractiveness dreamed of amongst real-life teens.

As the personification of that self or selves, the "neoteric vampire" represents the shadow and reflection of the original breed of vampire who subsisted without it. S/he ultimately becomes the physical embodiment of that shadow- or mirror-self and a doppelganger to the vampire of the folkloric and Stoker Traditions and those that followed. This twinned vampire is represented by the two-faces of the vampire as a physical manifestation of its two parts.

3.1 Twinning the Vampiric Visage

³⁷ The point at which an individual is able to recognise itself in a reflection.

The importance of reflection with regard to vampiric doubling appears in a paradigm from the Stoker Tradition: the two faces of the vampire. In *Dracula* the Count has an old face and a young face; in *Darke* these twin faces are represented by the vampire's usual, attractive face and his/her truly vampiric visage, described as the "feeding response" by Danielle Lawson (2014: p.244). That is, the facial reaction triggered when a vampire is about to feed. This compelling physical transformation of the face from human-like to vampiric compounds the notion of the double as "a figure of visual compulsion" (Webber 1996: p.31) and resolutely consigns his existence to the scopic sphere.

The facial reaction can vary from mythos to mythos, from a feral look of hunger, or sprouting of fangs³⁸, to a dramatic physical transformation where the face of beauty is replaced with something ugly, reptilian,³⁹ or unrecognisably humanoid. One of the most visually recognisable of these would be the fanged, gaping maw of the "feeding response" from *Fright Night* (1985). The transformation of the *Darke* vampire falls squarely within the reptilian category and references to snakes are made throughout the series as an indicator of this. The feeding response in this case comes about not due to feeding, but with anger and the degree of reaction varies between individuals. Common elements include "blood-red eyes" with the entirety of the eyeball changing colour, "peeled back lips", grey skin and a flickering snake-like tongue (2009: p.181, 2010: p.247, 2009: p.238). The transformation involves the independent movement of the facial muscles, which "twisted, exaggerated", to turn the once beautiful visage into something "hideous" (2010: p.258, p.244). The beautiful body follows suit to become something liminal, distorted, and grotesque, a creature of "yellow talon[s],

³⁸ The sprouting of fangs as featured in many vampire narratives is the most common form of the "feeding response".

³⁹ As in From Dusk Till Dawn (1996).

dull and gnarled" and "sinewy arm[s]" (2009: p.239, 2010: p.247); a thing that looks "human and yet...[sic]not" (2010: p.247).

This feeding response reveals the vampire's true nature through its physical appearance and harks back to the vampiric visages of the horror genre. It acts as a "mirror-image" double to the attractive public face of the creature and in its stead reveals something of ugliness (Herdman 1990: p.15). Thus the doubled reflection of the vampire is joined by a further double, which is something palpable and physical. With this in mind, it is notable that of the two occasions when the reflected image is specifically mentioned in *Darke*, one reveals the reflected beauty of a vampire and the other describes a "feral" "rabid animal" which transpires to be the reflection of another vampire's feeding response (2010: p.9). Hence both of these doubles are equally represented within the text.

As a general rule, the beautiful face of the vampire is the predominant one, whereas the feeding response is only activated under certain conditions. It is noteworthy that in various vampire storyverses those conditions commonly include feeding, anger or preparation for battle, and sexual arousal. A case can be made for the fact that the doubling of the vampire face has a further role to play in relation to beauty. Firstly, it is significant that it is the face, predominantly, which is affected by the transformation of this vampire into its feeding response. Secondly, it is conceivable that the face may be harmed during feeding or fighting, so the activation of the feeding response and the instatement of the true vampire face acts as protection for the hidden face and its beauty. Thirdly, the introduction of the true vampire face on occasions involving sexual arousal, as featured in *The Vampire Diaries* and *True Blood* amongst others, is also linked to physical appearance. However, rather than being directly linked to the beauty of the vampire, it is instead connected to the attractiveness of a

partner, harking back to the era when the appearance-challenged vampire preyed on beautiful victims.

The concept of the Janus-face correlates with the traditional notion of beauty equating to goodness and ugliness as a representation of one's vices. Many aesthetics scholars, including Arthur Marwick (1988) and Umberto Eco (2007), have written about this age-old reliance on appearance as a signifier of virtue. The component parts of the vampiric face in question personify this concept because the feeding response ensues when the individual is angry. However, where the twin-face trope deviates from this theory is that the feeding response in *Darke* is only activated by extreme anger, any lesser emotion and the vampire remains beautiful. Whilst the trope works in concert with this one emotion, it is triggered neither by other strong emotions nor by any negative personality traits which might be associated with ugliness under the hypothesis of "traditional" beauty (Marwick 1988: p.15).

Just as the vampire genre has its "traditional vampires" and its "popular vampires", so does the study of aesthetics have its "traditional" beauty and its "modern" beauty (Marwick 1988: p.15). The theory of modern beauty, according to Marwick, is based upon the premise that beauty is actually an "autonomous...independent characteristic" and a means by which people are assessed without relation to their other qualities (1988: p.15). It still uses the "beauty is good' stereotype', which has evolved from 'beauty equals virtue' to become 'beauty equals social advantage'" (Smolak 2012: p.124). An enormous amount of recent research has been done in this sphere including Nancy Etcoff's *Survival of the Prettiest* (1999), Deborah L. Rhode's *The Beauty Bias* (2010), and Daniel S. Hamermesh's *Beauty Pays* (2011). These texts argue "lookism" or discrimination in favour of the beautiful

(Hamermesh 2011: p.102) and represent what can be described as a discourse of "postmodern beauty" which is highly relevant to the "neoteric vampire". Etcoff explains:

We expect attractive people to be better at everything from piloting a plane to being good in bed. We guess that their marriages are happier, their jobs are better, and that they are mentally healthy and stable. For practically any positive quality you can think of, people will assume that good-looking people have more of it, do it better, and enjoy it more (1999, p.48).

This same assumption is also made by *Darke* vampires. They long for power and have settled upon the notion that this goes hand-in-hand with beauty. Whilst they generally choose host bodies from the children of the rich and powerful, they make final choices based on physical appearance. As the arbitrator of this, Poole too can be said to adhere to this theory, although the depictions of these vampires are far from favourable. Instead beauty is created as something sinister, as non-concensual and entitled regardless of the cost to other beings or other bodies and yet still these vampires benefit from every social advantage offered by "postmodern beauty". Poole attempts to revert to the "beauty-as-good" paradigm in vampire Cassie, however without existing wealth or social standing in an environment rife with both, this fails. Critics like Rhode argue that "lookism" is more than a mere theory and that being beautiful confers an "unsettling array of advantages" including better jobs and higher salaries (2010: p.23). Thus the beautiful vampire can expect a better life than his vampiric ancestor and a better life than even his human double can hope for.

3.2 Art Imitates Vampiric Life

Philosopher Roger Scruton notes that the "core subject-matter of aesthetics" is art (2009: p.97). Art plays an enormous role in Aesthetic Gothic and in the "aesthetic making and aesthetic response" found in both the doubling of the production of art and beauty and in reactions to it (Riquelme 2000: p.611). In a chapter based on aesthetics, a discussion of art is

relevant and highly pertinent, particularly with regard to the vampire and his/her double and to the earlier referenced televisual/cinematic acuity of this readership. Art, and more particularly sculpture, is a central motif in *Darke* with its campus filled with various artworks, and although the school is relocated to a different city each academic term, its statues are always present. These statues are used as a salient backdrop to the vampire activities within the school and as a foil around which the plot is structured.

This use of statuary mirrors similar uses in Victorian literature. H. Rider Haggard's *She* and Anne Crawford's *A Mystery of the Campagna* both from 1887 and F.G. Loring's *The Tomb of Sarah* (1900), all feature statues in their narratives. As with the artworks in Darke Academy, these statues take the form of a person and pertain in some way to classical sculpture. The statuary in *Darke* is largely taken from the tradition of Greek mythology, with sculpted scenes involving Leda and the swan, Narcissus, Artemis and Actaeon, and Cassandra and Clytemnestra, amongst others.

Each of the Victorian stories contains a statue which is either carved as a representation of its vampire and/or takes that vampire as a likeness for its creation. These mirror images in stone act as doubles of the beautiful vampires in question, one of whom holds the moniker of "the most beautiful woman in the world" (Burnham Bloom 2010: p.83). The same theory applies to the sample literature, with undeniable links to beauty. For critic Nicholas Royle the double figure is one which is "beautiful but at the same time frightening" (2003: p.2). This is true of the statues in the Academy and also of the *Darke* vampires. All of the statues which feature prominently in the narrative have a connection to beauty in terms of the Greek myth they are

⁴⁰ Crawford's sculpture is made in Roman style and is said to originate from that period, Haggard's is attributed to a lost ancient civilisation, and Loring's features a composition commonly found in classical art (Creed 1993: p.108).

related to. They also contain a god/godess as their subject matter as an allusion to the vampire spirits' view of themselves as god-like, in the only reference to religion in the series. In the story of Leda and the swan, Zeus is so attracted by Leda's appearance that he transforms into a swan to seduce her; Cassandra is taken captive because of her beauty; Narcissus is wellknown for his handsomeness; and Actaeon is turned into a deer for spying on the beautiful goddess Artemis. The universally known tales imbue an added dimension to the knowledge already provided by the vampire genre. These statues, which are all set at ground level, act as "beautiful" life-sized reflections in stone, of the "statuesque beauty" (2009: p.14, p.162) of the vampire students who walk by them every day. The concept is emphasised by a collection of stone busts sitting in niches at head height in the school corridor, like framed reflections of passing students. Thus the "aesthetic making" of the pupils into vampires is doubled by the "aesthetic response" of the positioning of the statues, and vice versa (Riquelme 2000: p.611). This use of statuary provides a doubling of the *Darke* vampires to impute the permanence of their beauty and the historicity of it, and by extension the historicity of the vampire. The notion is also carried in *She* where the mythic references "indicate the larger-than-life qualities of the characters – that they are types who have existed before and will exist again" (Burnham Bloom 2010: p.83). Where the statues feature pairs, the stronger of the two is aligned with the vampire and the victimised character represents the human victim.

In furtherance of the double notion, particular attention is paid to the statues of Leda and the swan, and of Cassandra and Clytemnestra. In the Leda statue we see "a slender bronze girl on tiptoe, dreamily stretching her arms and tilting up her face to a swan" (2009: p.14). This delicacy of form and beauty relates to the humanness of Leda, and perhaps to humanity's quest for beauty and consequently for the vampire form in *Darke*. Zeus, on the other hand, is

represented as follows: "webbed feet clawed at the girl's body like talons, wings arched above her, its neck and savage head raised like a snake about to strike. It looked brutal and triumphant" (2009: p.14). Here the immortal god, who cannot help but draw comparisons with the traditional vampire in his bat form and the lesser known lamia-like appearance of the vampire, is seen to quest for human beauty, just as the novel's immortal vampire spirits search for a beautiful new body to inhabit. The scene is reproduced in *Darke* when Cassie meets Estelle and the older woman's "gnarled fingers curled round her bicep. For an instant Cassie thought of the swan in the courtyard, its webbed feet gripping the bronze girl like talons" (2009: p.17). Cassie later finds out her intuition is correct when she discovers Estelle is a vampire. The spirit desires a younger body and the encounter directs her covetous gaze towards the new student, who later fuses with her spirit to become a vampire.

The Cassandra and Clytemnestra statue doubles the narratorial action between protagonist Cassie, or Cassandra, and her rival Keiko. The statue features:

one marble woman [who] cowered at the feet of another. The supplicant had lifted one pathetic hand, to shield herself or to plead for mercy. The woman above her, axe poised to strike, didn't look like she knew the meaning of the word (2009: p.105).

When Keiko and Cassie first meet at the statue, Keiko threatens her out of jealousy. On the second occasion Keiko attacks her in a fit of rage. The outcome is slightly different from that envisioned by the Greek myth, as Cassie lives to become a vampire and, as she notes later in the narrative, she isn't "feeble Cassandra anymore, the helpless victim. She was closer to the bloodthirsty Clytemnestra" (2010: p.29). These vampires personify the myths represented by the statues, thus personifying the statues themselves and bringing art and the inanimate to life in the style of Aesthetic Gothic.

The idea that beauty is in some way harmful or even fatal is also contained within each of the Greek myths chosen: Leda is seduced, or in some accounts raped, because of her beauty; Narcissus is so consumed by his beauty that he drowns looking at his reflection, and Actaeon is torn apart by dogs after seeing a beautiful goddess bathing. To reflect this, Cassie's beauty as a human and the attention she draws because of it, bring her dislike from the vampire contingent and the attention of a vampire seeking a new physical abode.

The statues represent the public facade of the vampire double but there is also a private facet which coincides with the secret vampiric face discussed previously. This private second aspect appears in the form of ancient vampire artefacts and in secret, vampire-only locations with swirling carvings of "monsters and demons" which move when in the presence of vampires, "wriggling, squirming, straining for blood" (2009: p.221, p. 182). These carvings are said to have life in the same way that vampires do (2010: p.258). Therefore, the motile carvings act as a double of the invisible spirit half of the vampire, whereas the stone carvings double its physical aspects. Thus the vampire can be said to be fully represented by statuary in one form or another and fully doubled by yet another means.

3.2a Memento Mori: Double Life After Death

In continuance of the idea of beauty being fatal, it is important to note that all three of the female vampires from the referenced Victorian stories die at the end of their respective tales. What is more, in two of those stories the statues are actually effigies of the vampires from their grave markers. Looking at the *Darke* statues in a similar fashion brings those sculptures into the realm of the grave effigy or *memento mori*⁴¹. Just as early grave markers and tombs

⁴¹ This is roughly translated from Latin as "remember you must die" and refers to the historical practice of keeping tokens associated with death as a reminder of mortality. In this instance the phrase refers to bodily representations on tombs and graves, for which the phrase became synonymous.

were sculpted from marble, so too are the markers in the Victorian stories, and just as the fashion for markers moved away from this material and towards alabaster (Crosseley 1921: p.26), so are the Darke marble effigies "alabaster white" (2010: p.29). The alabaster figures with their Greek styling further occupy the realm of the tomb because alabaster became popular during the pre-Victorian period at the same moment that "Neoclassical aesthetics were also reflected in [mausoleum] architecture" and its "symbols and images dominated representations of death" (Rugg 1999: p.207, p.206). In addition, any human forms depicted on the grave monument which were not the deceased were called "weepers", i.e. mourners. The *Darke* statues actually feature weepers to bring them further into the realm of the grave marker, but they are of a slightly different order (Crossley 1921: p.26). These "weepers" appear in the guise of the human victim in each sculpture.

Thus, rather appropriately, the vampires are doubled by something that has indubitable and unbreakable links with death and as John Herdman points out, there is a folkloric belief that an "encounter with one's double presages death" (1990: p.2). Once vampires, both from the Victorian tales and from *Darke*, are killed the *memento mori* is all that remains. In the same way real life "monumental bodies effected replacement of the deceased" (Llewellyn 1991: p.105), so too do the doubled statues replace the vampires after their death. In a similar manner, once Darke students become vampires, that new vampiric self acts to reconfigure the existing human form and personality by merging with it. This message can be carried to the vampire population as a whole as the new physical ideal and as a replacement for the less-beautiful human. Thus just as tomb art in the guise of statuary illustrates the "triumph of art over life" (Llewellyn 1991: p.17), so the art of the beautiful vampire overcomes the life of the run-of-the-mill human form. Using the grave effigy metaphor, then the doubled vampire

becomes the beautiful representation of the visually acceptable "social body", which Nigel Llewellyn defines as the sculpted effigy which remains in public view (1991: p. 47). In opposition to this is what Llewellyn terms the "natural body" or the decaying corpse and this can be aligned with the human representing the skeleton or rotting corpse element of the cadaver tomb (1991: p. 47). Therefore a dualism is created between the social and natural body and between human and vampiric beauty and vampires ultimately become the effigies of the human form, and their doppelgangers.

3.3 Beauty and Competing Feminine Discourses

As the protagonist in a series centred around physical appearance, Cassie is subject to both the universally known YA "Ugly Duckling" trope and the "I'm not like other girls" trope to differing degrees as they relate to beauty. Traditionally the "Ugly Duckling" trope references an individual who blooms into maturation, turning from ugly or plain into a beautiful adolescent. According to the story, Cassie is beautiful, but she does not hold this belief about herself. This is now a popular and common version of the trope whereby an individual does not come to accept their beauty until a journey of self-discovery has been made. This forms part of the "I'm not like other girls" trope and Cassie fits into this theme as she is an outsider at the school who does not follow the make-up and clothes trends, is not described in overly feminine ways and is not a part of the popular crowd. At face value, both of these tropes appear as positive traits for a character lacking in conceit, vanity or a dependence on group popularity.

However, when such gendering enters the arena of the vampire, particularly in view of earlier readings of the Postfeminist Gothic's impact on the nature of these young women, something more problematic occurs. Cassie is written as beautiful, but it is not until she catches the attention of a covetous vampire that her beauty is brought to the fore. When Cassie is turned and experiences her "vampiric becoming" she instantly becomes more beautiful, because that is what happens to vampires in this story-verse. This is a fictional location where the vampiric equates to beauty and the socio-cultural requirements for instant beauty demand that that is the case. Whilst Cassie does become noticeably more handsome once she is a vampire, it is not until she borrows expensive designer clothes and shoes and applies costly make-up that she is deemed attractive and that her beauty, via the transformative "Ugly Duckling" trope, is truly recognised by others and her vampiric peers. As an orphan scholarship student from a disadvantaged background, even vampiric beauty is not enough to elevate her appearance in a world impressed by material goods, consumer wealth, elitism and designer labels. Therefore physical beauty, even of the exquisite supernatural variety, is not sufficiently beautiful or even recognised as such without the trappings of consumerism to announce its existence.

Once Cassie completes her "Ugly Duckling" transformation and moves into the realm of designer couture, she leaves behind her "I'm not like other girls" moniker because once she is a vampire she is exactly like the other elite vampire females. She can nolonger claim disinterest in fashion, and boys and those other stereotypically feminised pursuits labelled as "other" from a standpoint of the quirky YA female protagonist. As "Other" from a vampiric perspective, Cassie is now nolonger "other" from a cultural point of view because she is precisely what the ideational teen girl is meant to be.

In discussing the history of portrayals of the teenaged girl, Ilana Nash, describes a dichotomy between a character who is either charming and quasi-angelic or challenges the boundaries of patriarchy (2006: p.6). Superficially, it is the YA protagonist who now takes on the latter role and the post-becoming vampire who enacts the role of accepted teenager. This is ironic considering the vampire's history, feeding habits and general perception of superiority to humans in this series. Nash describes these two traditionally adversarial teenage girl roles as being more than human or less than human, and as either a dream or a nightmare for society (2006: p.6). It is the charming, ostensibly conformist teen vampire who is thus representative of traditional societal notions of a more than human teenager as an ideal member of society, and the disruptive feminist human teenager who follows the "less than human" stereotype.

Feminine, popular, confident, beautiful girls are now either the antagonists in these YA stories or are the end product of a "vampiric becoming" where these characteristics are automatically allowable and attractive. These novels may be championed as feminist with their stories about strong women, written by women for young women, but in fact the messages they carry about beauty and about female stereotypes are questionable. Ashia Monet explains how these narratives highlight femininity as vanity for "popular mean girls", while at the same time rebuking readers for the very thing these narratives offer them (2020: np). She argues that feminism gives women the choice of how they will dress and how they will express themselves and that none of these choices affect their worth as a person – unless that person is a female character in a YA novel (2020: np). These sentiments sum up exactly the means by which femininity in the YA genre works, and they also hark back to the confusing real-life discourses of femininity faced by young women as analysed in Chapter Three. In YA novels young women need to know the "right" kind of feminine to be and the

right time to be it. They also need to be aware that there is a "wrong" kind of feminine, according to this genre's authors, and this "wrong" kind is summed up by its opposition to the novel's protagonist. However, this "wrong" kind of young womanhood becomes acceptable once vampiric maturation is reached and its beauty, strength, independence and physical power can only then be celebrated as appropriate. In the end Cassie does break away partially from her new lifestyle, both in the sense of vampiric society and in the sense of her "othering" as feminised stereotype but the damage is already done and beauty is already equated with these competing discourses of negativity, profitability and societal advantage.

The idea of the sixteenth century "vampire" bathing in the blood of young girls was transformed into the "neoteric vampire's" ability to physically become an adolescent after its move into YA literature. Of course, this in-text predilection for the young stems from the almost obsessive need to vampirise youth in real life. Now society metaphorically does exactly that and can be said to bathe in the blood of the young, whether this be symbolically through the use of medicalised beauty treatments aimed at the recreation of youthful skin or through its subjection and objectification of young female bodies who become societal targets as soon as their menarche blood is spilled. Not even vampire characters escape this societal consumption and they too fall foul to the competing discourses of acceptable and unacceptable femininity.

4. Before and After: Cosmetic Surgery and the Vampire Facelift

The "neoteric vampire's" beautiful form is a product of the defilement and abuses it has suffered since it was first imagined in the Folklore Tradition. Montague Summers noted the

folkloric vampire's bloated body, putrid breath, red face, and sharp teeth (1928: p.201). The already unfortunate physical condition of this "ambulant corpse" (Pickering 2014: p.69) was only worsened by the disfigurement the vampire body suffered at the hands of locals to curb its existence. Any deceased person considered to be at risk of becoming a vampire may have been nailed into a coffin or could have had their spine broken, hamstrings cut, or may have been decapitated (Summers 1928: p.202). Other "specific actions against the body" included pushing a spike through the tongue, housing garlic in the cranial orifices, or bursting the swollen body with a sharp object (Melton 1999: p.193, Barber 1988: pp.157-158). If that person was already considered to be a vampire, Summers notes that they could be stabbed with a whitethorn, aspen, maple, or hawthorn stake, or a consecrated dagger (1928: p.203). Basil Copper adds hanging, shooting with a silver bullet, and burning to that list (1973: p.30). Additional methods employed by local villagers, according to Emily Gerrard, include the extraction and burning of the heart and rubbing the body in specially prepared pig fat (Gerrard 1888: p.321).

In a further abuse of the physical form, the "traditional vampire" of cinema has spent years being burned by sunlight, garlic, holy water and silver as a "common element in twentieth-century vampire stories" (Melton 1999: p.195), and a continuation of his position as "the victim of atrocious acts of bodily violation" (MacCarthy 2006: p.189). J. Gordon Melton points out a significant angle to the sunlight-as-apotropaic trope which appeared in *Nosferatu* (1922), one of the first vampire films made, and which is salient to the current discussion. He explains:

Director Freidrich Wilhelm Murnau, in altering the storyline of *Dracula*, created the idea that the vampire could be killed if a beautiful woman held his attention until

dawn. The vampire could not return to his resting place and would be killed by the sunlight (1999: p.195).

Here beauty itself becomes a weapon against the appearance-challenged vampire, as something the vampire is obsessed with and helpless against. Exposure to such beauty results in death for the vampire, via physical deformation as a result of immolation from sunlight. The beautiful vampire of today can be seen as a direct descendent of the nosferatu of 1920s cinema, but rather than dying from beauty, he survives because of it. Historically, the vampire body has undergone a great deal of physical violence to the point of its destruction, now in its teen form, it has overcome that to be more beautiful than ever before and even more beautiful than its human rivals.

Almost as if the abuses of the Folklore Tradition were to presage the abuses now done to the human body, today people are willingly undergoing very similar types of violence to attain physical perfection. Any part of the body can be lifted, tucked, enlarged, or reduced. Bones are broken and shaved, poisons are injected into the face, and skin is stripped back or peeled with acids, and all to improve physical appearance. To get a better smile, the muscles of the lip can be severed and repositioned (Youn nd: np), the eye colour can be changed by stitching a silicone implant into the iris (Ellis 2013: p.13), ribs can be taken out to create a more desirable waistline, freckles removed with a laser (Barnes 2013: p.14), and toes deboned to fit smaller shoes (Volz 2009: np).

The numbers of people having cosmetic procedures such as these are on the increase.

According to The American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, there was a 164.2% rise for women and an 88.1% rise in men having cosmetic surgery between 1997 and 2010 (2010: p.9). More alarmingly, figures from the American Society for Plastic Surgeons reveal that

"Between 1996 and 2010 the number of teenagers aged 13-19 having elective cosmetic surgery has increased by 548% – from around 14,000 procedures to 76,841" in 2010 (Crezo 2011: np). The contemporary pursuit of beauty is big business and begins during the teenage years when "adolescents are notoriously hypercritical and extremely attentive to their beauty" (Etcoff 1999: p.58). Such attentiveness is reflected in teen cosmetic surgery figures and in the YA vampire who, according to Wilson Overstreet, is becoming more beautiful as a result of society's preoccupation with the perfect body (2006: p.4). The result is a vampire who would not be out of place on fashion runways, magazine covers, or cinema screens.

After undergoing cosmetic reinventions the vampire has achieved bodily perfection and is now envied by humans rather than abhorred. His/her reinvention can be attributed to the many metaphorical and literal readings of the cosmetics industry featured within the pages of *Darke*. The "before" images of the traditional vampire with pointed teeth, bloated bodies, baldness⁴², and hairy palms⁴³ resonate with the folkloric practice of placing coins on the eyes or a needle in the belly button (Montague 2010: p.52) to stop a vampire from rising from the grave. The idea of preventing the survival of ugliness with money and a needle ties the folkloric vampire to the vampire under discussion. The vampire of folklore has now been replaced by the cosmetic surgery "after" images which resemble the apotheosis of Western beauty, which aesthetics scholars have summed up as beginning with "facial and body symmetry" (Rhode 2010: p.45), slimness (Orbach 2009: p.3), and healthy hair and skin (Etcoff 1999: p.91). Men should also be tall (Rhode 2010: p.45), with chiselled faces, and a V-shaped torso (Etcoff 1999: p.157, p. 177) to produce "the body of a sportsman, hard, well-built and muscular" (Bradley 2013: p.169). For a woman the concept of the "fit" body is also

⁴² Miriam Blaylock in Whitley Strieber's *The Hunger* (1981) wears a wig to cover baldness.

⁴³ Dracula has hairy palms in the 1897 novel, as does F. Paul Wilson's Molasar/Rasalom from *The Keep* (1981). 172

pervasive according to Harriet Bradley and comes in two variations: the fashion model or the glamour model (2013: p.169). The Few and their "collective beauty" certainly adhere to these descriptions and they are described as looking "like an advertising pull-out in some glossy magazine: Vanity Fair, maybe, or Vogue" (2009: p.54).

The association between the vampire and beauty is now so prevalent that there is a cosmetic procedure called the "vampire face-lift", whereby blood is taken from the arms of a patient and injected into their face as a dermal filler to produce a more youthful/beautiful appearance (Saint Louis 2010: np). As the incarnation of Western physical desires and cosmetic surgery fantasies, vampires have moved from monster to movie star or model looks. The most recent batch of screen vampires are portrayed by former models, the most notable being *Dior Homme* model Robert Pattinson as Edward Cullen in the *Twilight* films (2008-2012) and former *Gucci*, *Calvin Klein*, and *Versace* model Ian Somerhalder as Damen Salvatore in *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-2017).

Just as models are chosen to portray vampires on film, so too are "The best and cleverest and most beautiful" teenagers in *Darke* chosen as hosts to vampire spirits, resulting in increasingly beautiful vampires. It is salient to note that the weapon chosen by Poole to kill the vampire is a knife. Once a vampire goes under the knife, to use a euphemism for cosmetic surgery, they die and their body becomes "Dried up. Mummified" (2010a: p.177), almost as if the artificially obtained beauty of surgery in some way equates to the destruction of the self. The idea is emphasised because a vampire wielding this magical knife feels an enormous rush of power in doing so, in the same way that surgeons are attributed with power over their patients (2010: p.258).

Similarly *Darke* vampires do not possess the well-known "neoteric vampire" paradigm of instant or increased healing. If they are injured, they seek medical treatment and heal as any human would; this is evidenced by Katerina's facial scar following her altercation with Cassie. Thus help to cure physical marring occurs at the behest of medicine rather than as a result of natural or supernatural healing.

The ability to procure beauty, whether through purchase in the case of surgery or through the assimilation of a vampire body, brings the physical firmly into the bailiwick of contemporary consumer culture and into the narrative of Aesthetic Gothic with its need to "create, experience, possess or destroy beauty" (Riquelme 200: p.617). Consumer culture is exemplified where medicine and cosmetic surgery meet (Haiken 1997: p.12, Davis 1995: p.17) and exists as a way to consume the desired body and identity (Elliott 2008: p.43). Anthony Elliott notes how this has a particular effect on the teen:

...a new rite of passage is emerging. As natural beauty in the contemporary era is increasingly replaced by artificial beauty, the world of celebrity, for which art and the aesthetic are at one, moves to centre stage in the cultural promptings governing surgical culture. And the latest wave of this cultural current are teenagers seeking the dismembering of their inherited looks and reconstruction of their bodies as an end in itself (2008: p.71).

The *Darke* vampires epitomise this rite of passage in two important ways. Firstly, they represent the teenage attainment of ideal beauty as achieved by contrived means as a path to future celebrity or power. Secondly, they maintain that contrived beauty by consuming the natural beauty of their victims. As immortals, the *Darke* vampires have survived for centuries by utilising the life force of their host bodies and by feeding upon the energy of human victims. Both acts mark this body-centric vampire as the ultimate consumer of beauty, and by

definition a most prolific devourer of beautiful victims, both host and food source, in the vampire tradition.

The consumption of victims is homosocial and vampires feed upon "life-sources" of the same sex. It is stated that this gender preference is due to the need for privacy and the ease of access to same sex roommates, but on the two occasions Cassie feeds upon males she is left with somewhat of an incongruous feeling, a sense of the masculine that can disrupt the gendered sense of self. In refuelling the desired body the exuberance, beauty, and physical fitness of the food source can be felt and elevated levels of these markers are preferred for a more sustaining feeding. By extension, humans who hold these qualities are held up by the narrative as being in optimum condition and therefore better human beings than those who are in a lesser physical and mental state, which is quite a problematic representation for the reader.

4.1 Body Obligation and Vampire MDs

The human body is now wholly under the purvey of the medical establishment and its beauty or lack thereof is no exception due to "society's acceptance of the use of medicine to enhance appearance" (Crerand et al. 2012: p.331). This is apparent in "pseudoscientific" cosmetics (Rhode 2010, p.53) or the surgical correction of "natural characteristics like wrinkles [which] have become 'deformities'" (Rhode 2010: p.50). This medicalisation of the physique has also moved into the world of the "neoteric vampire", with notable examples featuring vampire doctors in the healing practices of *HoN* and the treatment of transformation and childbirth in *Twilight*. With *Darke* the practice is connected to transformation and maintenance of the vampire body, both of which ultimately result in the preservation of beauty.

Darke vampires do not feed on blood but instead absorb energy from the human form via a process akin to osmosis. If a vampire fails to drink on a regular basis, he or she becomes weak and eventually dies. Appearance is the chief signifier of the need to feed and a "thirsty" vampire can be recognised by a gradual loss of beauty and a descent into a less attractive state. When Cassie avoids drinking her appearance falters and she is depicted as looking "terrible" with papery skin and dull eyes (2010a: p.17). Another vampire in need of food is described as:

The Year Ten boy with the shaggy blond hair had a bone structure almost as beautiful as Katerina's, but it was way too prominent. His face was gaunt and drawn, his skin pale and dry like paper (2009: p.149).

After drinking from a human his appearance returns to its original beauty. The process is medicalised by its description as "sick[ness]" (2009: p.157). Vampires in need of energy from their victims are outwardly assumed to be ill. Once they feed this illness is then passed onto their victim as a kind of communicable disease, and the victim takes on the label of "illness" with the accompanying loss of beauty via a gaunt, pale, tired appearance, adjectives which mirror those used to describe the hungry vampire.

The appropriation of ugliness, or what can more precisely be called average appearance, marks a lack of attractiveness as a lack of care for the body, as a visual cue to illness or weakness, and as an outward sign of deficiency. Bodily normalcy as deficiency, then, is the flip side of the earlier discussed notion of postmodern beauty as desirous and advantageous.

This topic is particular to our body-centric society in the West and has undisputable links to consumer beauty. Wendy Seymour explains: "If the appearance of the body can be shaped and changed by unlimited consumption of goods, men and women must bear responsibility

for being other than what they could be" (1998: p.31). Thus the idea of culpability is created for a lack of attention, maintenance, or improvement to the body and it is something people are judged upon, as Susie Orbach states:

We can fashion [the body] through artifice, through the naturalistic routes of bioorganic products or through a combination of these, but whatever the means, our body is our calling card, vested with showing the results of our hard work and watchfulness or, alternatively, our failure and sloth (2009: p.5).

Hence the unadulterated or natural appearance is vilified in favour of artificial or contrived beauty, which devotions must be paid to preserve. The "neoteric vampire" is no exception to this rule as s/he might be enhanced by the vampire spirit s/he carries, but this spirit must be satiated with energy or the sought-after beauty begins to fail.

5. Conclusion: Beautifully Monstrous

The connection between the vampire and beauty is not a new one; the two have been inextricably linked in various ways throughout the genre as outlined in the beginning of this chapter. However, in recent years the vampire has undergone his own "vampire facelift" to become a central character in the world of Aesthetic Gothic in becoming beautiful and young and socially accepted in a society where beauty is more highly esteemed than ever before and where discourses surrounding beauty and femininity vie for social positioning. Fast forward to three or four years after the end of the sample period of this study and even the traditionally ugly Beauty's Beast and Frankenstein's monster are physically handsome. The television series *Beauty & the Beast* (2013-2016) features a genetically modified beast who is attractive, and physically muscular with the only bodily signs of his beastliness being a facial

scar. Similarly the 2014 Hollywood film *I, Frankenstein* showcases a monster, played by Californian actor Aaron Eckhart, who is tall, handsome, and has barely visible scarring.

These modern interpretations of the "monster" also have their counterparts in literature in terms of the beauty industry. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is reinterpreted for the modern age in Brian D'Amato's *Beauty* (1992), where an obsessive artist invents a new form of plastic surgery with terrible consequences. In the YA marketplace *Peeps*' author Scott Westerfield wrote *Uglies* in 1995, about a world where all citizens are legally required to have full cosmetic surgery on their sixteenth birthdays. These narratives can each be said to respond to and comment upon contemporary trends in beauty in the same way that *Darke* does. As a reinterpretation of Stoker's vampire, these vampires echo beliefs, stresses, and practices of the modern world as I will now explain to conclude this chapter.

In summation, if we first look to readings of cosmetic surgery and the vampire we see the notion of the beautiful "monster" taken one step further with the vampire under consideration to epitomise and embody Western ideals of the physical form. As Nancy Etcoff notes: "The human image has been subjected to all manner of manipulation in an attempt to create an ideal that does not seem to have a human incarnation" (1999: p.11). Attempts to reach this ideal have resulted in the widespread use of cosmetic surgery and also in the creation of Poole's vampires, who represent the literary and supernatural incarnation of those desires.

In *Venus Envy* (1997) Elizabeth Haiken makes reference to a competition in the *New York Mirror* in the 1920s for a "homely" girl to win plastic surgery (p.12). At the same time Europeans were watching one of the first vampire films, *Nosferatu* (1922), which entered a world where cosmetic surgery was already available to improve the appearance and where

beauty ultimately causes the vampire's death. In 1931 those same audiences were thrilled by *Dracula* with Bela Lugosi, only to return to cinemas four years later "to see Bela Lugosi's *The Raven*, in which a sadistic plastic surgeon creates a monster by making a disfigured man even uglier" (Haiken 1997: p.12). Thus the vampire has long existed in a world alongside plastic surgery, however now the two are intertwined as the populace devours images of idealised beauty, and consumes the products and processes to create it.

When considering the vampire as doubled there are many incarnations, associations, and manifestations to highlight, as explained earlier. The vampire is doubled by his/her twinfaces, the reflection and shadow, and his/her artistic surroundings in the guise of grave effigies. S/he is multiplied by the body and spirit forms, and becomes the doppelganger of the pretty victim, the less attractive human counterpart, and his/her formerly ugly self "lurking in far-off boneyards" (Schillace 2014: p.267). This YA vampire as female is also doubled by the variety of femininity it portrays and the manner of discourse this implies depending upon its placement within the storyline and the appropriateness it finds within the YA dialogue with its audience.

The "neoteric vampire" also exists as a double to his/her own kind, to those vampires who have the appearance of the "neoteric vampire" but who enact the traditional role of the vampire, as evidenced by the characters Keiko and Katerina in this study. Each of the series in the sample has its evil vampires who are physically like his/her alter ego but who feed on humans, take from them against their will, and kill them. The vampire's beauty is mirrored in the "neoteric vampire" and in his evil counterpart just as it finds a reflection on the covers of magazines and advertising billboards. However, as this point demonstrates, the modern notion of beauty is not one related to goodness and virtue, it is now commensurate with

success, power, and the triumph over the wayward body through sustained beautification and taming.

In true cinematic style, the vampire is framed and reframed as beautiful, as doubled, as teen and as vampire, with focus on his/her body, spirit, and host. S/he is viewed from all possible angles and his/her physique is exposed to the voyeuristic view of peers, the protagonist, and ultimately the reader. Poole creates a sequence of framed filmic tableaux where the vampire, and therefore the vampiric body, are followed, stalked, and monitored just as the stars in the celebrity culture which inspires this brand of vampire are in contemporary culture.

Whilst this chapter follows a specific consideration of beauty in terms of the "neoteric vampire" in the YA fiction sample, there are other avenues open for unique research within the broader arena of vampiric beauty. Further study in this area could be directed towards the gendering of vampiric beauty. As mentioned briefly in the introduction to this chapter, prior to the birth of the "neoteric vampire" where males and females are equally beautiful, the development of vampiric beauty has followed different paths for male or female vampires. Study of this development with regard to beauty warrants further research.

In conclusion, the contrast between the beauty and "ugliness" of the "neoteric vampire" is a matter of degrees and perception. It is as much about the body as it is about perceiving the body in a society where beauty is key and where purchasing that beauty is a lifestyle choice. The vampire form provides the perfect fictive substitute for the postmodern body because it is one which can be revised and re-envisioned to suit its contemporary society. The vampire is as much about being doubled as it is about returns; as "types who have existed before and will exist again" (Burnham Bloom 2010: p.83) the vampire can be anything society desires.

Protagonist Cassie retorts: "there are worse things to be afraid of than ghosts and vampires and werewolves" and in the case of the contemporary obsession with looks, that may well be true (2009: p.40).

Chapter Five

Transformative Food: Oral Consumption in *Vampire Academy*

1. <u>Introduction: Vampire Oral History</u>

Whilst the concept of a physical attack on the body as a food source might seem horrific enough, the act of feeding has variously been adulterated, written, and read as metaphor. As a creature of metaphor, the vampire is no stranger to acting out the ills of any given society at any given time. For example, the vampire of folklore would not only steal your blood whilst you slept, in an enactment of the fear of untimely death and a reference to blood as an unknown quantity during a period of shifting peoples, s/he would also consume food stuffs in the home (Calmet 2001: p.226, Murgoci 2013: p.54) and cause crop failures, depriving the subject simultaneously of life and the means with which to sustain it. As mortality was fragile and community meant a great deal, being attacked by kin or close townsfolk, as the vampire would previously have been, equalled the worst kind of betrayal and the biggest threat to survival.

The act of vampiric feeding has been allegorised across many representations and replications of the canonical vampire and repeatedly codified as, amongst other things, sexual intercourse or rape⁴⁴ (Wilson Overstreet 2006: p.68), chemical addiction (Aikens 2009), and the dissemination of disease (Wilson Overstreet 2006: p.69, Hallab 2009: p.27, Stephanou 2014: p.52). The codification of feeding can be broadly categorised by historical time period, although there are many exceptions to this approach. Feeding in the Stoker Tradition is

⁴⁴ As discussed in Chapter Three.

proffered as a prime example of Victorian blood miscegenation, period bodily horrors, and foreign threats (Arata 1990). By the 1960s and 1970s, the sexual revolution wrought the thinly veiled sexualisation of vampiric feeding 45 (Abbott 2007: p.116, Melton 1999: p.344). In the wake of the social freedoms of the previous two decades, the 1980s saw the hunger of the vampire created and read as drug addiction (Sánchez 2011: np) and vampirism often exhibited symptoms redolent of AIDS and HIV infections (Nixon 1997: p.117, Stephanou 2014: p.61). The 1990s popularised and reproduced yet another re-writing of the vampire's feeding process and their human victims became prey animals (Stephanou 2014: p.124). Each of these categorisations of vampiric feeding has been constructed against a unique cultural moment and this timeline raises the question as to what the study sample period of 2000-2010 brings for the vampire and his/her feeding habits.

To answer this question this chapter will engage with and investigate the feeding habits of the "neoteric vampire" as socially constructed under the cultural discourse of food. It will look to the ways in which those feedings occur, the manner in which the author deals with feeding in the narrative sphere, and the resultant implications for the vampire body. In this chapter the concept of feeding will be read as a device for the representation of socio-cultural food practices of the modern world. In an era where food is readily available to most in the West; and where television food and cookery programmes have proliferated; where cookery books reach best-seller status; and where food is a lifestyle choice, the primacy of eating and preeminence of food cannot be overlooked. The creation and rise in literary food studies theory, a field previously dismissed (Keeling and Pollard 2009: p.6), and the developing global

⁴⁵ See Chapter Three for further discussion of this point.

discourse on food phrased as "food talk" by food and globalisation scholar John R. Thompson, is also no coincidence (2012: p.59).

The ensuing chapter will be based upon a close reading of the six books of Richelle Mead's Vampire Academy series, in terms of eating and feeding, in relation to theories of Gothic consumption. Alongside this the inter-related dialogues of cultural studies, medicine, and literary food studies will provide co-textual discussion (Henderson and Johnson 2012: p.71). *Academy* further offers opportunities for unique research because there is little or no detailed academic study of this text, ⁴⁶ despite the fact that its first book was adapted into Hollywood film *Vampire Academy* (2014), which, unlike its *Twilight* counterpart, did not prove popular with audiences.

2. Vampiric Feeding: Eating to Compete

The connections between early vampires of Eastern European folklore and food have come full circle with *Academy*. Mead admits taking inspiration for her vampires from Romanian folklore she studied in college, so the not inconsequential bisection between this creature and oral consumption provides a canonical base for investigation of her modern day Moroi characters (2009: np). Mead's Moroi are a species of vampire with Russian and Romanian heritage, although emphasis heavily falls on the former and their antedecedents and histories are written as Russian. Much like their folkloric namesakes, they are born, live out their lifespan (of over a hundred years in this case), and die (Ladouceur 2013: p.45). Unlike other

⁴⁶ It is mentioned by Amy Cummins in a 2016 book chapter which briefly discusses non-vampire characters. A reading guide to *Academy* published by Michelle Rowen and Richelle Mead in 2014 exists, but this non-academic text largely features an overview of the novels and characters.

"neoteric vampires", they are not preternaturally strong or fast, they are not immortal, and have no discernible vampiric abilities in the traditional or postmodern sense. They are beautiful and are drawn with particular aesthetic traits, a topic engaged with later in this chapter, but outside of this there are only three things which stand out: their diet, their fangs, and their innate magical ability. According to author Liisa Ladouceur folkloric moroi were also sorcerers (2013: p.45). Mead adopts this thread to produce vampires who have affinities with a natural element, but these gifts are trained minimally in school and made no use of in the vampire community at large, so this is easily dismissed. Consequently the remaining markers of vampirism, diet and a dental adaptation for drinking blood introduced by Mead, are solely related to nourishment by consumption. The Meadist vampire is created for and determined by its feeding habits, which are manifested physically through bodily adaptation and dietary obligation.

Mead's vampires are hemovores in the standard vampiric mould, but are not true specialists in this field because they "require human blood and food typically eaten by humans" to survive (Cummins 2016: p.92). The author does not explain why both blood and food are needed and it is never ruminated upon in the text, however this progressive, Americanised diet introduces the concept of nutritionally balanced eating for the vampire. In contemporary society the eating of food is inseparable from consideration of nutritional value. When eating (food) and feeding (on blood) are united in one diet, the imbibition of blood enters the domain of nutritional gradation and the inference must be that blood alone is not nutritive enough for survival, for whatever reason. Hence Moroi have an expanded and more rounded eating regime than the classic exclusion diet of most vampires, and by extension the reader

too is encouraged to consume a balanced diet. This is a positive step since young readers often take eating cues from the books they read (Daniel 2006: p.186).

Eating, or in this case drinking, just one type of food in real life marks the individual out as "crude and unrefined", and as surviving on "an inhumanely narrow assortment of foods" (MacClancy 1992: p.11). In fact, the notion of excluding foods in folklore is said to lead to vampirism⁴⁷ (Murgoci 2013: pp.56, 57). By extension, the traditional vampire and his/her blood diet is categorised as "crude" and "inhuman" and the "neoteric vampire" must move beyond eating limitations to fully participate in contemporary society and discard the retardation of his/her unrefined palate and restrictive consumption. After all, if there is one marker of alterity in postmodern Capitalist society, it is noticeably restricted and restrictive consumption.

The dual ingestion requirement of the Moroi, whom I will label as "omnivorous hemavores", acts to align vampiric eating practices with those of the imagined reader. In so doing it more closely connects the reader with the vampire character on a fundamental, physical level. Joni Richards Bodart notes that eating in YA literature is used to increase the resemblance between vampires and humans (2012: p.13). Indeed, other vampires in this literary sample also eat. From this perspective the "neoteric vampire" is more like the reader and more like humans generally than ever before. In discussing the *Vampire in Brooklyn* (1995), Les Tannenbaum remarks upon a vampire who feeds on humans in order to actually "assume their shapes", providing what he calls a literal illustration of the adage "you are what you eat" (2002: p.70). The eating/feeding duality in *Academy* operates under the same, if less literal,

⁴⁷ Murgoci notes that people who do not eat garlic are vampires and pregnant women who do not eat salt produce vampire babies (2013: p.56-57).

parameters. These vampires are virtually indistinguishable from humans; when the literal incorporation of the human occurs with feeding, this only cements the human affiliations the vampire attains through the introduction of eating.

In debating food as a signifier, Joshua J. Frye and Michael S. Bruner echo and expand upon anthropologist Jeremy MacClancy's 1992 work regarding food as identity (p.1). They explain:

It is a requirement for survival, but also functions as a defining element of human culture and identity. Modes of producing, distributing, consuming, and marketing food have sociological, socio-economic, and socio-political motives and consequences (2012: p.1).

Such food consequences can be read in the contemporary narrative of the "neoteric vampire" whereby the motives Frye and Bruner mention come to the fore. This is a vampire who has evolved to eat in order to partake in human societal rituals of the postmodern world, and to compete for survival via the consumption of mass produced foods. E. N. Anderson takes Frye and Bruner's wider cultural position and narrows it down to individual expression. He notes:

Food as communication finds most of its applications in the process of defining one's individuality and one's place in society....Eating is usually a social matter, and people eat everyday. Thus, food is available for management as a way of showing the world many things about the eater. It may be second only to language as a social communication system (2014: p.171).

Thus the "eater" in question is defined as more closely linked to humanity due to the shared consumption of food, the comparable physicality required for the act, and a mutual cultural eating ethos; hence the "neoteric vampire" communicates to the world that s/he is also more removed from the vampires that have gone before. Here the YA "I'm not like other girls" trope discussed in the previous chapter, mutates into the "I'm not like other vampires" trope.

With the act of distancing themselves from their vampiric forefathers, "neoteric vampires" and their authors, posit vampiric food choice as positive and progressive and paint the blood-drinking limitations of previous generations in the negative. As we have seen previously, creating an individual using specific descriptors of what they are not, forces them into opposition with the subject of that dichotomy and necessitates its depiction as wrong or incomplete. This is certainly the case with vampiric eating.

The "neoteric vampire" registers his/her difference from traditional or popular vampires through the medium of food. In *Consuming Culture: Why You Eat What You Eat* (1992),

Jeremy MacClancy references eating habits of children in the north of England and focuses upon their preference for eating sweets as a "subversive form of consumption", through which they reject the older generation's food values and nutritional rules to create their own "feeding patterns" (p.92). This real-life example closely mirrors the young adult "neoteric vampire's" rejection of the blood specialism of their forefathers by way of expanding into the realm of eating. In turn the "neoteric vampire" does indeed make their own "feeding patterns" and their own nutritional precedents in much the same way as coeval teens might. In choosing a more expansive diet the "neoteric vampire" not only asserts a level of independence from its previous incarnations, it also fosters closer links with the human world and in so doing is complicit in its own domestication because it follows that if this being is eating more, then it must be feeding less. Thus a move away from vampiric feeding as a youthful rebellion of sorts, succeeds in creating a divide in what was formerly considered vampiric and postmodern notions of the nature of vampirism as it relates to food.

In a cultural climate with an almost obsessive interest in food and where the spread of epicures was noted almost ten years previously (MacClancy 1992: p.209), it comes as a

surprise that vampires have not evolved to eat sooner or that the practice is not more widely undertaken, particularly since humans have been trying to eat like vampires for decades. As a real-world occurrence human blood drinking has ranged from Goth subculture groups right through to cannibalistic killings and it is thought there are thousands of real-life blood-drinkers in the USA alone (Robinson 2015: np).

With such feeding practices pushing humans into the vampiric realm, it is perhaps time the vampire moved into the newly vacated zones of eating. Vampires in *American Horror Story:*Hotel (2015) sometimes decant blood into glasses to drink like wine or into bowls to eat like soup in a bloody parody of human dining practices. Vampires have also added human beverages to their dietary repertoire, for example, the vampire in YA *Look For Me By*Moonlight (1995) drinks alcohol and Jules Duchon in Fat White Vampire Blues (2003) drinks coffee. Vampires have even flavoured synthetic blood with food tastes like chocolate in Kerrelyn Sparks' Love at Stake series. In Scott Westerfield's YA novel Peeps (2005), the vampires eat humans rather than drinking their blood. However, actually eating human food stuffs is far less explored territory for the vampire.

Whilst folkloric vampires are food due to hunger or perhaps from a residual habit from life, the "neoteric vampire" eats for entirely different reasons. Eating allows the Anglo-American vampire to compete in this food-centric universe and to survive in a society where the eating event has shifted from routine and into the realms of gastronomy. Furthermore, the addition of eating moderates the vampire's feeding on human victims by providing a mechanism

⁴⁸ There are a host of vampire cookbooks which encourage readers to have vampire-themed meals. The first of these, *The Vampire Cookbook* (1965), was published under the pseudonym Kilmore Daily. In recent times there has been a glut of these titles offering garlic-free recipes (*The Vampire Friendly Cookbook*, 2016, by Jacqueline Colhoun), dishes redesigned and renamed with vampire influences (*Love at First Bite: The Complete Vampire Lover's Cookbook*, 2010, by Michelle Roy Kelly and Andrea Norville), and even a Dracula-themed title where all foods are red in colour (*Chef Dracula's Bloody Red Vampire Cook Book* (nd) by M. D. Johnson).

which both minimises the frequency and overt dependence on feeding and filters it via a mundane and quantifiable human regime. The filtration of feeding helps to distance the "omnivorous hemavore" from the traditional human victim and promotes the domestication and normalisation of both the vampire and his hematophagy by diminishing what ostensibly marks the vampire as Other.

The Moroi's hematophagy centres upon drinking "from humans who willingly volunteered to be a regular blood source", human donors employed by the vampire state (2007: p.44). For students at St Vladimir's Academy these "feeders" reside in small campus feeding facilities much like hospital wards (2010a: p.134). They are located next to the cafeteria and adjacent to the kitchen facilities in each dormitory, much like a coffee lounge might be on real-life campuses. Students visit feeders once a day and use their fangs to pierce the skin of the individual to drink in the traditional vampire manner. They lap at the blood as it flows from the wounds and imbibe only small amounts per feeding. One feeding is described as follows: "Christian...then leaned over and sank his teeth into her neck. Her expression grew slack...as he drank from her" (2008a: p.113). The Moroi do not hunt or attack humans, but rely on a Capitalist system of permissive consumption whereby donors are employed to be fed upon. Donors are willing and comply in the same way a blood donor for the Red Cross or NHS might. These humans are complicit in the feeding of vampires and offer themselves up to be systematically consumed. Even the biological mechanics of feeding whereby the victim appears vacant or limp due to chemicals in vampire saliva ensure no resistance is offered once the process begins.

Feeding is located within a pseudo-medical environment and is conducted in a controlled and officious manner by a clipboard-wielding Moroi checking off names on a list. It is treated as 190

less of a social or leisure activity, in line with the discourse of Food Puritanism where "enjoying good food is sinful" (Anderson 2014: p.150), and more as a medicinal supplement. In fact, it can more precisely be termed as "anticipatory drinking" (Logue 1991: p.45), as the food system at play services the feeding needs of the vampire in anticipation of those needs rather than in response to them, thus banishing any expected consequences of vampiric hunger. In addition, the somewhat uncomfortable depiction of a teen Moroi feeding from an adult human's neck in a clinical setting is mitigated by the adjunct of their active participation in typical high school cafeteria scenes, and therefore a participation in "socialized food" and the solidarity of eating (Anderson 2014: p.175, p.172). The inclusion of such frequent cafeteria scenes necessitates the need to eat to render those scenes successful, so amongst other things eating is a convenience from the author's perspective and from the vampire's viewpoint as the need to feed regularly requires much more effort than the need to eat three times a day.

Feeding also helps to incorporate the forbidden into what would otherwise be an ostensibly standard high school narrative and to designate its students as vampires. The act of feeding delineates the human as food source, even if that feeding is permissive, and whilst the students may be privileged and entitled society teens who are physically weaker than the average human, they are still recognisable as vampires, whether this is accomplished using medicalised practices or more traditional means.

The Moroi do not inhabit their fictional world alone. Royal adult Moroi are guarded by a race of folklore-inspired dhampirs, who are half-dhampir, half-Moroi warriors. They grow up and go to school with juvenile vampires whilst training in their protection. Dhampirs are infertile alone and can only reproduce with members of the Moroi race to produce more dhampirs.

They are not considered vampires. A Moroi, a dhampir, or a human could become an undead immortal vampire if one of these creatures attacks them. Mead labels these traditional vampires as "Strigoi" (2008: p.316). They are also a re-working of the predominant "dead-vampire type" from folklore of the same name (Murgoci 2013: p.46, Ladouceur 2013: p.46). In her 1926 work on Romanian lore, Agnes Murgoci notes the existence of "strigoi" and "moroii" vampire types, stating that they consort together and the strigoii is the master of the moroii (2013: p.47). Mead reinterprets this understanding and the ruling Moroi and the minority Strigoi become enemies. The existence of these separate factions sheds light on the eating and feeding habits, collectively to be called oral consumption habits, of the "neoteric vampire".

Moroi oral consumption takes up a relatively small portion of the narrative, largely because the series narrator is a dhampir and therefore witnesses the processes second-hand. An almost equal amount of narrative space is allotted to the human eating habits of dhampir narrator Rose and the feeding of the Strigoi minority who pepper the novel sequence sporadically. Strigoi feeding is emphasised because it is traditional in nature and furthers the plot due to the turning or killing of characters. In this sense the civilised consumption of the Moroi, and thus the "neoteric vampire", becomes subordinate to its more traditional vampire rivals in some senses in favour of plot development. "Neoteric vampire" consumption is somewhat overshadowed but this is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, feeding and vampiric eating in moderation are created as an antidote to the food excesses of the West, in conjunction with this, withholding literary feeding/eating episodes creates an element of mystery in a real-life society where these practices are so commonplace and so public.

Secondly, the vampire diet and its processes are made more significant due to the limited access the reader has to it, as will be explained later in this chapter.

2.1 Gendered Oral Consumption

Critical perception has often considered the gendering of the vampire body as subversive due to the crossing of perceived and hegemonic societal boundaries relating to the sexes. That debate can be furthered by engaging the topic with regard to the eating/feeding vampiric body because theories of Gothic consumption prioritise all things oral (Brown 2012: np). In the Stoker Tradition, the Count's masculinity is framed through his feeding upon female victims, cementing the trope of the masculine vampire and the feminine victim. Even the female vampires within the novel, in the guise of the Victorian New Woman, are gendered as male and their intended male victim is consequently constructed as female, particularly with the addition of the victim's designation as hysterical, a complaint thought of as solely feminine (Showalter 1987). Vampires were previously gendered in this manner, presumably because they lost their human reproductive abilities once they gained undead status, thus also losing their gendered identity when viewed through the nineteenth century gaze.

Academy vampires, like the majority in this literary sample, are living and retain their reproductive abilities, which in turn reinforces their gendered status. In confirmation of this, male Moroi are predominantly shown feeding on female donors, despite the fact that no preference is ever stated and there is no indication that this is mandated feeding practice. Such a heterosexual delineation is peculiar considering feedings are written as medicalised rather than sexual. It has the effect of reinforcing vampire gender identity and of designating feeding as a gendering experience, to which end male vampires can be labelled as

"femivores" and female vampires as "mascivores", created terms to mean feeding on a particular gender of food.

Curiously, there are no scenes of female vampires feeding in the designated way, although feedings take place outside the narrative view and one must assume they are also gendered in the same way as male feedings. There are two scenarios where the female protagonist must feed on her female dhampir friend as a matter of urgency. Both of these are treated as necessity, and there is an accompanying element of shame to these because feeding is on a dhampir not a human. However, considering the overall gendering of feeding present in conjunction with the fact that feeding on a dhampir is only carried out as part of a sexual liason, the matter of breaking gendered and hegemonic norms involved in feeding only serves to emphasise gendered feeding patterns and heteronormative relations overall.

The heterosexual division is only emphasised when feeding and sexual congress unite in the practice of "blood whoring", whereby Moroi have intercourse with and feed from a dhampir lover of the opposite sex. While this "dirty" and "almost pornographic" practice is written as negative and akin to prostitution and only occurs outside of the narrative sphere, it works to reinforce Mead's structuring of her "neoteric vampires" as heterosexual in their feeding (2007: p.62). Overall, "neoteric vampire" feeding is written as heterosexually gendered because it represents the majority position and plots the Moroi within Mead's accepted range of consumption practices. By extension, it creates oral consumption boundaries the imagined reader could relate to by virtue of their transposition from the sexual realm. So whilst the reader might not comprehend the importance of adhering to hegemonic feeding (read eating) practices as posited by Mead, they would be aware of these concepts reframed in terms of heterosexuality.

Exceptions to this rule occur in Strigoi feeding, where gender is indiscriminate. This manner of feeding is allowed because these vampires represent the old vampire type and this kind of feeding is indicative of deviation and violence. Thus acts outside of "mascivorous" and "femivorous" gendered feeding are largely marked as either desperation or deviation. From this I do not take in any way that Mead is commenting on homosexual relations, although all romantic or sexual liaisons are heterosexual in *Academy*, but I do infer that deviations in eating practices are transgressive to the implied author and pivotal to her construction of the feeding/eating vampiric body as this chapter will demonstrate.

The gendered identity of the "neoteric vampire" is retained and gendered consumption in the traditional vampire-as-male-consumer and victim-as-female-consumed sense is not applicable. The gendering of the vampire becomes something different when eating enters the equation. As "Gothic texts accord a power to all things oral that suggests something much deeper and darker is going on in our dealings with what we put in our mouths", concepts of Gothic consumption used in concert with contemporary food discourses produce a skewed view of eating (Brown 2012: np). Here narratives of popular culture and contemporary women's and teen magazines come to the fore with their dieting rationale and stereotyping of male and female eating habits where girls "must eat sparingly, particularly in public, while they watch boys give free reign to their appetites" (Gilman 2008: p.72, Wilson 2010: p.1).

This thinking, according to cultural historian Sander L. Gilman, leads to disordered eating in teens (2008: p.72). Females are written as delicate eaters with bird-like appetites. The Moroi fit this eating/feeding profile and are thus gendered as female under these circumstances.

Strigoi conform to the male stereotype enshrined in American culture as voracious carnivores with large appetites and messy eating habits (Roth 2016: np). The positioning of flesh as

masculine fare, something which has potentially always existed in human civilisation, renders the Strigoi as male (Jensen Wallach 2013: p.133). This new philosophy of gendered eating locates the consuming habits of these vampires as dichotomous. The Moroi as feminine eater/feeder is controlled, undemanding, and operating under societal conventions. The Strigoi as male eater/feeder's appetitive "overconsumption and insatiability" (Brown 2012: np) challenges hegemony and societal stability. As a key element of many narratives of Gothic consumption, Jennifer Brown notes that it "reflects aspects of contemporary, capitalist society" (2012). I would posit that over-eating *and* under-eating are both representative of Capitalist society, as this dichotomous pairing are inseparable.

The gendering of eating/feeding is further muddied when traditional and unavoidable readings of vampiric feeding apparatus are taken into account. In a thesis about the vampire body, in a chapter about oral consumption, it would be remiss not to engage with the apparatus of that consumption, that is the mouth and fangs. Of all the physical adaptations vampires display which inform their existence as a species, the addition of fangs is the most memorable and the most enduring. Vampiric fangs simultaneously mark the owner as vampire, as blood drinker, and as predator, all of which carry connotations of maleness. As many critics have asserted, these phallic protuberances which stab and break the skin and hollow out flesh are markers of masculinity and signpost the owner as such (Carter 2002: np). Mead's "neoteric vampire" has fangs in the form of slightly elongated canines. They are permanent and so are not associated with retractable fangs and their signification as a penile erection. These fangs are small and easily concealed behind the lips, in fact "Moroi were taught to smile and speak in a way that minimized fang exposure" to allow the vampire to pass in human society (2010a: p.166). Fangs are never brandished or threatening, and never

used to attack, so the equation with male sexual violence or potency is missing. In fact, Moroi fangs are only used for consensual feedings and act as little more than a vampiric version of a tin opener. Mead takes these steps to avoid the gendering of her vampires as male through the fang paradigm, however, her efforts fail for several reasons. Firstly, the depiction of fangs, no matter how small and unimpressive, still brings to mind almost a hundred years of vampiric associations with masculinity. Secondly, since Mead indirectly references the use of fangs with blood whores and the penetration of the skin during sexual intercourse, the phallic element immediately comes to mind. Thirdly, as Mead constructs Strigoi as traditional vampire types who do violence with their fangs, the phallic and therefore masculine associations cannot be avoided. One Strigoi "bared his fangs, giving...a look of pure fury" (2010: p.274), another has "lips curled back to show his fangs" (2009: p.20), both as a warning of violence to come. Another still "swiftly and efficiently ripped into" a victim's neck (2010: p.251), such aggression leaves open wounds harking back to the masculine hollowing out of the flesh referred to above. When a woman's "throat had been ripped out" (2008: p.19) by Strigoi fangs, the void and phallus symbolism is clear.

A similar scenario arises with the traditional critical gendering of the vampire mouth as female and associations with the vagina dentata, most notably from academics Christopher Craft (1984) and Barbara Creed (1993).⁴⁹ The feeding mouth, often with the postprandial remnants of the blood meal surrounding it or the scent of blood coming from it,⁵⁰ conjures links with the bleeding bodily orifice and female menstruation. Mead attempts to avoid this feminisation by avoiding the motif of the bloody mouth in the text. However, as with the

⁴⁹ As I discuss in paper: "Vampiric Hymenoplasty: True Blood's Jessica Hamby as Undead Maiden".

⁵⁰ Some vampires are noted for the blood smell on their breath, for example in Barbara Hambly's James Asher novels (1988-2010) and F. Paul Wilson's *The Keep* (1981).

fangs trope, Mead fails due to long-held associations and the use of the feeding mouth during sex. Strigoi depictions of blood "smudged around...[the] mouth" (2007: p.319) or "dripped from...[the] lips" (2008: p.272) only emphasise these links. Descriptions of Moroi "pink-glossed lips hiding...fangs" (2008: p.40) further feminise the vampiric mouth, overtly with female cosmetics and covertly with a blood substitute. Moreover, as eating/feeding folkloric vampires could either have blood or maize meal around the mouth as an indicator of their last meal (Murgoci 2013: p.54), signifiers of fertility via menstruation or fecundity via maize seeds follow to feminize the subject and to hark back to what Aspasia Stephanou marks as traditional readings of the female vampire body's connection with food and nutrition in terms of Gothic consumption (2014: p.76).

The situation becomes more complex when the female orifice is considered as a whole with its fangs. The bearer of this compound Gothic mouth, which "both penetrates and receives" (Crawford 2014: p. 85) and as Christopher Craft famously described it as "soft flesh barred by hard bone", becomes both masculine and feminine and is then gendered as intersexed (Craft 1984: p.109). The feminized mouth displaying postprandial meal remnants combined with the masculine contemporary stereotype of a messy eater compounds this intersexed state.

Mead's construction of feeding as heterosexually gendered, the culturally stereotyped creation of Moroi as female consumers and Strigoi as male consumers, and the generic implications of vampires as intersexed, produces an incredibly complex set of gendered themes and symbols surrounding oral consumption. Eating/feeding is problematized and, as in the real world, it effectively shapes and remakes the space of the body (Bell and Valentine 1997: p.23) and a vampire emerges who is demarcated as heterosexual, feminised, and

intersex despite Mead's seeming attempts to the contrary. This complex eating/feeding framework is emblematic of Gothic consumption and Brown's notion of the "deeper and darker" relationship between eating and eaters is brought to the fore (2012: np). The connection between the vampire and his/her disordered eating practices is a complicated one, not unlike the real-life relationship of contemporary teens and food.

3. <u>Disordered Eating: Vampiric Food Addiction</u>

Many Westerners are now conversant with the politics of food, particularly teens who are dealing with physical maturation and trying to control aesthetic perception. Today people are aware, and in some cases hyper-aware (McQuillan 2004: p.xi), and proactive in matters of diet; ethical food choice; "good" or "bad" eating habits; and food trends. Their oral consumption has an impact on the body in terms of disease, physical appearance, and perceived levels of bodily health, not to mention "crises of bodily identity" in terms of eating disorders (Atkins and Bowler 2001:p.4). Eating practices and diet play a considerable role in the Anglo-American world and as a result the economy of eating is embedded in the discourse of the "neoteric vampire". The vampire has a history of disordered eating, and the adversarial and often combative relationship between the vampire and food is nothing new.⁵¹

⁵¹ In the Middle Ages, disasters such as crop failure and food shortages might be attributed to vampires (Radford 2009: np). Some vampires could take away the "power" of bread, foul, or even mother's milk, and stop bees producing honey (Murgoci 2013: p.59). During the same period, food became an apotropaic against vampires: wine prevented a return from the grave (Murgoci 2013: p.50); garlic protected the home (2013: p.62); and garlic, millet, and lemon filled cranial orifices to prevent turning (Murgoci 2013: p.55, Ladouceur 2013: p.49).

"Neoteric vampires" are no different and continue the tradition of food addiction and disordered eating.⁵² Nutrition Consultant Susan McQuillan states:

Food addiction goes by many names: emotional eating, compulsive overeating, binge eating, eating disorders, eating disturbances, and disordered eating. You might not realise it, but chronic dieting is a form of food addiction. Avoiding or restricting food is a food addiction. A food addict is anyone who is overly preoccupied with food and body size. A food addict is anyone whose relationship with food is getting in the way of his or her physical or emotional wellbeing (2004: p.xi).

In discussing contemporary vampiric eating/feeding in general, one is all too familiar with its markers: these may include mention of diets or vegetarianism; shifts in eating for moral reasons; vomiting after food; selective or restrictive eating; the inability to eat solid foods; or secretive eating (Bryant-Waugh and Lask 2013: pp.1-4, p.52). It may come as a surprise that while this list aptly describes the consuming habits of many YA vampires, it is actually a set of scenarios which parents should look out for in order to detect an eating disorder in their child. Any one of these eating events is said to be a marker of an eating disorder and many YA vampires exhibit multiples of these behaviours. To this list Bryant-Waugh and Lask add further indicators such as preoccupation with food, eating alone, sensitivity about or strangeness around food, and denial of hunger (2013: p.52). Susan McQuillan additionally notes eating differently in public and private, hiding the evidence of eating, and eating when not hungry or the inability to stop eating (2004: p.19). Again, these accurately describe vampiric consumption traits. Readers see much to emulate in their idealised "neoteric vampire" hero/heroine and dangerous eating practices may be one of these enviable elements,

⁵² *Twilight* vampires are well-known for their "special diets" and the fact they regurgitate any human food eaten, creating a restrictive eating regime centred upon food denial and bulimic tendencies. The vampiric cohort of *The Vampires Diaries* (2009-2017) use hot drinks and alcohol to keep up appearances, but also to maintain a human body temperature, thus producing a dependence upon caffeine and behaviour and consumption levels suggestive of alcoholism.

particularly since children's literature is viewed as teaching socially acceptable eating behaviours (Daniel 2006: p.186).

With the many mixed and often competing discourses of "healthy" eating and the increasing cultural disdain for those who do not adhere to these rules governing physical aesthetics, it stands to reason that the "neoteric vampire" suffers from distinct consumption issues. The subordination of vampiric consumption in *Academy* is intriguing because it posits a hierarchy of eating practices within the series. Vampiric oral consumption is illuminated by the inclusion of three differing consumption patterns.⁵³ Within *Academy* dhampirs act as the control group for normalised eating. The dhampir narrator and her kind eat conventional food stuffs and junk food, always with the qualification that these foods are fuelling intensive physical training regimes to produce bodies comprised of "a lot of hard, lean muscle" (2007: p.141). This equates to standard real-world eating practices and dhampirs are representative of humanity in a fictional world where vampires have "little exposure" to humans, who are mentioned or included infrequently unless they are a food source (2010a: p.420).

The two vampire factions provide counter-consumption arguments: the Strigoi present opposition to the Moroi as "neoteric vampire" and are written as the nemesis of both Moroi and dhampir races. As such they are representative of the traditional vampire and its untenable eating practices.⁵⁴ Their indiscriminate, excessive, and destructive feeding habits

⁵³ The trinity of eating styles is a common trope in YA vampire fiction, usually comprising good "neoteric vampires", bad vampires, and humans or another control group. For example, *HoN* initially has vampires, red vampires, and humans as its consumption trinity. In *Suck It Up* (2008) by Brian Meehl these groupings are named Leaguers, Loners, and Lifers. Sometimes this system is nuanced by the introduction of further eating groups such as other supernatural beings.

⁵⁴ Physicist Costas Efthimiou proved traditional vampiric eating practices would wipe out the human population within three years if, starting in 1600, a sole vampire fed on and turned one person per month. By the end of that period the world would be populated by vampires and no humans would be left to feed on (Goudarzi 2008: np).

mark them out as "bad" eaters, of blood in this instance. It is common in YA vampire literature to delineate "good" and "bad" eaters, i.e. blood drinkers who kill versus those who control their feeding or feed from animals, with good and bad characters sending the message that eating the wrong thing makes you a bad person. This eating behaviour, according to food nutritionist Susan McQuillan, is a trait of "compulsive overeating" (2004: p.xi). When a blood source is available Strigoi maximise it by gorging themselves; they attack victims and drain them of blood, and even take "prisoners to keep as a snack for later" (2008a: p.374).

As "bad" eaters, Strigoi are by extension bad citizens, something Mary Y. Hallab confirms with her assertion that dead folkloric vampires, including the strigoi of lore, are created as punishment for their deviations from communal norms (2009: p.33). In this case, deviance is registered as violent and sustained overeating and over-eaters are literally written as a threat to society and as evil, a message that is unavoidably transferred to the imagined reader and real-life eating practices where fat has taken on a "sinister quality" (Gilman 2008: p.3).

The notion is emphasised because Strigoi eat Moroi and sometimes turn their victims, ergo over-eating is presented as a contagion killing ordinary citizens. This becoming often happens via a force-feeding of Strigoi blood, consequently over-eaters force normal people into over-eating. They lose all sense of their old moral selves and embrace a monstrous becoming, to paraphrase Mead (2008a: p.199). Thus over-eating is posited as contagious, immoral, and life-threatening and over-eaters are to blame, mirroring real-life discourses of over-eating and villainising those responsible.

If Moroi are truly positioned oppositionally to Strigoi as "bad" eaters, then it would follow that they are "good" eaters. This concept aligns with the "good" and "bad" behavioural

boundaries of health discourse that provide populations with eating instructions and regulatory coding as remarked upon by Evans et al. (2008: p.12). Cultural historian Sander L. Gilman would agree on this point; he states: "Eat organically, eat naturally, eat healthily, eat fat-free, eat high-fiber, eat low-carb, eat slowly (or, at least, eat slow food), and you are by definition a better person than those who don't" (2008: p.174). The heroes of this series are created to combat the over-eating, bad diets, and poor feeding choices of the Strigoi with the inference that real-world eaters should do the same within their own food lifestyles. This also carries the judgement that something should be done about over-eaters in real life.

Outside of folklore, vampires are rarely depicted as being overweight and none of the *Academy* characters are written as such, yet these characters now occupy a world where obesity is a major health issue which is increasing in the West (Abraham 2008: p.196), reflected by the rise in teen obesity in the USA from 1999 to 2004 (Ogden et al. 2015). Whilst Strigoi are not written as overweight, their eating practices imply that they should be, a trait carried through other vampire narratives. One vampire in Scott Westerfield's *Peeps* (2005) announces: "I may eat like a four-hundred pound guy, but I never get fat" (p.69). The vampire reality of not gaining weight does not translate into real life, where over-eating is synonymous with obesity. As such the over-eaters this narrative disdains, rails against, and ultimately kills, in reality are the overweight because from a Gothic consumption perspective "the punishment for indulging the appetite is severe" (Brown 2012: np). Body studies expert Susan Bordo sees a less extreme but still recognisable aspect of modern life which correlates with this construct when she states: "While the rest of us struggle to be acceptable and "normal" they [the obese] get away with it; they must be put in their place, humiliated, and

defeated" (1990: p.100). Hence the defeat of the Strigoi amounts to the capitulation of overeaters by way of food and physical conformism.

Over-eating is a long-held American tradition.⁵⁵ On top of the already large portions common in the United States, many restauranteurs have created giant versions of dishes to challenge their customers. This food sales philosophy and eating mind-set has moved to the rest of the Western world. The Travel Channel's popular *Man v. Food* (2008-2012) reality show brought this phenomenon to the fore by televising such gourmandized challenges for viewers to enjoy vicariously. Thus, the notion of over-eating successfully has been lionised, championing and celebrating excessive oral consumption. Even without such challenges, the mass consumption of fast food, highly calorific dishes, and fat and sugar-laden meals is big business in America and the West.

A "healthy" eating movement has developed in opposition to such immoderate eating practices, where the body is sacralised and eating "well" is prized, reiterating the notion of the recalcitrant body from Chapter Four in terms of beautiful, slim "neoteric vampire" physicalities and the need to actively shape them to prevent vampiric becomings, which in this instance relate to obesity. The Moroi are representative of this with an idealised appearance stated as looking "very much like super-skinny runway models so popular in the human world" (2007: p.51). These are bodies coveted by many in the real-world, bodies which speak to appropriate and controlled food intake and therefore "good" eating.

The very nature of the "neoteric vampire's" disordered eating/feeding means the standing of the Moroi is somewhat more complex than Mead's categorisation of them as "good" eaters.

⁵⁵ Competitive eating, where diners compete to eat food, began at state fairs prior to World War One, and by 1997 it became a recognised competitive entity and now has a sport governing body (Blitz 2014: np, MLE nd: np).

Eating events occur almost sixty times during the *Academy* series, with more than twenty feedings in addition. Many of these are referenced in passing as having occurred outside of the narrative, are dismissed with phrases like "food followed" (2009: p.117), or replaced with eating distraction techniques like "winding linguine around…the fork" (2009: p.111) or not eating "so much as pushing food around" (2010: p.61), with no actual evidence the food has been consumed and no biting, chewing, or swallowing information recorded. In contrast, feedings are described in some detail, with references to "fangs biting into the feeder's yielding flesh" and the reactions of both vampire and donor given (2007: p.45). Furthermore, whilst the robust dhampir diet is mentioned regularly by the narrator, and the over-eating Strigoi behaviour is related as detailed plot development, actual Moroi in-text eating is limited.

Protagonist Lissa is shown feeding and is part of many of the eating events and yet her actual in-text food intake is minimal – on one occasion she is reported as having "grabbed a yoghurt", but is never shown eating it, and on another she licks a spoon of yoghurt (2007: p.46). The significance of this in terms of Gothic consumption is important. Jennifer Brown notes that the act of swallowing, particularly within the vampire narrative, is crucial to awakening insatiable vampiric hungers (2012: np). Since Mead's vampires have largely lost their "bloodlust" due to the extensive state-run feeder distribution framework, they have also negated the vampiric hungers associated with blood in an act of domestication and humanisation whereby the last major trope of traditional vampirism has been diluted and displaced to force the revenant into the YA mould (2010: p.123).

Instead the deleterious and insatiable hungers to be conquered are linked with food and intext displays of its consumption are limited as a result. Moroi are never actively shown 205

avoiding food, but it is mentioned that food appetite is reduced after drinking blood. It would seem they successfully avoid eating without the notice of their peers or comment from Mead. Food avoidance or low food intake are indicators of anorexia nervosa and this is a label which can easily be applied to the Moroi when their physical appearance, pallor, and eating habits are taken into account, particularly as they are noted as needing less food than humans (2008: p.221). The fact that their eating practices are comparable to those of a human character who is later revealed to have an eating disorder when she appears in spin-off series Bloodlines (2011-2015) provides undisputable evidence of this. As "Anorexia seems to be considered an acceptable topic for young readers" (Daniel 2006: p.208), having an entire race of anorexic vampires is apparently appropriate in today's eating climate.

If a Moroi kills during the feeding process, in other words if they over-eat, they turn Strigoi. What this essentially means is they become "bad" eaters and are corrupted by the act of consumption from a Gothic standpoint (Brown 2012: np). In this way, consuming the wrong thing, consuming in the wrong way, or merely consuming too much forces the body to transform into something undesirable and wrong – a sentiment now echoed in real-world terms in links between poor eating and medical issues including diabetes, cancer, and heart disease (Anderson 2014: p.3). The notion of improper feeding has been common in vampire tales since the times when folkloric revenants drained family members at the dinner table. ⁵⁶ With an increased focus on eating addictions and disorderly oral consumption, the modern-day consuming vampire is vulnerable to monstrous becomings if their feeding becomes

⁵⁶ According to Augustin Calmet (1746) stories abound of vampires visiting the home in food-related scenarios. In one a vampire marks acquaintances for death at the dinner table (2001: p.223); in another a vampire returns home at mealtimes to suck blood from relatives (2001: p.226).

improper. Just as *Academy's* Moroi become monstrous with improper feeding, so the trope is continued in the 2013 film *Afflicted*, whereby a vampire is fine if they feed regularly and properly, but if they do not, they turn into a monster and feed indiscriminately, much like Mead's Strigoi.

William Patrick Day describes vampire stories as cautionary tales involving the surrender to desire (2002: p.3); desire from Day's point of view is sexual. However, I submit that the "neoteric vampire's" development in line with this specific cultural moment aligns his/her desire with the contemporary Western debate surrounding food and eating; thus the desire being fulfilled, or otherwise, is the desire to eat/feed, whether this is in an improper or an uncontrolled manner. Thus the vampire story can still be seen as a cautionary tale, as Day insisted in 2002, cautioning against the surrender to appetite, over-eating, placing too great an emphasis on food, or the wrong kinds of consumption.

4. The Consumed Body

The discourse of physical size and weight is inextricably linked with the rhetoric of food and oral consumption as a "manifest index of well-being surpassing all antecedent and contingent dimensions of 'health'" (Evans et al. 2008: p.13). Whilst there are no overweight vampires in *Academy* or in the wider YA literary sample in this study, the discourses of size and weight are present in the form of bodily absence. By this I mean not just the lack of representative characters that are overweight or obese, but more precisely the somatic restriction Mead has placed upon her entire Moroi species which means they are written as "über-slim" or "super-skinny" (2009: p.10, 2007: p.51). The combination of restricted size and weight generates a

smaller, slimmer, vampire in line with the wishes of teen readers who would themselves like to be thinner, almost 70 per cent of girls by adolescence (Smolak 2012: p.129). Mead's vampire is one which takes the physical ideals of the "neoteric vampire" to its limits and beyond by physically reducing the space each individual occupies to the point that their bodies resemble the products of extreme dieting or anorexia nervosa.

The aesthetic ethos of the ultra-slim model body is transferred to film in *Vampire Academy* (2014), where Moroi protagonist Lissa is played by actress Lucy Fry. Fry is well-known for her runway model physique and her modelling work in an industry where bodily ideals are set by "designers [who] have insisted that emaciation" makes models "look good in the clothes" (Rhode 2010: p.60). She has been described as having the typical "banana" body shape, meaning she is tall and slim with small shoulders, hips, breasts, and buttocks, or very boyish in nature (Body Measurements 2001: np, Body Measurements nd: np). Her physique is such that she also played a teen with an eating disorder in horror film *The Darkness* (2016). Fry has been described as a "thinspiration" by one American teenager on her blog about anorexia, where the actress is praised for her overall thinness and protruding collar bones (My Hidden Secret 2013: np). In one blog entry another teen, who also writes about limited eating practices, congratulates herself on missing her daily meal of "1 rice cake and three pickles" and cites seeing the "perfect" Fry on television as the encouragement she needed (Ellie Ana 2012a: np). Fry is listed amongst other "thinspo[s]" who have physical traits such as thigh gaps, concave stomachs, size zero frames, arms little bigger than the bones they contain and "boney little shoulders", characteristics which would also surely apply to Mead's Moroi, both male and female, if these details were included in the texts (Ellie Ana 2012b: np).

The "cult of slenderness", according to social scientist Harriet Bradley, is one which is policed and pursued by woman, with other females in the cross hairs (2015: p.175). It begins in the teenage years when girls start to regulate each other's eating habits to conform to expected eating stereotypes (Wilson 2010: p.2). With this in mind it is conceivable that a series for the YA market would have physical ideals governed by food at its forefront. It becomes even more likely, considering Bradley's assertion, when the writer in question is a woman. What is unprecedented, if conjectures on the female perpetrated and focused slender body argument follow, is that these paradigms would also govern male appearance.

Nevertheless, this is exactly what has happened in *Academy*, where male and female vampires alike contend with the same physical confines and the same generic and oft repeated description as "tall and slim" (2008: p.1).

The Moroi may have evolved beyond the restrictive exclusion diet of most vampires and of their Strigoi enemies, and their expanded eating habits might be indicative of a healthy diet, but their physical size and pro-ana appearance carries the intimation of a food addiction, and as indicated above, cannot help but provide inspiration for real-life teens with similar eating issues. This is a vampire whose opposition to the over-eating Strigoi has taken the form of a size physically restricted by species. The consuming body of the vampire has been transformed into the consumed body of the Moroi. The concept of the vampire body as consumable first appeared in the Middle Ages⁵⁷ but it has reached new levels with contemporary consumerism, not least with its literal consumption by the Strigoi who feed

⁵⁷ One early account of killing a vampire reads like a recipe with charcoal, boiling, and chopping of the body (Murgoci 2013: p.53). Others show the body being eaten by locals for protection when the ashes of innards are mixed with water and drunk (Murgoci 2013: p.51), or when blood is taken from the coffin and made into "blood bread" or mixed with brandy as a drink (Ladouceur 2013: p.65).

upon it. However, no amount of oral consumption will push this "neoteric vampire" into the weight category of a healthy teen and out of its constrained and confined Meadist body.

The uncontrollable nature of the vampire acts as a conduit for our own synchronistic desires (Richards Bodart 2012: p.xxvii), however, the Moroi are different. They have mastered their hunger, much like young anorexics; have no voracious appetites; and no uncontrollable vampiric thirsts or desires (Bryant-Waugh and Lask 2013: p.11). They have even lost the predator's heightened sense of smell or taste for tracking their prey. It is stated that Moroi have "superhuman" senses, but they never materialise (2008: p.1). As the focus of a YA audience hungry for more serialised fiction, these vampires are at the peak of consumerist attention and yet they have no real vampiric consumption instinct of their own remaining, because all of their consumption needs are met by an organised consumerist feeding system, which includes a "blood delivery service" offering home delivery of feeders (2010a: p.379). Much as with modern food production, global feeder facilities operate to gather and distribute blood donors to vampires, so what was once the subject of the hunt now falls within the realms of husbandry and true domestication.

In a way these vampires are much like the creatures in Lauro and Embry's A "Zombie Manifesto" (2008) because they too have become their own victims, symbolically and literally in the sense of Moroi being fed upon by Strigoi. They are both a consumer and a product of consumerism, much as contemporary human generations are. However, the consumption/consumer duality has become unstable and this "neoteric vampire" risks being completely consumed by his/her public. The voluptuous vamp replaced with the slim and athletic "neoteric vampire" of this sample has, with *Academy*, become the boyish waif. Her

male counterpart has undergone a similar almost sex-less transformation, or indeed consumption.

In the wake of such becomings the vampire has lost all fight and become domesticated to the point that s/he has fallen victim to consumption. The popular nineteenth century trope of psychic vampirism⁵⁸ has come full circle with *Academy*, and instead of vampires feeding on humans by mentally draining them of energy or life force, the vampire has become the victim and it is his/her body that is being siphoned away and consumed by modern food culture to proffer the extremes of physical correctness. In a way, the vampire has been eaten away by its reimaginings and reinventions as us. In discussing vampiric oral consumption George A. Dunn notes: "The activity of eating ends up destroying the object of our enjoyment - or at least putting an end to its existence as an independently existing entity by transforming it into part of our own flesh" (2009: p.10). This familiar description also applies to the vampire's own diminishment, de-othering, and perhaps ultimate demise, at our hands.

4.1 Dieting and Bodily Dissolution

For critic Sandra Tomc, the early Rice Tradition epitomises contemporaneous dieting movements and what she calls: "one of the most powerful narratives of gender metamorphosis available to 1970s culture" (1997: p.97). Tomc maintains that the vampiric body of the Rice Tradition owes its physical appearance to the rhetoric of successful dieting, the "promised dissolution of female secondary sex characteristics", and Rice's own wishes to lose weight (1997: p.97, p.100). In a way, William Patrick Day concurs on this point when he notes that Rice's vampires are sustained imaginatively by feeding on themselves (2002:

⁵⁸ Stories include Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Good Lady Ducayne* (1896), Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* (1897), and *Luella Miller* (1903) by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman.

p.48). The act of radically reducing the body through dieting, a food addiction in its own right, can be seen as feeding on the self, and its mental incorporation confirms the ingrained nature of the physical act. Tomc rightly connects the importance of gender metamorphosis in *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) with the fact that the majority of the vampires, and characters overall, are male. Thus her research in this area focuses upon the loss of the female and the various ways this occurs. For Tomc the "exclusion of…physical signifiers" results in transformative androgyny for the vampire, something still relevant in Mead's work today (1997: p.97).

Transfiguration of the body in *Academy* comes about not due to a 1970s vampiric becoming of the kind Rice readers would recognise, or even of the weight loss kind promoted by Barbara Hambly in the late 1980s where formerly fat humans slim down as vampires (1998: p.104). Nor does it come as a result of the undiscriminating everyone-who-is-bitten-is-turned junk food mentality of the Whedon Tradition. Instead Mead constructs a wholesale reinvention of the vampire body as an entity. These vampires are not formerly human and gifted with a metaphoric vampire diet pill; they are engineered by Mead to adhere to an idealised coeval vision of physical perfection and correctness. The simplistic notion of a metamorphosis through dieting is a thing of the past, to be replaced with a fundamental and all-encompassing identity of aesthetic idealism where the discourse of dieting is embedded into the DNA as a ready-formed and already-realised attainment. Tomc's "liberatory model of radical weight loss" from the Rice Tradition (1997: p.97) is replaced with an unfaltering and unimpeachable model of "health" and aesthetic perfection.

What these two models have in common, is that the vampire body is actively consumed by authorial creation to the point where the secondary sex characteristics and reproductive traits

as outlined by Tomc are lost. In *Academy* this dissolution of the physical concerns both male and female vampires and the aforementioned characteristics, which include the development of breasts, the softening of facial features, widening of the hips, and the placement of fat deposits on the hips and thighs for females. For males, these characteristics are formed by the broadening of the chest and shoulders to create a triangular torso, the creation of heavier body musculature, greater height than females, and a squared jaw. With this wealth of gendered physical description to draw from as a basis for describing the idealised vampire body, the authors in this study have excelled in celebrating the desirous nature of that form.

Mead, on the other hand, uses the following prosaic description for both male and female vampires: "tall and slim" (2007: p.1). This is sometimes varied to become "tall and slender" (2007: p.70), or "taller than most humans...and über-slim". (2009: p.10) For males a further variant of "gangly-looking" (2007: p.70) or "lanky" (2008: p.135) is added and on one occasion a male Moroi is referenced with the qualifier that he has a "leanly muscled body-about as buff as any Moroi could manage" (2010a: p.306). This androgyny of description registers a loss of secondary sex characteristics, which is further emphasised by the repeated discussion of female Moroi's lack of feminine shape in immediate comparison to the dhampir narrator. For example, Moroi girls are said to be "small-chested...meaning...[the narrator's] larger breasts and more defined hips" stand out (2007: p.51). In another instance the narrator remarks: "no Moroi girl's chest could have held this dress up" (2007: p.269). Moroi generally are said to be "small-boned", an unfavourable description for a male Moroi when viewed alongside the heavily muscled male and female dhampirs (2008: p.70). It is essentially as if Moroi bodies are shapeless bodies; they are neither physically defined as being properly male

or properly female. They are bodies which lack gender specificity and are lacking in corporeal substance.

These types of descriptors provide the sum total of description for the vampire body and such illustrations of the Moroi physicality only appear twice on average in each of the six instalments, astonishingly low rates for any novel. So not only do Mead's Moroi occupy size-restricted bodies, these bodies operate on an almost gender-less and nearly description-less basis, whereby the body is gradually eliminated by its lack of description and therefore lack of existence. As confirmation of this, Mead's only other illustrations of the vampire form appear in the joint referencing of the hair, clothes, and sometimes eyes, of an individual. For example:

Avery was wearing a tight, short dress made of some kind of blue fabric that shone silvery in the light. Her hair hung long and wild, and the tears pouring from her blue-gray eyes had destroyed the heavy makeup she wore (2009: p.75).

In essence, Avery's body in this example is missing because what is actually described is a dress, eyes, hair, and a covering of makeup but no other indicators of the existence of a physical form of any kind. This "dissociation from her self as a body", a term used by Jen Ann Craig to describe a real-life anorexic, evokes images of Gothic consumption as it relates to anorexia but also what Craig calls the "diabolical double" (Craig 2014: np). The Gothic doubling which occurs here is that of the acceptable self as clothing, hair, and eyes, versus the unwanted, and under-referenced somatic body.

This method of depiction is used relatively frequently in *Academy* and because descriptions of the vampire body proper are so infrequent, it gives the impression that this private boarding school is inhabited by empty clothes topped with eyes and hair. The eradication of

the doubled body beginning with unwanted lumps and bulges, and continuing with the loss of secondary sex characteristics, and then the removal of unwanted body parts like the excessive tummy or thighs, results ultimately in the disappearance of that body as demonstrated here (Bordo 1990: pp.89-90). The elimination of the unwanted physicality already has precedence in *Academy* in the liquid they use "to get rid of the Strigoi body", which contracts into dust and nothingness when it is administered (2009: p.27). Here at least, Mead treats her destruction of the body honestly, unlike in her other depictions of it.

The androgynous bodies in *Academy* are representative of a physical ideal taken to the extreme, where the aesthetics of anorexia are employed to contain and control the physical form (Dominguez-Rue 2010: p.297). In destroying the unwanted elements of the body, whether these be sex and reproductive characterises or perceived physical imperfections, bulges, and excess weight, we are effectively trimming it down and removing its component parts. The physical becoming taking place is one of dissolution and author-sanctioned reduction of the body, something both body studies expert Susan Bordo and critic Sandra Tomc foresaw in a dieting extreme where the parts of the body are eradicated, ultimately to the point of its disappearance (Bordo 1990: p.90, Tomc 1997: p.100).

5. Conclusion: Competing to Eat

Oral consumption is fundamental to the transformation of the physical and by extension the "vampiric becoming" of Gothic consumption. Feeding delineates the body as vampire and eating acculturates it into Capitalist society, but this also carries the doubled implication of the vampire's disordered relationship with consumption and the modern problematization of

the nutritive. In "Reading the Slender Body" (1990), Susan Bordo writes that obesity and anorexia co-exist due to the paradox of coeval life whereby people are both encouraged to be controlled, for example at work, and to be uncontrolled in leisure time with the excessive consumption of eating, shopping, and television, etc. (p.97). Thus highly controlled and uncontrolled eating are created as anorexia and overeating in real life and as "good" and "bad" eaters in the text, with the inference of real-life anorexia and overeating. For Bordo these oppositional aspects are "rooted in the same consumer culture construction" (1990: p.99). This is the same construction which created Mead's Moroi and Strigoi and which "reveals the instability of the contemporary personality construction" in real life (Bordo 1990: p.97). In the text this is transformed into the instability of the vampire body whereby the controlled can become the uncontrolled with one bite too many, and where the body loses gender specificity through problematic consumption and somatic reduction almost to the point of its demise.

The vampire body acts as a mechanism for Mead's commentary on physical appearance and the discourses of weight and size. She utilises folkloric characters with historical associations to food shortages and develops those asociations into a dialogue on contemporaneous reductive eating patterns. She introduces food to the vampiric diet but is complicit in reducing not just the vampire body, but also the amount of food and blood consumed. Through it she condemns over-eaters who fall outside of her accepted range of eating practices, and therefore excessive appetite in the reader, and promotes the ideals of her Moroi protagonists.

On two occasions it appears Mead attempts to question these physical ideologies. Firstly, she writes: "Moroi tended to have unreal, runway model bodies" (2009: p.10), although it is not

clear whether the polysemic "unreal" is meant as unattainable and false or as a colloquial term for amazing. Secondly, she notes: "slender Moroi girls looked very much like the superskinny runway models so popular in the human world. Most humans could never reach that 'ideal' skinniness'" (2007: p.51). At first glance it appears Mead is using inverted commas to query restricted size as a physical "ideal". On closer investigation Mead is not actually questioning the slimness she has reduced her vampire body to because it is not the "slender" vampire under scrutiny but the "skinny" model.

Thus Mead fails to make the connection between the limited size, and therefore weight, of her Moroi and that of humans in real life. By extension she also fails in instilling her eating philosophy in the reader because whilst the overweight child may become the overweight adult, according to Sander L. Gilman, so too might the child exposed to dieting and notions of bodily perfection (2008: p.77). As this avid reader consumes the "omnivorous hemavore", s/he follows the over-eating patterns of the Strigoi who also feed off the Moroi physicality. The vampire form is consumed not only by this voracious reader but by an author actively seeking to minimise the amount of physical space it occupies, and by a Capitalist society intent on consumption.

The vampiric body is central to this study and as such the areas of permissive consumption and conscientious eating fall on the periphery of the topic and have therefore been side-lined in favour of more salient matters. However, they are central to the body of the victim or donor of the "neoteric vampire", whether this be human or animal, and further research into this area of literary food studies would provide a fruitful and unique topic covering blood farming, sustainable feeding, and carnivorous vegetarianism. The blood whores and feeders of *Academy* alone represent a fascinating opportunity for future investigation. What is more,

the concepts of active and passive consumption between donor and vampire would shed new light on vampiric feeding relationships in the postmodern world.

Further related research opportunities can be found in the new genre of fiction featuring morbidly obese vampires, created in response to the idealised vampire physiques contained in this study. Texts like Andrew Fox's Fat White Vampire series (2003-2014), Johnny B. Truant's Fat Vampire series (2012-2013), and *No One Likes a Fat Vampire* (2013) by R. A. Martinez chart the difficulties of vampires living with excessive weight and size. This genre would provide an ideal research platform for extending the study of Gothic consumption and the feeding/eating vampiric body in terms of the postmodern vampire and discourses of size.

This final thematic investigation unifies discussions in preceding chapters in readiness for overall conclusions to be drawn. It does this by uniting the varying threads of investigation which find their natural convergence in the subject of food and feeding. As we have seen, the eating body draws its physical appearance from the extremes of beauty (Chapter Four), its food source is heavily inter-related with religious (Chapter Four) discussions of blood, and its gendering echoes and draws upon earlier considerations of the sexual and gendered body (Chapter Three). The practice of eating, via the choice of food stuffs, fuses many of the topics covered by the previous chapters of this thesis and relates in some way or another to them all. As such it provides a fitting and very deliberate culmination to this thesis and a gateway research element from which to proceed to the drawing of final conclusions.

Conclusion: Vampiric Revisionism

It has been demonstrated, both by the research within this thesis and by the vampiric histories it contains, that the vampire's physicality and use as metaphorical signifier is continually in flux and subject to socio-cultural reproduction. This final section of the thesis will in some ways mimic this re-drawing by re-examining what has gone before. This chapter will offer a brief summation and reiteration of the key arguments and topics discussed in this thesis, before presenting overall findings and drawing conclusions to bring the investigation of the unique literary construct under consideration to a close. It will do this by taking an overview of the critically themed arguments as a whole by delving into the socio-cultural production and continuing metamorphosis of the teenage vampire in question. As a result the research goals will be met and the end result of this thesis will be the furtherance of the academic dialogue into this topic, thus demonstrating the PhD worthiness of this study as a whole.

1. Revisiting/Revising the "Neoteric Vampire"

When we look back to Chapter One, we see a multitude of physical becomings refracted through the lens of a very particular sort of socio-cultural adolescence as reinterpreted for a young Western audience. In this way the vampire and the ideational teen have come together to form a combinatorial abhuman who is perpetually on the verge of becoming and the youthful (vampiric) body provides the platform for that transformation. This transformed self, for it is indeed the contemporary human body that the teen vampire is representative of, is a

re-enactment of the teenager by virtue of its creation at the hands of an adult author and because it is defined by the negative space left by the dual refutation of childhood and adulthood. It is a re-seeding of the desirous phase of youth and the youthfulness this conjures, and by extension a telling reflection of the youth-obsessed cultural climate that the eons old vampire must now, for appearance sake at least, be a teen to hold popular attention.

However, being eternally youthful is not enough to satisfy in the coeval Western world where lookism holds sway, a vampire protagonist must also be preternaturally beautiful as outlined in Chapter Four. As a central tenet of the "new vampire's" existence, aesthetic perfection of the face and body sets him/her apart from his/her human counterparts and marks him/her as superior to them. The Gothic body is thus divorced from notions of base or inferior looks and the vampire instead enters the realm of idealism, as the epitome of the West's desires for physical perfection as both young and extremely beautiful. This body is framed and re-framed, emphasised and re-emphasised on many levels through textual language, dialogue, and visual descriptors to give emphasis to that scopic idealisation and to unify the notion that beauty should be universally created as the norm and universally sought by each individual in the real world. As confirmation of this we see a "new vampire" who counts vanity amongst his/her character traits, whether knowingly or unwittingly, and seeks fellows of the same ilk. Linda Smolak's theory that "beauty equals social advantage" (2012: p.124) rings true and gives the "new vampire" a far better existence than his folkloric, traditional, or popular predecessors. As the more beautiful doppelganger of the human, the "neoteric vampire" exists as the answer to real-world cosmetic surgery fantasies and the medicalisation of contemporary beauty. The normal (human) body and its appearance is thus read as deficient, fragile, and undesirous by comparison. Beauty is seen as a marker of power

and social success and as a signifier of victory over the natural body, which is subsumed in favour of vampiric aesthetics.

The kind of bodily victory under discussion comes about via the imbibition of sustenance as seen in Chapter Five. All of the "new vampires" in the sample, with the exception of Twilight, eat human food and supplement their diet with blood or human energy. This progressive shift in feeding habits announces the "neoteric vampire" as a product of Western dietary excesses and also pushes him/her into the realm of the Fokloric Tradition with regard to dual consumption. The rejection of the sole blood consumption model of the popular vampire in favour of the additional eating habits of the "omnivorous hemavore" enables the vampire to appear domesticated and normalised, whilst at the same time competing in the contemporary food-centric domain. The Moroi take this one step further with their Capitalist system of permissive consumption whereby food, like the retention of beauty, is treated in a medicalised fashion almost as if eating/feeding in some way equates with illness. Just as with the attainment of beauty, the imbibition of nourishment falls within accepted, but highly restrictive practices. Whilst the "new vampire" must reach the upper echelons of beauty, s/he must also abide by highly restrictive eating/feeding allowances in order to maintain his/her health and desired appearance. Whilst the expansion in permissible eating events might at first glance seem like a positive development, the way in which it is dealt with by the creators of the "neoteric vampire" means it is anything but. The insatiable hunger of the vampire is something to be mastered, but in a manner in which the "neoteric vampire" is conspicuous because of his/her struggles with consumption and the need to contain the amounts of nourishment taken in, the way in which it is consumed, and the frequency with which this is achieved. The vampire's historic pattern of disorderly eating is contorted into something

unrecognisable for the teen audience. Enjoyment of feeding/eating is removed and replaced with the satisfaction given by *not* eating/feeding. In turn this produces the size restricted vampire capable of matching up to size zero runway models so idolised in today's world.

The combination of the levels of beauty deigned to be so important in the "new vampire" and the feeding regime initiated to support those exacting physical standards come together when discussions of sexuality rise to the fore as exhibited in Chapter Three. The "neoteric vampire" body is repeatedly highlighted through its sexuality whether this be with the overwhelming use of virginity narratives, notions of vampiric abstinence whether sexual or related to hungers, or as a signifier of teen desire or the sexual fantasy. This is a variety of vampire, created for a teen audience, required to espouse safe, diluted sexuality. On the surface the vampire can be seen to proffer a domesticated version of sexuality which is generically appropriate to the burgeoning desires of its readers with partners and lovers who give undying love, protection, and eternal devotion. Twilight in particular has been lambasted for this brand of sanitized sexuality by vampire aficionados and labelled as "abstinence porn". However, as demonstrated in Chapter Three, the reality behind the power plays, glamorisation and normalisation of abusive relationships, sexual bargaining, the idea of punishment resulting from sex particularly for the female, and the liberal veiled use of rape threats is far from a "safe" form of sexual representation. The "new vampire's" sexuality is in fact so threatening, that HoN, Twilight, and Academy feature on the American Library Association's "Frequently Challenged Young Adult Books" list, which means they have been

banned from American libraries or their inclusion has been challenged (American Library Association 2016: np).⁵⁹

Religion finds its connection with the body through abuses, both historically as anathema and in the contemporary world through the physical abuses which are religiously adhered to in order to establish beauty and a youthful appearance and to train the recalcitrant body in the deification of physical perfection. Whilst the "neoteric vampire" has become the godhead of his own publishing empire it is his/her superlative aesthetics which are worshipped by its readership. Looking back to Chapter Two, we see a "neoteric vampire" who exists with the absence of traditional religion. Religion is either dismissed on the overt level or is recreated into a complex vampire theology. Both of these actions produce a fictional scenario where the body is freed from the restrictive powers of religion as anathema and instead takes on a combinatorial approach to religiosity whereby multiple belief systems are cannibalised and re-written, much like the vampire him/herself, to exist concurrently and to celebrate the vampire as god-like rather than an enemy of religion. This allows for the "vampiric becoming" to be read both as a kind of maturation in Chapter One and as resurrection in Chapter Two because of its sheer fluidity.

In terms of feeding, counter consumption arguments are generated between traditional and "neoteric vampire" factions whereby the rapacious, consuming monster-vampire is written as over-eater and the confined, domesticated "neoteric vampire" body as consumed is unable or

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⁵⁹ In 2009 the entire *HoN* and *Academy* series, even books as yet unwritten, were banned from Henderson Junior High School in Texas because of their sexual content, while in the same year *Twilight* was banned from primary schools in Australia because it was "too racy" (Doyle 2010: p.4, p.6, p.7). *HoN* was again subject to negative scrutiny in 2011 when its book *Betrayal* was challenged for inclusion in some Alaskan school libraries due to its encouragement of sexual thoughts amongst teens (Doyle 2011: p.5).

unwilling to feed freely and falls victim to their rival *and* the consuming imagined reader, to the point where this creature has been eaten away, in the bodily sense, by its reimaginings. This erosion also features prominently in what David Lyon describes as the voluntarism of religion (2000: p.76), whereby elements of various practices are stripped from existing doctrines and rehashed in real-life and in the textual sphere under discussion. Here the "religious 'consumer'" (Hunt 2005: p.147) reinvents personal belief systems in the same way that the vampire's religious and spiritual connections have been revamped to suit the consumer, to produce a vampire who consumes and embodies "Christ conventions".

This notion of increasing societal consumption continues in the "neoteric vampire's" affiliations with virginity and abstinence as overarching narratives of consumption/consummation and finds particular purchase with the concept of beauty and the desired/desirable body as a consumable to be maintained and improved upon as exampled in both the physicality of the "neoteric vampire" when compared to its previous incarnations and in the body-centric West. The desirous nature of this body is confirmed with its location as perpetually youthful. By extension the systematic habituation of young people (Latham 2002: p.1) into the economies of consumerism and the need for adults to conform to these "youth" trends (Kinder 1995: p.77) becomes part and parcel of the "neoteric vampire's" repertoire of skills to blend into the contemporary age.

In one respect or another, this body is forever a teen body and thus the adult and the child are denied. The teen "neoteric vampire" consumes his/her own ability to become a "real" adult by instead becoming a vampire. The representative adolescent subject population discussed in Chapter One becomes something quite different in the final chapter when regarded in terms of oral consumption. Here the subject, that is the subordinated young adult audience and their

corresponding fictive counterparts, becomes the eater. Accordingly, the act of eating is transformative and the abhuman body in question, the consuming body, actively consumes the passive human body. In linguistic terms the abhuman is designated as dominant subject and the human food source as object. The eating subject consumes the object of consumption, which in the case of feeders equates to the adult body. So the tables are turned on the adult population in true YA tradition and the former subordinate subject turns into the prevailing predator. At each feeding blood or energy from human sources becomes incorporated into the vampire body and the object is consumed by and into the subject. This acts as a literal marker for the devouring of the human body by the vampire and the consumption and replacement of the adult.

As a representation of generic paradigms and teenage sexuality, the vampire consumes virginity and therefore childhood. The outcome of which is a creature sanitized of heritage, but representative of hybridity; a creature denied humanity's bodily diversity in terms of appearance, size, and age, but founded upon variety and the principles of becoming. In other words, the vampire has taken the West's consumerist ethos and perfected it.

One question raised by this research centres upon the ongoing production and popularity of the "neoteric vampire". This study is predicated upon the assertion of the importance of the "neoteric vampire" as a nascent re-imagining of his/her popular predecessors. During the heyday of the series in the literary sample, new series novels were published annually or sometimes more frequently. Since 2010, interest in the "neoteric vampire" has peaked and the annual publication of new additions to each series became irregular, dwindling to the point where no new publications were produced. Thus the "neoteric vampire" as socio-literary zeitgeist exhausted itself culminating in what Fred Botting describes as over-familiarity

through cultural visibility (2014: p.199) and what *Publishers Weekly* labels as "paranormal fatigue" (Sue Corbett 2011: np). This construct is no longer the most popular in YA fiction, being supplanted by the post-apocalyptic novel. This fact in no way detracts from the importance of the "neoteric vampire" as a unique cultural construct or as a vampiric evolutionary step, it simply cements the "neoteric vampire's" place in the annals of vampire history and confirms its position as a unique cultural construct belonging to a unique cultural moment in which this character was cannibalised ultimately by its consuming readers.

2. Multiple and Recurring Vampire Pasts

Throughout this thesis the notion of the revisionist vampire meets the idea of the recurring vampiric past. That the "neoteric vampire", and indeed any variation of vampire, is both unwittingly and intentionally subject to the echoes and implications of vampire history is unquestionable because it would appear that the vampire cannot rid him/herself of his/her canonical contextualisation. For example, in the field of vampire studies, the "neoteric vampire" can be seen as the direct descendant of the previously popularised version of the sympathetic vampire, and as demonstrated throughout this study, carries traits of more historical vampires.

The connection to the past is only emphasised by the fact that the vampire becomes his/her own lived history due to immortality, reincarnation, or prolonged life spans. This applies both physically and canonically. In a way, this entire thesis is based on physical inheritance. Its chapters are selected because of their connections with the critical texts found within the salient Traditions, which are used as markers and its sample texts are chosen because of their

relation to the genre and physical differences displayed by the "neoteric vampire" in comparison to those of the "traditional vampire". It could be argued that this entire study creates a tension between the "neoteric vampire's" disavowal of his/her historicity and the academic need displayed here to categorise that vampire within his/her vampire super canon, as a continuation of or removal from the traditional expectations of such a being.

Whilst the "neoteric vampire" is created and written in opposition to his/her "traditional vampire" relation, both with regard to his/her opposing protocols in terms of positioning as adversarial to the more canonically traditional or earlier versions of him/herself from a plot standpoint, s/he is also written as revisionist to offer a supplementary understanding of contemporary cultural climates where the expectation of one's vampire belongs to the YA rather than the horror genre. In an academic discussion involving the concept of cultural contextualisation, the past again comes to the fore because time periods pass and therefore what was once current becomes a part of a specific time period, which eventually becomes part of history. As such, the "neoteric vampire" of the early 2000s has already passed into this category and has joined the ranks of the forebears s/he set themselves apart from so forcefully.

The vampire has always existed, both as a contemporary figure and as a remnant of pasts, indeed Brian J. Frost confirms this:

By many names, and in a host of disparate guises, the vampire has been known to men of all nations throughout history. Indeed, so immeasurably ancient is the polymorphic phenomenon that its origins can be traced back through all the ages of

which there are records preserved, until they become lost in the twilight of tradition and fable (1989: p.3).

The polymorphic vampire is a product of multiple histories rather than a singular past. Vampires are a recurring type, no matter how far removed from the source origins. With this in mind the story of recurring vampiric pasts becomes a narrative of recurring vampiric bodies; of bodies who are ugly or beautiful, hungry or satiated, contemporary or out of time, aggressive or submissive, chaste or wanton, abused or revered, and read as befitting their period of origin. The "neoteric vampire" him/herself, as evidenced by this thesis, is a salient example of this physical propriety. Susannah Clements attributes vampiric recurrences over the last century to the fact that vampires provide a metaphor so rich they are able to adapt to changing worldviews (2011: p.4). As such the vampire is capable of unlimited change and this reinvention and revision is still ongoing. The question of what variety of vampire will emerge from the remains of the "neoteric vampire" is a separate thesis entirely.

The "I'm not like other girls"-turned-"I'm not like other vampires" trope is heavily utilised throughout this literary sample and the wider YA vampire sub-genre. It grants its vampires separation from the vampires that have gone before, to a degree, and also from its fellows within each specific narrative to produce a creature heavily reliant on individuation and the unique process of transformation. This solidifies the notion that this vampire is created for this generation of readers because it was not available to previous generations, or more specifically it was not available to adults and parental figures, who therefore cannot claim knowledge or understanding of it. This resonates with teen audiences who also feel that adults lack knowledge or understanding of their very particular transformations. This trope is applicable across the thematic areas of youth, religion, sexuality, beauty and eating and in all

of these avenues the "neoteric vampire" is found to be "not like other vampires". As a literary representation of the real-life teen, when the "neoteric vampire" asserts their difference from other vampires, they are in fact asserting their coded difference from adults, of both the literary and real-world varieties. Therefore these vampires are more able to speak to the truths of contemporary teens because they are written as contemporary teens, they are a direct literary representation of the real-life teen and because they are very particularly delineated as "not adult".

3. Conclusion: Shaping the "Neoteric Human"

As the foregoing thesis demonstrates, the intersections between the cultural invention of the "neoteric vampire" body and its transformations and physical idealisations are significant and extensive. Just as the vampire is newly defined by what it means to be human using the particular cultural politics at play in this time period, so too the vampire and his/her transformative body is re-shaping idealised conceptions of what it means to be human through reflection, refraction, commonalities, and difference. When a young adult vampire character is created as both aspirational and inspirational, as a devoted partner, a best friend, a hero, and the ultimate in protection, and is referenced for his/her newly-found morals in comparison to the creatures that have gone before, it must be lauded as a role model for the ideal in young adult behaviour, family values, loyalty, and enduring love. Such a transformation speaks to the American Dream, and of leaving behind the transgressive and forbidden to become a signifier of utopic ideals. These are ideals which appear to grant the reader admittance into a world of wish fulfilment for all, where any human teenager has the

ability to become special via admission into the world (and subsequently the body) of the vampire through a complex system of transformation, whereby a hybrid pseudo adult/eternal teenager is the epitome of a successful becoming. This says much about belief systems and the notion of maturation in the contemporary West.

However, when we look below the surface of the "neoteric vampire" we see a more dangerous creature than first appearances might suggest, and in fact, a vampire who has the potentiality to be much more dangerous than many of his/her predecessors due to the negative real-life inferences of his/her socio-cultural construction. This is a vampire that may be domesticated and "safe" for our teenagers to interact with, but who actually follows much more closely to the Gothic than appearances would suggest.

This is a vampire who intrinsically tells the young reader that the most desirous form of eating is a restrictive diet where eating less in a controlled manner is to be congratulated and where eating "too much", too frivolously, or incorrectly turns you into something to be ashamed of and shunned. This is a vampire who lionises sexual and physical abuses as romance and who normalises stalking, power relationships, multiple simultaneous partners, and punishment for sexual "transgressions". S/he glamorises the notion of the perfect physicality and promotes dependence on the attainment and maintenance of bodily ideals, whilst marking out those who do not meet these exacting and unrealistic standards as either oppositional or as too undesirous to appear in its pages. Parental complaints which have seen these sample texts banned from schools and libraries for being overly sexual, might perhaps have looked a little deeper for more fundamental reasons to discourage their children's interest in these titles.

Whilst the impact that contemporaneous culture has had on the fictive vampire has been demonstrated, it is also worth noting the major cultural influence these texts have wrought on their readers, and by extension the cultural sphere at large. It is true that the media attention garnered by these texts and others of their ilk is immense and that they have reached enormous numbers of readers and viewers of all ages is undeniable. Such widespread attention when refocused upon the textual teen body cannot help but have ramifications for the real-world teen body in comparison, after all both youth and the vampire are societal constructs and are therefore subject to societal trends.

What is fascinating is that this once Othered creature is now the epitome of social attractiveness and sits at the centre of cultural popularity, realising a new brand of cultural optimism founded on the teenager. The young adult "neoteric vampire" has effectively replaced the Anglo-American teenager in his/her own literary genre and as a result of this we see the co-option of the teenager into something improper. As period custodians of the "neoteric vampire" Gray (Amy Vincent), the Casts, Meyer, Mead, and to a lesser extent Poole⁶⁰ (Gillian Philip), have engineered vampires who occupy mainstream positions. This is significant because all of these authors are personally Othered in some way as individuals from a hegemonic standpoint. As women they are all Othered from a gender perspective. Meyer and P. C. Cast both occupy marginal subject positions due to their religious or spiritual practices, Meyer as Mormon and Cast due to her perceived Wiccan beliefs. Thus minority voices are responsible for the successful re-siting of the vampire from its marginal roots, into a more central positioning.

⁶⁰ Poole's series is the product of a book packager.

The vampiric revolution has come at the price of the now-marginalised human teen, which is perhaps surprising considering the authors' understanding of the effects of belonging to such a minority. Instead these authors celebrate the post-human "neoteric vampire", while at the same time re-writing cultural conventions on what the human, and by extension the human body, should be to produce a whole schema of somatic and aesthetic criteria the teenage reader should aspire to, a "neoteric human" or sorts if you will. This schema is very much consumer-based and asserts the role of the twenty-first century consumer in YA vampire fiction. At the same time, it equates to a dismissal of the minority position, and by extension a disavowal of the very authors of this fiction and what they represent in furtherance of the need to disavow heritage, dispel the adult, and to promote the bodily uniformity of the consumer.

These female authors create heroines who are strong, vital and able to raise the bar for female expectations in a vampire genre which was traditionally male-dominated and masculine before it transferred to YA fiction and became bound by the strong woman. However, in reality they are complicit in the destruction of the feminine through the use of the antifeminine "I'm not like other girls" trope, the anti-feminist Postfeminist Gothic and "Damsel in Distress" trope and by continuing the teen female-as-literary-foil convention which originally found popularity in early filmic and literary representations of teen girls (Nash 2006: p.3). Add to this to concept of the female vampire's loss of femininity, gaining of masculine vampiric characteristics and performative femininity as vampiric, not to mention the sexual duality where women are written as either sexually coercive in the traditional male role or subjugated by males as a victim of their sexual whims and desires, and the real-life reader finds little to recommend these female portrayals.

The power of the God-head is being replaced by the power of the self in Western society and in this sub-genre of fiction, yet that newly-prioritised self repeatedly falls victim to contemporaneous consumption in one form or another, to the point where the "neoteric human" cannibalises that self to produce a desired outcome. This notion is reminiscent of Sandra Tome's analysis of the disappearing vampire body in the Rice Tradition (1997), which perhaps forewarned what was to come for "neoteric vampires" and their "neoteric humans". The "neoteric vampire" does not literally have to feed on the "neoteric human" because the sought after physical ideals depicted in these texts, when taken to the extremes revealed in each narrative, do that independently. The "neoteric vampire" is the literary proxy of the "neoteric human" and acts both as a performative effigy of the human form and a fictive Gothic doppelganger for consumerist Western society at large. As such it represents a reconstruction of the human and a reimaging of the vampire. If we return to Nigel Llewellyn's binary of the natural body replaced by the social or commemorative monumental body (1991: pp. 46-47) as an evaluative tool, we can draw comparisons between the human form as the natural, unadulterated body and the fictional "neoteric vampire" or real-life "neoteric human" physicality as the social or monumental body favoured by society. Taking these associations to their final conclusions, Llewellyn's "natural body" (1991: p.47), which in his discussions of death equates to a rotting corpse, is subsumed by the socially acceptable and idealised "monumental body" (1991: p.46).

The cultural consumerist rhetoric at play whereby the natural (teen) body is repeatedly targeted as undesirable and in need of transformation is sustained and much more covert in comparison to other didactic vampire tales heralded by their powerful messages of cultural

instruction⁶¹. Here, instead the vilification of the human body is masked by its replacement with the superlative "neoteric vampire" form, marketed as a sanitised version of the age-old vampire who is safe and appropriate for the YA reader. The hero, friend, lover, and saviour figure that is the "neoteric vampire" is entirely a metaphor of metamorphosis and easily passes as a suitable reading companion for the contemporary teen. His/her generic conventions and inventions combine to produce an abhuman who appears at a remove from his/her traditional and popular forebears of the adult horror sphere, and the recurring narrative insistence that distances this creature from his/her canonical heritage only works to support that notion. However, as an intrinsically Gothic being, the "neoteric vampire's" connections to his/her vampiric ancestors are strong and are in no way greater felt than with the subsumed, yet readily accessible, conversion paradigms which made Count Dracula so fearsome in the nineteenth century. While the "neoteric vampire" may not want to create a vampire race per se, s/he certainly promotes the creation of the "neoteric human" in his/her image. The nineteenth century invasion novel thus takes on a new twist with the sample texts under discussion to become a narrative of cultural invasion through bodily transformation, which in true consumerist fashion, is reproduced in its multiples through the medium of serial fiction to provide wave after wave of publications aimed at young adults, all carrying the same underlying vampiric message: consume or be consumed.

⁶¹ Christian vampire fiction lambasts non-adherents to Christian teachings. Eco-vampire fiction vilifies individuals not following an environmentally-friendly, vegan, animal-friendly lifestyle.

4. Further "Neoteric Vampire" Scholarship Opportunities

As outlined in each chapter conclusion, there are a number of viable areas for further research linked to the thesis topics. Many of these aforementioned future research opportunities are highly relevant to current thinking from a subject perspective and sit at the cutting edge of academic attention in a number of fields not just vampire studies, children's/YA literary studies, and body-centric theory.

Overall, this project provides the ideal platform for the study of the future of the "neoteric vampire". It raises practicable research questions about what happens to that socio-cultural construct outside of its unique cultural moment and outside of the thesis boundaries in terms of the evolution of its vampiric tropes and the changing body as socio-cultural representative. In turn this is pertinent to the viability of this research as an ongoing topic. Powerful and highly pertinent research topics related to this include viewing the "neoteric vampire" as consumer, and analysing him/her in terms of physical departures as trans-human, post-human, or post-Gothic. The most obvious area to look to in this vein would be the very "neoteric vampires" under discussion in this dissertation. Several of the literary series examined here have books which were published post-2010 and therefore were not included within this research⁶². These publications provide evidence of the future of the young adult vampire and his/her development. They are representative of the vampiric tropes which found sustainability outside of the study period and of the elements of somatic representation which were relevant going forward, so would provide a fascinating basis for related future research.

⁶² HoN is the most prolific of these with additional titles Destined (2011), Hidden (2012), Revealed (2013) and Redeemed (2014), plus Loved (2017) and Lost (2018) which make up the House of Night: Other World series. P. C. and Kristin Cast have also authored four novellas, between 2011 and 2014, which feature adult characters from the HoN series as teens. Darke has one further book, Lost Spirits (2012), whilst Evernight has one additional novel: Balthazar (2013).

Similarly, the subsequent and related novels from the authors highlighted here also raise questions about the future of the "neoteric vampire" and the sustainability of this construct, even within the best-selling series utilised for this research. For example, *Academy* has a spin off series, Bloodlines, which is made up of six books published between 2011 and 2015 and which features the same characters in new stories from the perspective of a non-vampire. These publications raise questions about the centrality of the "neoteric vampire" and its positioning within the YA industry post-2010. Stephenie Meyer has also provided a rich source of future research which adds to this debate with the publication of *Life and Death* (2015), a novel written to mark the tenth anniversary of the publication of *Twilight* (2005), which retells the original story using characters of the opposite sex. Her novel *Midnight Sun* (2020), which narrates *Twilight* (2005) from the perspective of Edward Cullen was also recently published. An investigation into the sexuality and gender narratives of these characters is certainly warranted considering the valuable insights developed in the original book as outlined in Chapter Three.

The "neoteric vampire" of the literary sample has more recently moved into the medium of the graphic novel⁶³. Just as the Whedon Tradition's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* successfully transferred into this sphere, so the majority of the sample texts have followed suit. This is significant from an academic standpoint because it represents a further incarnation and metamorphosis of the "neoteric vampire" into a nascent area of research for academicians, much like the YA genre before it. The "neoteric vampire" of the graphic novel provides the opportunity for comparison with the "neoteric vampire" of YA serial fiction when

⁶³ Academy has become Vampire Academy: A Graphic Novel (2011). Blue has been reinvented as Blue Bloods: The Graphic Novel (2013), written by Melissa de la Cruz, Robert Venditti, and Alina Urusov. The Casts have been joined by writer Kent Dalian to produce House of Night: Legacy (2012), whilst The Twilight Saga has spawned a series of graphic novels by Meyer and author Young Kim published from 2011 onwards.

represented in visual form. It raises questions of how those same bodies are culturally (re)produced through a visual medium and whether the highly charged textual aesthetics are followed through in pictorial rendering and what those renderings imply from a socio-cultural perspective. Writing on the dramatization of the literary into the visual medium of television and film, critics Robert Giddings, Keith Selby, and Chris Wensley remark upon the specialism of the scopic form as "specifically representational" and note the moving image's "close relationship between signifier and signified, compared to the arbitrary relationship of verbal language" (1990: p.6). The same relationship applies to the YA novel in comparison to the predominantly visual medium of the graphic novel. A study of this topic would be both timely and germane.

In continuance of the idea of examining what becomes of the "neoteric vampire" and what elements can be researched further, the notion of the graduation of that character from high school into college, while still being a denizen of YA serial fiction, is one avenue to explore further. If as has been posited in this thesis, the setting of the high school is a key development of vampiric evolution, then the changes and potential physical maturation the vampire undergoes as a college student are noteworthy. The Morganville Vampires (2006-2013) series by Rachel Caine is a prime example of the YA college vampire saga and analysis of the nine books which make up its publications between 2000-2010 would add yet another facet to the understanding of the contemporary vampiric development as it unfolded concurrently with samples under scrutiny in this research. When this collegiate vampire inhabits the realm of adult serial fiction in series such as Chloe Neill's Chicagoland Vampires (2009-present), the differences the vampiric body exhibits and the generic paradigms which

necessitate those differences equate to new research regarding the matriculation of the "neoteric vampire".

Research into the "neoteric vampire" provides an apt platform for the study of the variety of vampires created in direct response to them and their physical perfection – the kind of vampires who share some of their morality but are physical representations of the everyday man/woman. One example of such an anti-"neoteric vampire" is Brian Meehl's skinny, vegan, teen vampire protagonist Morning McCobb from novel Suck It Up (2008). McCobb is described in the text as a "SangFU" vampire type – a "blood fuck up" or mistake not specifically selected for his beauty and physical prowess in the new Aryan regime of vampire perfection the novel describes. Johnny B. Truant's Fat Vampire series (2012-2013) portrays a similar dialogue with and reaction against the "neoteric vampire". In a world where vampires are turned at their physical peak, Truant's protagonist is morbidly obese Reginald Baskin who is turned by a skinny Goth teen elder. Both characters fall outside of the series' new regime of physical perfection but take over vampire society. As a reaction against the physical perfection of the Edward Cullen character-types populating YA fiction, McCobb and Baskin provide an attractive starting point for research into the backlash against coeval body expectations. Baskin is of particular interest because his extreme obesity harks back to more traditional vampiric physical representations of the baseness of the body in what Bahktin's 1965 work would refer to as a grotesque body. In turn, this relates to the nascent and highly pertinent current literary study of ableism and the notion of the "neoteric vampire's" physical ideals as ableist.

As background research for this thesis, a sustained and systematic examination of the salient vampire representations from the Folklore Tradition to the year 2000 was undertaken,

encompassing literature, film, and television. It concentrated upon the vampiric traits used, looked to when they were introduced, and the ways in which these traits were utilised and adapted in each incarnation in order to better understand the development of the vampire and the effect this might have on the "neoteric vampire". In a way this research followed in the footsteps of Montague Summers' 1920s research on the folkloric vampire when he said: "I…essayed to find some explanation of the traits and activity of the vampire, to formulate some sort of hypothesis which may account for these terrible phenomena." (1962: p.xvii) This investigative technique was expanded upon by way of producing a sound footing for the study of the "neoteric vampire" and in so doing a large body of unique research was created focusing upon the history of vampiric tropes. What was in effect a by-product of this thesis now stands as a substantial piece of academic inquiry in its own right and is something that can be developed in future for either post-doctoral study or by publication.

The vampire is now fully integrated into twenty-first century society, albeit without the knowledge of the hegemonic human populace in many of the literary case studies within this sample. There is no vampire apocalypse and no Capitalist-Consumerist human food farming, threads commonly found in the vampire's annexed adult horror genre. The YA vampire merely slots into contemporary consumerist high school life as we know it and makes a place for him/herself amongst the teen contingent of fellow supernaturals popular with these readers. Whilst no vampire apocalypse has occurred, the often disturbing themes visible in the sample texts as they relate to the teen Gothic body in transformation, from the encouragement of restricted eating practices to the lionisation of sexual abuse, would surely

rival topics found in adult horror fiction. The dark side of the vampire is still in existence, but in the case of the "neoteric vampire" it is peppered with contrary depictions of immortal love, family values, a variety of neutral morality, and wish fulfilment particular to this brand of fiction, and comes in the form of physical perfection governed by the extremes of beauty to produce a vampire character which has undergone and continues to undergo physical transformations which carry direct inferences from the cultural climate that produced it.

At the confluence of the fields of vampire studies, Gothic theory, YA literary criticism, cultural studies, and body studies, is where this research finds its niche in a unique literary construct which developed from a particular cultural moment in Western society. The newness of this subject matter in combination with the fresh approach taken to existing ideas on the vampire and the YA literary character as dealt with by this thesis have produced a sustained, systematic and original piece of research which fills a gap in academic research and adds to critical debate on this subject.

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