

**Monsters, Dreams, and Discords:
Vampire Fiction
in
Twenty-First Century American
Culture**

Jillian Marie Wingfield

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Abstract

Amongst recent scholarly interest in vampire fiction, twenty-first century American vampire literature has yet to be examined as a body that demonstrates what is identified here as an evolution into three distinct yet inter-related sub-generic types, labelled for their primary characteristics as Monsters, Dreams, and Discords.¹ This project extends the field of understanding through an examination of popular works of American twenty-first century literary vampire fiction, such as Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series, alongside lesser-known works, such as Andrew Fox's *Fat White Vampire Blues*. Drawing on a cultural materialist methodology, this thesis investigates vampires as signifiers of and responses to contemporary cultural fears and power dynamics as well as how they continue an ongoing expansion of influential generic paradigms. This thesis also incorporates psychological theories such as psychodynamics alongside theoretical approaches such as Freud's consideration of the uncanny as means of understanding the undead as agents of fears and powerplays on a scale from individualized to global. Theories of power inform an argument for vampires as indicators of cultural threats, augmentations, or destabilizations within uchronic Americas. This thesis also draws on post-structuralism to inform an investigation of vampires as cultural indicators. Thus, theorists including Auerbach, Baudrillard, and Faludi are called on to underscore an examination of how modern undead narratives often defy – but do not disavow – cultural dominants, spanning a spectrum from reinforcing to questioning of environment.

Through an assessment of central vampiric characters and their effects within the speculative Americas they inhabit, this thesis scrutinizes vampire narratives' interaction with contextualities such as terroristic infiltration and a perceived need for martial hegemony, the fluid form of the American Dream, and the

¹ Although not a work of vampire fiction itself, it must be briefly noted that these terms borrow from Tennyson's elegy 'In Memoriam A. H. H.', in which the poet muses on themes that bleed into vampire fiction including science, religion, time, brutality, and love: Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 'In Memoriam A.H.H.', *Alfred, Lord Tennyson Selected Poems*, ed. by Aidan Day (London: Penguin, [1991] 2003), LVI.21-22, p. 166; for an introductory examination of this work, see Holly Furneaux's British Library article, 'An introduction to "In Memoriam A.H.H."' (2014), <<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/in-memoriam>> [accessed 1 August 2017]

persistence of intra-cultural racial antagonisms. This will be carried out through investigation of two key literary texts within each of the three sections, considering how each epitomizes the sub-genre, engages with key vampiric forms, and extends generic understanding. The narratives on which this thesis focuses range from the apocalyptic of the Monsters section, where overcoming vampire threat is linked to corruption in and of a post-9/11 American 'democratic' corpus, to unattainable wish-fulfilment in the Dreams section, home to attempted occlusions of monstrosity in representations of alternative faces of fear hidden within American Dreams, and a questioning of the divisiveness embedded in modern U.S. culture in Discords, where the most divisive and long-standing cultural challenge – racial antagonism – finds vampiric mimesis.

While focus here is on twenty-first century vampire fiction as an evolving form, the literary works investigated carry forward a palimpsestic understanding of generic ancestry. As such, fundamental to this analysis is how each of the texts focused on here also assimilates understanding of earlier key works in the American vampire genre. Although film undoubtedly plays a significant role in the history and reception of America's undead, it only informs this thesis in the form of Tod Browning's 1931 Universal 'monster movie' *Dracula*, as not only the point of entry into popular awareness for modern vampire fiction, but also a universal referent for all subsequent iterations of U.S. undead. Alongside Bela Lugosi's influential portrayal of Stoker's Count in Browning's film, this thesis focuses on the influence of further iterations of *Dracula* and the two other foremost variants within twentieth-century American vampire fiction: Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (1954), in which vampire fiction first fully assimilates into American culture, and Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), a romanticizing of undead bloodlust in tension with questioning and angst.

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A post-script special thanks to Bram Stoker as the author of the origin text for much that has become accepted as traditional within modern vampire fiction: finding out that my birth date and the original date of publication for *Dracula* are one and the same was the happiest of coincidences!

Contents

Abstract	p. i
Acknowledgements	p. iii
Contents	p. iv
Introduction: ‘Dragons of the prime’: Vampire Fiction and Twenty-first Century America	p. 1
- ‘they went and came, / Remade the blood and changed the frame’: The Three-headed Dragon of Modern American Vampire Fiction	p. 16
- ‘truth embodied in a tale’: Vampires, Fear and Power	p. 27
- ‘A hollow echo [...] A hollow form’: A Brief History of America’s Pivotal Vampire’s	p. 34
Section One: Vampire Monsters	p. 54
Chapter one: ‘In the face of such terror’: Guillermo Del Toro and Chuck Hogan’s <i>The Strain</i> Trilogy	p. 55
- ‘at once both familiar and monstrous’: Exploiting and Extending Generic Knowns	p. 67
- ‘the Angel of Death’: The Master as Post-9/11 Terror	p. 72
Chapter two: ‘behind the monstrous’: America’s Home-made Vampires in Justin Cronin’s <i>The Passage</i>	p. 97
- ‘something about them that struck a deep chord of recognition’: Past Vampires as Part of the Present	p. 109
- ‘And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years’: Cronin’s Vampiric Flooding of Modernity	p. 116
Section Two: Vampire Dreams	p. 135
Chapter three: ‘twisted up in dreams’: Stephenie Meyer’s All-American Vampire Family	p. 136
- ‘they are no different than any other vampires’: Part of the Generic Darkness	p. 152
- ‘a very convincing dream [...] confused with reality’: The Perfect American Family(?)	p. 160

Chapter four: ‘Where all your bloody dreams come true’: Charlaine Harris’s ‘Sookie Stackhouse’ Series	p. 176
- ‘the whole Anne Rice thing’: Generic Involvement and Darker Dreams	p. 187
- ‘the vampire [...] walked into the bar’: Fears, Negotiation and Pretence in American Culture	p. 195
Section Three: Vampire Discords	p. 210
Chapter five: ‘Violating all the rules’: Vampire Identity in Andrew Fox’s <i>Fat White Vampire Blues</i>	p. 211
- ‘for Varney’s sake!’: Generic Participation with a Little Bit of Violation	p. 226
- ‘I’m a white guy. He’s a black guy. He resents me for it’: Race, Identity, and Alienation	p. 235
Chapter six: ‘I awoke to darkness’: Vampire Hybridity and Ambiguity in Octavia E. Butler’s <i>Fledgling</i>	p. 248
- ‘I think I’m an experiment’: Blurring the Genetics of a Genre	p. 264
- ‘Dirty little nigger bitch’: Vampires and Revenant Racism in America	p. 271
Conclusion: ‘with these have grown [...] something greater than before’: Vampires, Undying Fear, and Power Dynamics in the United States of America	p. 285
Bibliography: ‘All subtle thought, all curious fears’	p. 294
- Primary Texts	p. 294
- Secondary Texts	p. 295
- Online Secondary Texts	p. 313
- Further Selected Modern American Undead Reading	p. 321
- Selected American Vampire Television and Filmography	p. 323

Introduction:
'Dragons of the prime':
Vampire Fiction and Twenty-first Century America¹

‘To the jaded eye, all vampires seem alike, but they are wonderful in their versatility’ (Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampire, Ourselves*)²

‘The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown.’ (H. P. Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*)³

‘I have more [...] I spread it over centuries, and time is on my side’ (Bram Stoker, *Dracula*)⁴

There are three constants that underpin modern vampire fiction: one, that these fantastic undead creatures are acknowledged within human culture(s); two, that they are agents for our fears; and three, that they are material indicators of contemporary understandings of power dynamics, evidenced in their animosities and attempted accords. With vampires as such ‘versatile’ abstract entities, their plasticity signals the time(s) and place(s) in which they dwell alongside locating them as supra-human tools of cultural observation.⁵ As part of human culture(s), vampire narratives show variance to Rosemary Jackson’s suggestion that fantastic

¹ Alfred, Lord Tennyson, ‘In Memoriam A.H.H.’, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson Selected Poems*, ed. by Aidan Day (London: Penguin, [1991] 2003), LVI.22, p. 166

² Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 5

³ H. P. Lovecraft, *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, ed. by Alex Kurtagic (Abergele: Wermod and Wermod, 2013), p. 1

⁴ Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, ed. by Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal (New York. London: W. W. Norton, 1997), p. 267

⁵ As Lorna Piatti-Farnell states of vampires in contemporary popular literature, ‘even in the twenty-first century, a decisive and all-encompassing definition of the vampire escapes us.’ Although falling into the trap of assuming there is such a Gothic being as ‘the’ vampire and arguing a case for modern vampires as obedient followers of ‘laws and strict regulations’, as Piatti-Farnell also argues, they evidence a clear differentiation ‘from other groups, whether human or supernatural’ and are adaptable and mutable mediators of human concerns and that the undead are ‘impossible to separate from context’. As also argued here, Piatti-Farnell eschews attempting to define vampires as physical entities, preferring instead to question the ‘position they occupy in the structures of human representation’ as indicators of ‘patterns of presentation and behaviour’, but looking specifically at vampire bodies as ‘malleable form[s]’: Lorna Piatti-Farnell, *The Vampire in Contemporary Popular Literature* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 196, 194, 54, 55

texts are ‘constrained by [their] surrounding frame’, with the texts discussed here less constrained and more stimulated by their surroundings.⁶ Thus, vampires and their narratives are bound to contexts as psychodynamic interpretations of cultural environs as much as they are bound to the effects of generic lineage. The emotionally-determined response of vampire fiction to fear and power dynamics within contemporary culture can be seen as drawing on Kathleen Holtz Deal’s outline of psychodynamic theory as a means of understanding subjective cultural ‘truth[s]’, such as post-9/11 responses to terroristic threats or the culturally internal destabilizing of racial animosities, as ‘narrative [...] rather than [...] objective realit[ies]’.⁷ And, as Stoker’s *Dracula* asserts, vampires always have ‘more’, constantly adapting to represent what Lovecraft identifies as the ‘oldest and *strongest* emotion’: fear.⁸ Fear, that emotional response to environmental stimuli that causes a rush of adrenalin and readies a body for fight or flight, finds a non-toxic outlet in vampire fiction. With the conceptual identifying properties outlined above fundamental to the actuality that there is no such being as *the* vampire, this thesis examines the characterization and agency of a selection of twenty-first century American vampires and the narratives they inhabit as reflective of power dynamics and fears specific to time and space: Gothic dominants within America as a global dominant.⁹

⁶ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London and New York: Routledge, [1981] 2001), p. 122

⁷ Kathleen Holtz Deal, ‘Psychodynamic Theory’, *Advances in Social Work*, 8, 1 (2007) 184-195, p. 194; As Maud Ellmann identifies in her introduction to *Dracula*, vampire fiction displays as a ‘symptom of the terrors of its age [...] anatomizing [...] anxieties’: Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, ed. by Maud Ellmann (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. viii

⁸ My emphasis, Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. 267; Lovecraft, ed. by Kurtagic (2013), p. 1; Vampire-like creatures are acknowledged and understood as far back as ancient Assyria (circa 2400 – 612BCE). Montague Summers writes of *Ekimmu* as dead people whose souls can find no rest in ‘Chapter IV: The Vampire in Assyria, the East, and some Ancient Countries’. However, a more nuanced understanding of the source material – the Gilgamesh epic – used by Summers comes from David Ferry’s translation, which has corpses wandering in the underworld: “‘And he whose corpse was thrown away unburied?’ “He wanders without rest through the world down there [the Nether World].”’: Montague Summers, *The Vampire His Kith and Kin* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., [1928] 1929), <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/goth/vkk/vkk06.htm>> [accessed 11 August 2007]; David Ferry, *Gilgamesh: A New Rendering in English Verse* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992), p. 92; for a brief historical overview of the Assyrians, see Peter BetBasoo, ‘Brief History of Assyrians’, *Assyrian International News Agency*, <<http://aina.org/brief.html>> [accessed 15 April 2017]

⁹ The American vampire genre can be understood to take its lead from the dominant form of its predecessor: as David Punter states, ‘the English Gothic *novel* on the whole tended to transmute

Casting aside the improbability of a vampire archetype, this thesis focuses on discussion of modern undead as recognized cultural entities structured by the effects of threats, alongside bolstering and assimilation as well as undermining and questioning, within the globally dominant U.S., drawing on fears and powerplays to evidence American vampire fiction's recent evolution. An examination of an as-yet unrecognized generic morphing into three sub-types – categorized for their primary characteristics as Monsters, Dreams, and Discords – in the long opening decade of the twenty-first century shows vampires as culturally affected fantastic expressions of abuses and exertions of power from above – the Monsters of section one are products of religious and political-martial oppressions – to below – section three's Discords examples are demonstrations of violent racial marginalization that persists in the U.S. While there are areas of overlap with recent examinations of postmillennial vampires such as Susan Chaplin's recognition of modern vampiric diversity, recent investigations stop short of identifying undead diversifications for what they are and how their vampiric variants all approach the specific dynamics of America's 'postmillennial period'.¹⁰ In the first sub-genre, 'vampire Monsters' shade the fears and powerplays of post-9/11 apocalyptic viciousness in a nation founded in violence and monstrosity; the second, 'vampire Dreams' concentrates on the fantastic reinforcing of what, at best, might be considered naïve and, at worst, cruelly unobtainable fantasies, with the 'American Dream' as an unviable ideal; and the third, 'vampire Discords', demonstrates the fallacy of U.S. liberality and

immediate social comment into the substance of [the] metaphysical'. Thus, America's vampires become personifications of the fears and power dynamics affecting their immediate cultural environment: David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the present day, Volume 1 The Gothic Tradition* (London and New York: Longman, 1996a), p. 57

¹⁰ Chaplin focuses on a the generically dominant texts of Meyer's *Twilight* and Alan Ball's televised interpretation of Harris's 'Sookie Stackhouse', *True Blood* as purveyors of power, sacrifice and cultural simulations. Other recent investigations of modern vampires continue to consider the undead in terms of areas such as gender and postcolonialism which, while illuminating, do not give a wide enough understanding of how vampire literature, leading where other media such as film and television follow, has diversified to reflect increasingly unstable cultural dynamics within the global hegemon of America: Susan Chaplin, *The Postmillennial Vampire: Power, Sacrifice and Simulation in True Blood, Twilight and Other Contemporary Narratives* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2017), p. 2; see also, Julia M. Wright, *Men with Stakes: Masculinity and the Gothic in US Television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); *Transnational and Postcolonial Vampires: Dark Blood*, ed. by Tabish Khair and Johan Höglund (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013)

egalitarianism, shown at its most toxic in the disquiet of enduring racial antagonisms.¹¹ The texts scrutinized as examples of the vampire Monsters sub-genre are: Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan's *The Strain* trilogy (2009-2011) in chapter one, and Justin Cronin's *The Passage* trilogy (2010-2016) in chapter two. Representatives for examination in the vampire Dreams section are: Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series (2005-2008) in chapter three, and Charlaine Harris's 'Sookie Stackhouse' (also known as the 'Southern Vampire Mysteries') series (2001-2013) in chapter four. For the final section, texts investigated as Discords are: Andrew J. Fox's *Fat White Vampire Blues* (2003) in chapter five, and Octavia Butler's *Fledgling* (2005) in chapter six.

The source of influence for the three nouns – Monsters, Dreams, and Discords – that capture the principal characteristics of each of these newly identified sub-genres needs acknowledgement: Alfred, Lord Tennyson's 'In Memoriam, A.H.H.' (1849). A nineteenth-century elegiacal response to the death of his friend Arthur Henry Hallam, Tennyson's 'In Memoriam' serves to keep his friend in a state akin to the vampiric – simultaneously alive and dead in poetic form. Tennyson's 'In Memoriam' has affected an inspiration for this thesis that started with the line of verse, 'Nature, red in tooth and claw', speaking of an essential violence within the

¹¹ The American Dream originates in Walter Lippmann's *Drift and Mastery: An Attempt to Diagnose the Current Unrest* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, [1961] 2015). First published in 1914, Lippmann's *Drift and Mastery* suggests that 'there are a thousand terrors which arise out of the unorganized and unstable economic system under which we live' and that 'There are those who cannot conceive of a nation not driven by fear', the product of which prompts 'dreaming and servile races'. Lippmann's American Dream is, therefore, a form of nightmarish hesitation that blinds growth, imagination, and will with 'the haunting horror of constructed evils': Lippmann ([1961] 2015) pp. 138, 139; also, see the transcript of 'Civil Rights Act (1964)', <<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=97&page=transcript>> [accessed 9 September 2016]; In her proposition that 'the postmillennial vampire [...] cannot be understood solely as a "scapegoat"', Susan Chaplin conforms to the notion that modern vampires cannot be easily pigeonholed: Chaplin (2017), p. 2; While not part of this project, for further examples of the diversity of American vampire narratives available in the early twenty-first century, see the contrasting between the monstrous vampire feeding frenzy of *30 Days of Night* (Steve Niles, Ben Templesmith et al, 2002), a discordant questioning of violent viscerality in series such as Charlie Huston's 'Joe Pitt' (2005-2009), and the teenage dreams and YA emotive machinations in P. C. and Kristin Cast's 'House of Night' (2005-2014). In *30 Days of Night*, Niles and his fellow Nosferatu cause devastation to the isolated community of Barrow, Alaska under cover of a month of darkness; Huston's 'Joe Pitt' series concerns the vampire loner and private detective Pitt's often violent interactions with various vampire clans occupying Manhattan Island, New York; and P. C. and Kristin Cast's, 'House of Night' series revolves around Zoey Redbird as she goes through the romanticized processes of adapting to teenage life as a vampire, based in an undead boarding school in Tulsa, Oklahoma

wider environment in which humanity exists, and of an understanding that fragile civilized cultural conditions are permanently unstable.¹² Tennyson's 'In Memoriam', although not a vampire narrative, shares the temporo-cultural influences of nineteenth-century Britain that spawned the modern western vampire genre, the American branch of which is established as a co-determinant for understanding the literary texts investigated here. The lines, 'A monster then, a dream, / A discord. Dragons of the prime', have been recruited as a shorthand understanding of how the vampire genre has, in America, evolved into three sub-generic typologies, as well as to caption a link between the origin-figure of modern U.S. vampirism, the Hungarian immigrant actor Bela Lugosi's cinematic portrayal of Stoker's Dracula in Tod Browning's 1931 Universal Studios film of the same name: as Raymond McNally and Radu Florescu point out, 'Dracula [has] a diminutive meaning "son of the dragon"', and America is, at present, the modern global superpower or 'prime'.¹³

¹² Tennyson, ed. by Day ([1991] 2003), LVI.15, p. 166

¹³ Tennyson's lyric elegy, dedicated to his close friend Arthur Henry Hallam (d. 1833), tells of an emotive journey from despair to a new hope, mirroring many vampire narratives in its exploratory musing on themes including death, grief, nature, time, cruelty, and love. Tennyson reflects a mid-nineteenth century cultural disparity within the British Empire, his narrative purgation addressing fears and attempting to find an alignment between God and Nature (or faith, as opposed to religion), and science, where they rupture assumed knowns, and destabilize cultural patterning: Tennyson, ed. by Day ([1991] 2003), LVI.21-22, p. 166; Raymond T. McNally and Radu Florescu, *In search of Dracula: the History of Dracula and Vampires Completely Revised* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1994), pp. 8-9; The Universal Studios film of *Dracula* was based on a stage adaptation by Hamilton Deane and John L. Balderston, in which Lugosi also starred prior to being directed by Tod Browning: for further discussion, see David J. Skal, *Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web of Dracula from Novel to Stage to Screen* (London and New York: Faber and Faber, [1990] 2004); Bram Stoker's *Dracula* has been the subject of much debate and adaptation since its initial publication on 26 May, 1897. Alongside the 1931 Universal Studios *Dracula*, directed by Browning, American cinematic engagement includes films such as *Abbott and Costello meet Frankenstein* (1948), *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992), and *Dracula Untold* (2014); G. John Ikenberry's suggestion that modern America as a global superpower is 'unipolar' in its lack of political empathy, with no distinct or equivalent counter, positions that U.S. as a potentially dictatorial empire. He goes on to quote the British labour politician Harold Laski's summary of the then 'looming American empire in 1947': 'America bestrides the world like a colossus; neither Rome at the height of its power nor Great Britain in the period of economic supremacy enjoyed an influence so direct, so profound, or so pervasive'. Perceptions of America as a 'neoconservative' empire, a 'liberal force that promotes democracy and undercuts tyranny, terrorism, military aggression, and weapons proliferation', is also seen as the unconstrained power (at its most virulent in the almost carte blanche license to intimidate global citizens seen in the Patriot Act) of an oppressive global dominant for those peoples and places not in accord with its ethos. As Ikenberry argues, 'Power is often muted or disguised, but when it is exposed and perceived as domination, it inevitably invites response [...]. Critics who identify an emerging American empire, meanwhile, worry about its [...] corrosive effect

Having identified vampires as amorphous cultural constants that feed on prevailing fears and power dynamics within a modern America that G. John Ikenberry identifies as hegemonic 'producer of world order', and the works of vampire fiction to be examined as models of the newly distinguished three sub-types into which the U.S. genre has evolved, this introduction outlines the theoretical approach adopted in this thesis, defines the three generic sub-types, summarizes the early millennial fears and powerplays that act as cultural catalysts for undead fiction, and presents an overview of generic history.¹⁴ Always in flux, modern America (and through its current position as globally-influential dominant, much of the planet) has been destabilized by the cultural ripples emanating from the terroristic attacks of 11 September 2001, which instigated comprehension of vulnerabilities within this superpower and, through it, a heightening of anxieties. Put simply, an underlying fear of the potential loss of global political-martial-cultural dominion underpins post-2001 works of American vampire fiction as the most recent additions to a genre that has always incorporated the psychological supremacy of fears and powerplays within given cultural contexts.¹⁵ This interpretation of the dialogic narratives of American culture and its vampire fiction draws on a cultural materialist approach to investigate vampires as signifiers of fear and power dynamics – vampire fiction may be a fantastic medium, but its roots lie in contemporary cultural structures and interactions spanning from between America and the wider global community

on democracy, and the [global] threat it poses': G. John Ikenberry, 'Illusions of Empire: Defining', *Foreign Affairs* (2004), <<https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/154-general/25685.html?tmpl=component&page=>> [18 May 2018]

¹⁴ G. John Ikenberry, 'Power and Liberal Order: America's Postwar World Order in Transition', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 5 (2005), 133–152, p. 133

¹⁵ The Gulf War, events of 9/11, and ongoing hostilities with 'terrorists' can be seen to continue the cultural disquiet raised by the Vietnam War. Spanning from the 1940s to the 1970s, the Vietnam War is argued by Craig Lockard as a 'battleground for two generations', with U.S. soldiers 'placed in an impossible position [...] by the misguided policies of officials in both the executive branch of government and the Pentagon'. The arguments that 'the use of external threats [...] promote internal stability' alongside acting to aid 'a missionary-type "evangelism" to reshape the world in America's image' continue to resonate in the protracted ongoing antagonisms between the U.S. and 'the Middle East' (beginning with the Gulf War in 1990) that undermine cultural confidence and, in turn, influence authors such as Cronin (see chapter two) who incorporates martial overcompensation for perceived inadequacies within the apocalyptic narrative of his *The Passage* trilogy: Craig A. Lockard, 'Meeting Yesterday Head-on: The Vietnam War in Vietnamese, American, and World History', *Journal of World History*, 5, 2 (1994), 227-270, pp. 229, 242, 243

to between individuals. This thesis incorporates psychodynamic theory as a means of understanding subjective narratives within vampire fiction as mediations determined by contemporary cultural patterning rooted in anxieties and instabilities as well as intra-generic interrogation, alongside drawing on psychologically-based models such as hypervigilance, trauma, and race psychological theories as well as Freud's *Uncanny* and Jung's *Dreams* as discursive aids.¹⁶ It also draws on post-structuralism as a tool for investigating vampires as signifiers of both context and a questioning of generic ancestry.¹⁷ A bricolage calling on theorists including Auerbach, Marx, and Baudrillard is used to examine how modern undead narratives relate to theories of fear and power as part of a defiance – rather than disavowal – of cultural binaries, instead spanning a spectrum from a reinforcing to interrogation of environment.

The modern American fiction examined here is open-ended in its interpretation of the roles and interactions of its vampires. Narratives that might, at first appraisal, appear as binaries such as good versus bad, vampires versus humans, or external versus homegrown are argued as carriers of more nuanced deconstructions of American culture. Consequently, through focusing on a selection of modern American vampire fiction, this thesis demonstrates that there is no universal vampire (this palimpsestic plurality evidenced from the ur-text of *Dracula*, each commentary on or iteration of which emphasizes what most speaks of contemporary time and place). America's vampires, even those who appear as interloping aggressors such as del Toro and Hogan's Master (see chapter one) or Meyer's Volturi (discussed in chapter three), are symbolic of America's internal cultural subjectivities, hyper-real simulations of prevailing fears and power dynamics: for example, vampires such as those discussed in chapter two are created as a functional means for development of invincible soldiers but, instead

¹⁶ Where psychodynamic theory recognizes the effects of childhood experience as causative of manifestations of unconscious leakage, this thesis draws on psychodynamics to inform leakages of prevailing fear and powerplays in modern vampire literature: see 'Psychodynamic Approach', <<https://simplypsychology.org/psychodynamic.html>> [accessed on 15 February 2018]

¹⁷ Holtz Deal (2007), p.194

of reinforcing the political-martial status of modern America, Cronin's exploitation of death-row criminals as laboratory subjects brings about its collapse.

In his consideration of the mutability of cultural materialism at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Alun Munslow's suggestion that history 'cannot escape its authorship [...] the past is not just re-interpreted according to new evidence but also through self-conscious acts of re-writing' implies an understanding of 'history' not as a structurally objective truth but consisting of continuous subjective narrative interpretations (thus, as already suggested, informed by post-structuralist understanding).¹⁸ With an assumption made here that historical documentary includes commentaries considered fiction, vampire narratives are shown as steered by 're-writing' of contemporary subjectivities. Vampire fiction specific to time and place offers invaluable idiosyncratic negotiations of contemporary cultural concerns. As a fantastic sub-set of what might be considered as human 'reality' – their 'existence' governed by, rather than opposed to, context – vampires advance no absolutes. They are at once part of history(ies) as well as presents (and, in some instances, of speculative futures). Through investigating the vampire-human as well as intra-vampiric dynamics within the fictional domains of twenty-first century American vampire novels, it is possible to understand how and what they tell us of prevailing fears and power dynamics.

As Gothic dominants, America's vampires conform to the esoteric expectations that have always been a part of undead fiction: although undeniably supernatural beings, vampires are as much super-*cultural* beings, their undead identities and the narrative spaces they inhabit fashioned by and adapting to spatio-temporally encoded fears as these beings act as rhetorical conduits for reflecting and refracting contextual concerns through speculative re-structuring. Evidencing a Foucauldian undermining of the fallacious 'notion of a transcendental self', vampiric contextual mutability is indicative of a 'scepticism concerning the existence of a universal, permanent, ahistorical stand-point' – there are no cultural constants, with change an essential part of human (and vampire)

¹⁸ Alun Munslow, 'What History Is', *History in Focus*, 2 (2001) <<http://www.history.ac.uk/ihr/Focus/Whatishistory/munslow6.html>> [accessed 5 July 2016]

continuity.¹⁹ As Gothic scholar Ken Gelder makes clear, ‘Vampires are both textual and extra-textual creatures [...] they are “in” culture’.²⁰ So, as cultural constructs, vampires are forever imminent entities, always adapting to generational concerns.

Central to this thesis, ‘culture’ is taken to mean a system of symbols or series of stories, by which a nation’s people define who and what they are, here with a specific focus on elements of twenty-first century American culture that offer material manifestations of dominant fear(s) and power dynamics.²¹ This is informed by Raymond Williams’ definition of culture as:

a theory of relations between elements in a whole way of life [...] material, intellectual and spiritual [...] a record of [...] important and continuing reactions to [...] changes in our social, economic and political life [...] seen, in itself, as a special kind of map by means of which the nature of the changes can be explored.²²

Culture, as a ‘record of’ all that exists within a time and place is thus understood here as adhering to what, in the late nineteenth century, the founder of cultural anthropology, Edward Burnett Tylor, identifies as an evolutionary process involving ‘Progress[ion], degradation, survival, revival, [and] modification’ that is part of a ‘complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by [humans...],’ part of a ‘study of [...] human thought and action’.²³ As was mooted at the start of this

¹⁹ Christopher Falzon, *Foucault and Social Dialogue Beyond Fragmentation* (New York and London: Routledge, 1998), p. 1

²⁰ Gelder discusses some of the more popular forms of vampire fiction, from nineteenth century literary works such as John Polidori’s *The Vampyre* and J. Sheridan Le Fanu’s ‘Carmilla’ through to works of the twentieth century by authors including Anne Rice and Stephen King: Ken Gelder, *Reading the Vampire* (London and New York: Routledge, [1994] 2001), p. x; See Anne Rice, ‘The Vampire Chronicles’ series (1976-2016) and Stephen King, ‘*Salem’s Lot* (1975)

²¹ As Audrey and Brian Smedley assert, ‘culture is [something] external, acquired, and transmissible to others’: Audrey Smedley and Brian D. Smedley, ‘Race as Biology Is Fiction, Racism as a Social Problem Is Real: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives on the Social Construction of Race’, *American Psychologist*, 60, 1 (2005), 16-26, p. 17

²² Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1967), pp. viii, xvi, xvii

²³ Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art, and Custom Vol.1* (London: John Murray, 1871), <https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=AucLAAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover&dq=e+b+tylor+primitive+culture&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjRg_Ho3aDQAhXplMAKHV07BikQ6AEIGzAA#v=onepage&q&f=false> [accessed 9 November 2016] (pp. 16, 1)

introduction, vampires are subject to this 'complex [cultural] whole', reflecting of and on generational fear and power dominants. The vampire fiction examined in this thesis reflects on the contemporaneous through narratives of the fantastic that follow Tzvetan Todorov's understanding:

In a world which is indeed our world, the [...] fantastic occupies the duration of [...] uncertainty [...] There is an uncanny phenomenon which we can explain in two fashions, by types of natural causes and supernatural causes. The possibility of a hesitation between the two creates the fantastic effect.²⁴

Consequently, the 'our world' that informs vampire fiction incorporates past, present and potential futures in narratives of the uncanny that conform to the origin source of Freud's definition:

the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar [...] something should be frightening precisely because it is unknown and unfamiliar [...] the term 'uncanny' (*unheimlich*) applies to everything that was intended to remain secret, hidden away, and has come out into the open.²⁵

The ambiguity that is a defining feature of Freudian uncanniness – the unfamiliar within the familiar – is, as touched on above, central to this discussion. The capacity of vampire narratives to mutate and reflect upon the concerns of each generation takes these near-human creatures beyond being populist thrills, showing them to be inimitable fantastic indicators of shifts in cultural dynamics.

With undead creatures speaking of a culture's deepest fears and power struggles, it is, as Auerbach indicates towards the end of the twentieth century in *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, their 'wonderful [...] versatility' that makes vampires unique among fantastic beings, although, as extensions of human cultures, consciousnesses, and experiences, Auerbach's identification of the interpretive role(s) of vampire narratives might be more appositely considered when inverted: 'Ourselves, Our Vampires'.²⁶ Try to define undead creatures and it quickly becomes apparent that they defy ready understanding: not all haematophages,

²⁴ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard (Cleveland and London: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973), pp. 25-26

²⁵ Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock (London and New York: Penguin, 2003), pp. 124-125, 132

²⁶ Auerbach (1995), p. 5

there are those who, for example, subsist on psychic energy, pizza, or ingest nothing; not all white aristocratic males, undead ranks include cows, ducks, obese, youthful, intellectual, mindless, savage, suave, loving, communal, and loners.²⁷ The cultural reflexivity of vampire fiction positions undead as creatures ‘who can take on the allegorical weight of changing times and collective psyches’ and, with all taking part in a fictional survival of the fittest, other Gothic beings such as zombies and werewolves fall short of offering comparable levels of versatility, and are obliged to follow where vampires lead: as Ken Gelder states in *Reading the Vampire*, vampires are leading Gothic entities, taking ‘many different forms’ and saying ‘many different things’.²⁸ Just as a Rorschach inkblot might be anything from a bat to a butterfly, vampires are shadowy forms onto which each culture and generation projects spectrums of fears and authorities.

Each individual work discussed here is not only a product of contemporary U.S. cultural collectivity but also carries forward a palimpsestic understanding of the nation’s most influential generic precursors. To borrow from Cronin’s acknowledgement of these generic dominants, all vampire narratives bear the influences of their antecedents: in discussing his creation of *The Passage*, Cronin hyperbolizes that he ‘was working with [...] every vampire story ever written’.²⁹

²⁷ For examples of modern vampire variety in literature and film, see: cows – *The Little Vampire*, dir. by Uli Edel (Aurora Media et al, 2000); ducks – *Count Duckula* dir. by Chris Randall and Keith Scoble (Cosgrove Hall Films, 1988-1993); obesity – Adam Rex, *Fat Vampire: a Never Coming of Age Story* (New York: Balzer + Bray, [2010] 2011); youthful-looking – John Ajvide Lindqvist, *Let the Right One In*, trans. by Ebba Segerberg (London: Quercus, [2007] 2009); intellectuals – Suzy McKee Charnas, *The Vampire Tapestry* (New York: Orb Books, [1980] 1992); psychic vampires – Colin Wilson, *The Mind Parasites* (Rhinebeck, NY: Monkfish, [1980] 1992); mindless / savage – *30 Days of Night*, dir. by David Slade (Ghost House Pictures/Columbia Pictures Industries, 2007) ; suave – Tom Holland, *The Vampyre: The secret History of Lord Byron* (London: Abacus, [1995] 2007); loving – Michelle Rowen, *Lady and the Vamp* (New York and Boston: Forever, 2008); communal – P.C. and Kristin Cast, ‘House of Night’ series (2007 – 2014); loners, pizza eaters, non-eaters – Charlie Huston, ‘Joe Pitt’ series (London: Orbit, 2005-2009)

²⁸ Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger, ‘Introduction: The Shape of Vampires’, in *Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*, ed. by Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), p. 4; Gelder ([1994] 2001), p. ix; Auerbach’s and Skal’s suggestion in their annotation of Stoker’s *Dracula* that ‘Werewolves and vampires are often allied in Romanian folklore. They are natural as well as linguistic kin—both are hybrids, prone to nocturnal transformation into animals – but Dracula, with nineteenth-century faith in his own supremacy, treats wolves merely as his *servants*’: my emphasis, Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. 14

²⁹ ‘*The Passage*: Q & A with Justin Cronin’, <<http://enterthepassage.com/the-passage-q-a-with-justin-cronin/>> [accessed on 3 January 2013]

Because of this metafictionality, it is essential to any understanding of contemporary vampire fiction to incorporate its interplay with earlier narratives. Although vampires were recognized and written about before John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819) introduced novel readers to the aristocratic charisma of the undead Lord Ruthven in the early nineteenth century, from its publication onwards vampires have been 'go to' Gothic fictional creatures of choice, always parasitical presences 'where power is' which, from the early twentieth century, has been the global superpower of America.³⁰ But the cementing of vampires as preeminent Gothic beings, and arguably the most significant influence on successors, comes at the end of the nineteenth century in the form of Bram Stoker's *Count Dracula*. Courtesy of early twentieth-century theatrical and cinematic adaptations of Stoker's *Dracula*, vampires follow the socio-political shift of power across the Atlantic from the heart of the waning British Empire to America as waxing global superpower. Since Lugosi's *Dracula* flapped his way onto cinema screens in 1931 (courtesy of a rubber bat stand-in), American imaginations have often turned to vampires as representatives of antagonistic energies in need of defeat (if only temporarily).³¹ Discussion will return to the influential form of

³⁰ Auerbach (1995), p. 6; Katharina M. Wilson suggests that the term 'vampire' was known in Britain from the seventeenth century, well over a century before John Polidori published *The Vampyre* in 1819, stating, 'in 1688, the term [vampire] must have been fairly well known, because [Charles] Forman, in his *Observations on the Revolution in 1688*, written in the same year and published in 1741, used the term in a footnote metaphorically without attaching any explanation to it [...] "the Vampires of the Publick, and Riflers of the Kingdom."': Katharina M. Wilson, 'The History of the Word "Vampire"', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 46, 4 (1985), 577-583, pp. 580-581; For further discussion of pre-Polidori folkloric vampires, who primarily preyed on family members and neighbouring households, see Dom Augustin Calmet's *Dissertations sur les apparitions des anges, des demons & des esprits, et sur les revenans et vampires de Hongrie, de Boheme, de Moravie & de Silesie* (1746). As Marie-Hélène Huet states of Calmet's undead, they can 'never claim to be living, and we always know them for what they are [...] excommunicated souls, vampires, or as the more generic revenants [...] Calmet suggests they belong to a recognizable group, the damned', acting as 'possessed agents of a greater evil that has robbed them of their individual identity': Marie-Hélène Huet, 'Deadly Fears: Dom Augustin Calmet's Vampires and the Rule Over Death', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 21, 2 (1997), 222-231, p. 229

³¹ While vampires such as del Toro and Hogan's Master or Cronin's Zero, discussed in chapters one and two, follow the antagonistic lead of Lugosi's *Dracula*, their characterizations dominated by a narrative need for a 'baddie', American vampire fictions such as those discussed in the Dreams section below, portray their undead as closer to what might be perceived as (often romanticized) protagonists, with negatives such as their bloodthirsty inclinations, downplayed: see also novels such as Stephen King's *Salem's Lot* (1975), McKee Charnas's *The Vampire Tapestry* (1980), and George R. R. Martin's *Fevre Dream* (1982) that can be seen as contributing to the understanding of diversification in American vampire fiction over the twentieth century

Dracula, and Lugosi's portrayal of Stoker's vampire as root of America's undead genre not only here, but also in each chapter although, for now, keep in mind the image of Lugosi's distinct portrayal of an Eastern European aristocrat in high-collared cape and evening dress, pale skin contrasting with dark slicked-back hair, and consider how it continues to be a reference point for American vampire fiction several decades after first frightening film-goers (as well as being pastiched every Halloween by myriad children demanding candy with menaces across the U.S.).³²

Having identified a generic evolutionary diversification, this thesis extends understanding of American vampire literary fiction by addressing the need for its critical investigation through examining its engagement of a culture which, over the years since 2001, has been dominated by rippling fears overshadowed by the culturally causative terroristic events known as 9/11, whether directly or indirectly. Monty G. Marshall submits:

[the] subject of 'terrorism' seized the world's attention in late 2001 as a result of one fairly brief, yet highly dramatic and destructive, attack on two of the core symbols of the world's most powerful political actor, the United States of America. The targeting of the World Trade Center in New York City, the symbol of the United States' enormous global economic power, and the Pentagon Building in Washington, DC, the symbol of the United States' overarching military superiority [...] The attack itself attained symbolic stature as an affront to the established global order, a challenge to the world's dominant power.³³

In *Risk: The Science and Politics of Fear*, Daniel Gardner follows Marshall's understanding of 9/11 as a symbolic 'affront' to modern global hegemonic structuring in his proposition that 9/11 is a globally influential 'communal experience' that has taken America from being a nation that was assumed to be 'safe and prosperous' to one at the centre of 'an unreal, frightening time' with 'terrorism [...] the *bête noire* of our age' rather than what, for Americans, are more prosaic risks such as diabetes, obesity, or influenza: as Gardner goes on to state,

³² Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), pp. 23-24; As the most influential of myriad palimpsestic revisions of Stoker's text, Lugosi's Dracula sets both actor and character on a conflated path to popular infamy. For further discussion, see David J. Skal's *Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web of Dracula from Novel to Stage to Screen*, which sites Lugosi's Dracula as 'a lightning rod for prevailing social anxieties': Skal ([1990] 2004), p. 195

³³ Monty G. Marshall, 'Global Terrorism: An Overview and Analysis', *Center for Systemic Peace Occasional Paper*, 3 (2002), 2-47, p. 2

these are 'not new or darkly glamorous' (which is where vampires come into the equation).³⁴ Vampire fiction published subsequent to 9/11 patterns challenges to America as 'the world's dominant power' that often stem from the moment when America's assumed invulnerability was destabilized by terroristic targeting of symbols of the country's defence and leading position in international trade (the Pentagon and World Trade Centre, respectively).³⁵ In his contemplation of the cultural effects of these terroristic events, Baudrillard suggests the collapse of the twin towers of the World Trade Centre as representative of the capitalist 'power bearing these towers suddenly los[ing] all energy, all resilience; as though the arrogant power suddenly gave way under [...] the effort always to be the unique world model.'³⁶ The attacks perpetrated on 11th September 2001 have evoked what seems to be a form of cultural PTSD, the subsequent forms of mass anxiety melding with an already malleable vampirism to infect the undead variants that form the building blocks of this thesis.³⁷ As one form of parasitism assimilating the ethos of another, American vampires and their narratives have assimilated their context to track the U.S.'s global hegemonic trajectory, flourishing within this social dynamic as carriers of psycho-historical context. Thus, the cultural surge in fears and instabilities within the U.S. cultural psyche after 9/11, including the speciously oxymoronic ordinance of President George W. Bush's 'War on Terror', has nurtured a tension that has, in turn, fed into a diversification of U.S. vampire

³⁴ Gardner's proposal that fear 'is a fantastic marketing tool' resonates with reasoning behind the popularity of vampire fiction: Daniel Gardner, *Risk: The Science and Politics of Fear* (London: Virgin Books, [2008] 2009), pp. 1, 2, 3, 14, 15; Howard Stein suggests that the 9/11 terrorist attacks on U.S. targets 'resulted in a sense of violation and humiliation' that 'in turn triggered a "crisis cult"(going to war)': Howard F. Stein, 'Days of Awe: September 11, 2001 and its Cultural Psychodynamics', *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society*, 8, 2 (2003), 187-199, p. 187

³⁵ Monty G. Marshall (2002), p.2

³⁶ Jean Baudrillard, 'Requiem for the Twin Towers' in *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, trans. by Chris Turner (London, New York: Verso, [2002] 2003), p. 44

³⁷ For discussion of the levels of PTSD recorded amongst those directly affected by the events of 9/11, see Heidi Resnick, Sandro Galea, Dean Kilpatrick, David Vlahov, 'Research on Trauma and PTSD in the Aftermath of 9/11', *PTSD Research Quarterly*, 15, 1 (2004), <<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/newsletters/research-quarterly/V15N1.pdf>> [accessed 13 April 2018]

fiction – fears and the undermining of power made numinous, with imagined terrors displaying the potential to overpower realities.³⁸

Despite Americans being ‘the healthiest, wealthiest, and longest-lived people in history’, since the terrorist events of 9/11, Gardner argues in *Risk* that U.S. citizens have become ‘increasingly afraid’ of imagined terrors more so than real threats, such as motor vehicle fatalities or obesity-related diseases.³⁹ In this environment, this ‘culture of fear’, Monty Marshall argues a definition of ‘acts of terrorism’ as ‘unconventional (extralegal or non-rational) applications of violent or coercive behavior’ that, in turn, stimulate a flourishing of U.S. vampire fiction, its undead agents for a confrontation of contemporary ‘extralegal or non-rational’ violence and coercion.⁴⁰ This is executed from the three pathways briefly identified above: one, by overt confrontation of a fear of attacks on home land (from both external and internal sources) and concomitant personal, cultural, and political devastations; two, by displaying attempts to resist fears by presenting false happinesses and hopes bound up in unattainable materialistic ‘American Dreams’; and three, by dissonant narratives of fears and inequalities associated with uncomfortable pre-existing internal cultural antagonisms (here focusing on what is arguably America’s prime source of internal destabilization – racial hostilities and disparities), that continue to dominate within U.S. Borders.⁴¹ Before moving

³⁸ Although too soon to fully identify and comment on the potential for national destabilization that may arise from the presidency of Donald J. Trump, it is a curiously noteworthy coincidence that the texts scrutinized here sit between the externally-generated terrors of 9/11/2001 and the potential of internally-generated terrors beginning on 11/9/2016. These dates – 9/11 and 11/9 – may yet be seen to form mirrored bookends for an early twenty-first century divergence in American vampire fiction, with 9/11 being the moment when U.S. home soil was violated by acts of terror perpetrated by external antagonists and 11/9 the point where, for many citizens, terror moves beyond the metaphorical and becomes wholly culturally generated with Trump as President. Immediately after the announcement of Trump as forty-fifth president elect, protests and riots occurred in cities across America including Portland, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, and San Francisco, as well as outside the Trump Towers of Chicago and New York: ‘Trump presidency: Protests turn violent in Portland, Oregon’, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-us-2016-37946231>> [accessed 11 November 2016]

³⁹ Gardner ([2008] 2009), p. 11

⁴⁰ Marshall (2002), p. 3

⁴¹ Gardner ([2008] 2009), p. 15; Social segregation laws were state enforced under the umbrella of ‘Jim Crow’ laws, named after ‘a black character in minstrel shows’ of the nineteenth century. They included segregation on public transport, in restaurants, educational and medical facilities, housing, and bans on interracial marriage: ‘Jim Crow Laws’, <https://www.nps.gov/malu/learn/education/jim_crow_laws.htm> [accessed 9 September 2016]; As of 2014, Americans in poverty numbered forty-seven million, or fifteen percent of the

on to deliberate the nature and influence of early millennial fears and the power dynamics that are a part of them alongside outlining the historical influences on the vampire texts identified above as exemplars of the three sub-generic typologies that make up contemporary American vampire fiction, discussion now turns to defining more fully the three sub-genres of vampire Monsters, Dreams, and Discords that have, to paraphrase Tennyson, changed the framework of undead fiction.

‘they went and came, / Remade the blood and changed the frame’: The Three-headed Dragon of Modern American Vampire Fiction⁴²

The early twenty-first century vampire personae and narratives discussed here are, as touched on above, readable as mutable and plural, made of Barthesian mythological ‘yielding [...] associations’ and ‘unstable, nebulous condensation[s]’ of what is both culturally marginal and central.⁴³ Where other Gothic creatures, often subjectively generalized as monsters, remain part of conservative narratives in which they are manifested only to reinforce a (mythical) socio-political status quo through their destruction, the undead investigated here in section one often prompt doubt and questioning about the dynamic between human(s) and monster(s). Otherness to humanity often attributed to vampires is blurred as polarities such as good and evil or right and wrong are part of story arcs set in uchronic Americas, prompting consideration of ‘what ifs’ potentialities.

The ‘what ifs’ investigated in section one begin with the noun ‘monster’. Deriving from the Latin *‘monstrum’*, as a supernatural omen or portent, something abominable, it implies something beyond a perceived norm, dreaded as morally or physically deviant. Also deriving from *‘monere’*, works of monstrous vampire fiction can be understood as tools of demonstration, with undead as purveyors of apocalypse positioning them as sites of blame for cultural fears that are less

population, but the figure rises to twenty-six percent among African Americans, showing the continuing presence of racial inequality: see ‘Poverty Facts The Population of Poverty USA’, <<http://www.povertyusa.org/the-state-of-poverty/poverty-facts/>> [accessed 28 June 2016]

⁴² Tennyson, ‘Epilogue’, ed. by Day ([1991] 2003), ll.10-11, p. 220

⁴³ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. by Annette Lavers (London: Vintage [1957] 2000), p. 119

disturbing to confront when placed just beyond the known, just beyond *human*. Monstrosity, as Judith Halberstam suggests, 'is historically conditioned rather than a psychological *universal*', adapting to respond to prevailing generational fears.⁴⁴ Here, novels identified as conforming to the vampire Monsters sub-generic paradigm directly confront fears centred on terroristic acts through apocalyptic narratives that, coming after the 9/11 attacks on homeland targets, play on placing America in the vanguard of global near-destructions of humanity, displaying an nationalistic arrogance that might be boiled down to an almost childish urge to maintain dominance even if as sources for global destructions of humanity. These vampires evidence Ervin Staub's definition of evil as 'part of a broadly shared human cultural heritage' essentially concerned with 'the destruction of human beings', which 'includes not only killing but the creation of conditions that materially or psychologically destroy or diminish people's dignity, happiness, and capacity to fulfill [sic] basic material needs.'⁴⁵ Bringing with them apocalyptic degradations that strip away the materiality governing modern U.S. human culture, with all known social structures drastically undermined to the point of ruin, these vampire Monsters narratives also present a final hint that, even once apparently overcome, should lessons *not* be learnt, terrors will return.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ As Halberstam goes on to state, 'The body that scares and appals changes over time, as do the individual characteristics that add up to monstrosity': My emphasis, Judith Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham and London: Duke University Press [1995] 2000), pp. 7, 8

⁴⁵ Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil: The Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 25

⁴⁶ The early twenty-first century Gothic landscape in American fiction is necessarily influenced by post-9/11 cultural pervasive anxieties, mirroring wider concerns that all forms of border are no longer viable, and home / homeland no longer places of refuge. Narratives based around permeability, lack of safety, uncertainty and apocalypse govern Gothic / horror fiction. Films and television series ranging from the biblically-inspired *Legion* (2010) to the unheimlich Netflix series, *The Haunting of Hill House* (2018) and novels such as Stephen King's *Cell* (2006) feature plots that centre round questioning, prejudices, terror(ist) threats, technophobia, martial law, the destruction of American culture and an undermining of its superpower status through mass infection. Vampires, as the most recognizable of Gothic creatures despite their infinite diversity, disparate narratives and typologies, encompass the post-9/11 anxieties that have coloured wider Gothic fiction. Alongside the novels discussed here, early twenty-first century U.S. vampire films and television tackle the uncanniness underlying early twenty-first century American culture, ranging from fear and prejudice to widespread indiscriminate devastation in films including *Ultraviolet* (2006) and *Priest* (2011) alongside cross-over tales like the comic book-come-film *30 Days of Night* (2007): *Legion*, dir. by Scott Stewart (Screen Gems et al, 2010); *The Haunting of Hill House*, dir. by Mike Flanagan (Amblin Television et al, 2018); Stephen King, *Cell* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, [2006] 2007); *Ultraviolet*, dir. by Kurt Wimmer (Screen Gems, Ultravi Productions,

While it is tempting to see those vampire Monsters discussed here as autonomously culpable creatures, actioning death and apocalypse, they do so as (partially unwitting) agents for the intentions of others, as reminders that locating monstrosity is a point of subjectivity. The grand narratives of Monster-based storylines examined in section one are governed by apocalypse as an instantaneous form of human devastation, but del Toro and Hogan's vampire antagonist, the Master, is an intermediary expression of a fallen archangel's blood, wreaking God's vengeance on humanity for a secularization that this deity foresees and chooses to punish rather than forestall. Evelyn Oliver and James Lewis suggest of angels:

[they] are the traditional intermediary spiritual beings between god [sic] and humanity [...] defined by their function of message-bearer [...] Originating in Zoroastrianism, they are [...] found in the Western family of religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – where God is conceived as being so elevated he does not intervene directly in the world.⁴⁷

In contrast with del Toro and Hogan's deific foundation, Cronin's vampires stem from a martially sanctioned genetic-engineering project that, in an exploitation of 'defective' human source material (death-row convicts) alongside a young girl abandoned by her mother, unleashes the very U.S. collapse that this genetic manipulation – or human playing of God – is meant to avert. And so, the death and destruction wrought by vampire Monsters can be recognized as a cultural metaphor for a projection of culpabilities beyond the vampiric.

In chapter one, del Toro and Hogan's trilogy is examined for its locating of an America targeted as the origin point of a global 'punishment' by an agent of God. The Master, formed from the blood of archangel Ozryel (the angel of death), is the bringer of a biblical 'plague' that routs 'civilization in a coup d'état of astonishing virulence and violence', but also allows for the survival of a few brave and resourceful humans in a post-apocalyptic, post-nuclear new Eden, again located in the U.S.⁴⁸ In contrast with the divine punishment of del Toro and Hogan's

2006); *Priest*, dir. by Scott Stewart (Screen Gems et al, 2011); *30 Days of Night*, dir. by David Slade (Ghost House /Columbia, 2007)

⁴⁷ Evelyn Dorothy Oliver and James R. Lewis, *Angels A to Z*, 2nd edn (Detroit: Visible Ink, 2008), p. xiv

⁴⁸ Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan, *The Night Eternal* (London: Harper Collins, 2011), p. 11

biblical-style reckoning, in chapter two, Cronin's vampire apocalypse is a human-made disaster, brought on by the machinations of America's military attempt to create super-soldiers: part of what Chalmers Johnson describes as 'a military juggernaut intent on world domination.'⁴⁹ Instead of an intended reinforcing of America's global position of authority, Cronin's vampiric 'experiments' escape, killing or turning most of the country's citizens, leaving a few pockets of survivors in a quarantined U.S., their plight reduced to an historical case study. Although some vampires such as those to be examined in the Dreams section below offer (false) hope of all that is available to a select super-humanity within this superpower, section one demonstrates how vampire Monsters point to a potential for rapid cultural collapse that is the unspoken fear residing at the heart of America's global hegemony.

Vampire Dreams present an apparent impetus to assimilate superhuman qualities into a nation that, as the dominant within an increasingly unstable global environment, needs bolstering with – albeit fictional and fantastic – aspirational aids: the American Dream, encouraging desire and striving for such things as individual power, wealth, and beauty, is personified by the unattainability of vampire forms. Momentarily turning to desire, in this thesis, discussion of it is as part of the fear spectrum – as a part of what is longed for (mostly) as a fantasy – conforming to what Jerrold E. Hogle considers as an indistinctness between fear and desire, where 'each cultural position seems capable of blurring into its opposite'.⁵⁰ Hogle's abstracted discussion of a continuum of 'longings and fears', his suggestion of permeable boundaries, of what is and is not part of a culture, echoes in this thesis' understanding of vampires as a part of yet apart from humanity, with reconsideration of assumed binaries within modern vampire fiction opening up to the possibility that vampires, at least sometimes, may be positioned 'on the side of right'. Fears become embroiled in longings and sympathies for vampires as perverse instruments of morality, with some such as

⁴⁹ Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004), p. 4

⁵⁰ Jerrold E. Hogle, 'Introduction: The Gothic in Western Culture', in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. by Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 5

Butler's vampire protagonist Shori and Meyer's Carlisle Cullen displaying consciences, concerns, and compromises within their supernatural forms.⁵¹ Narratives corresponding to the vampire Dreams sub-genre show attempted resistance to fears and domination, avoiding the terror-related problematics present in monstrous vampirism's metaphor for national ruination. Instead, undead Dreams display romanticized and unrealistic aspirations, evidencing hollow happinesses bound up in materialism. Little links these vampires to their folkloric origins as they are adapted to the ideological beliefs that lie at the heart of the American Dream. In *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea*, Jim Cullen (no relation to Meyer's vampire family of the same name, but an uncanny coincidence!) proposes that ambiguity 'is the very source of [the American Dream's] power [...] beyond an abstract possibility, there is no *one* American Dream' just as there is no *one* vampire, both changing with each generation but retaining a degree of familiarity.⁵² Subsequently, in 'a fearful world, [where] Americans have no choice but to live *with* fear if not *in* it', merging manifold vampiric attributes with the American Dream allows for an undermining, if not neutralizing, of threats more overtly present in vampire Monsters' narratives, affecting an unachievable fantastic form of reassurance for early millennials.⁵³

Investigation in section two focuses on an endeavoured occlusion of monstrosity, facilitating both covert and overt undead assimilation into twenty-first century American culture as fantastic signifiers of a romanticization of America epitomized in its Dreams. These representatives of outward civilized solidarity and strength reflect an American twenty-first century cultural imperative for a show of post-

⁵¹ Hogle (2002), p. 6

⁵² Jim Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, [2003] 2004), p. 7

⁵³ Samuel P. Huntington, *Who are we? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), p. 337; With the American Dream central to national identity – neutralizing this 'dream' is tantamount to neutralizing national identity, potentially leaving U.S. global dominance vulnerable not only to ideological questioning of the *internal* effects of Capitalist assumptions such as continuing upward trajectory of prosperity and power being open to all according to ability and effort but also of the *global* martial-political-cultural reputation that keeps them as superpower.

9/11 unity and security.⁵⁴ Meyer's and Harris's series – the subjects of chapters three and four, respectively – invite reader sympathy for their vampire protagonists, despite containing elements of undead monstrosity. The two chapters in this section investigate what vampire Dreams suggest about an America in which vampires are (sometimes) accepted, admired, and even lusted after. As suggested above, and further discussed below, the character of Dracula is a guiding influence on the generic assimilation of romanticized vampires. As J. Gordon Melton reports in relation to Lugosi's portrayal, 'with 97 percent of his fan mail coming from women [Lugosi] responded by suggesting that generations of subjection had given women a masochistic interest'.⁵⁵ Thus, the romanticizing of potential killers opens the genre to instabilities created by a telescoping of fear and desire.

Meyer's *Twilight* and Harris's 'Sookie Stackhouse' series both have first-person (human) female narrators whose relationships with their vampire love interests position the undead *alongside* more so than *beyond* U.S. citizens. However, the fantastic nature of these figures also reinforces the findings of Sandra L. Hanson and John Zogby's survey 'Attitudes About the American Dream', where results show 'remarkable consistency between 1997 and 2007 in the public's belief that hard work offers little guarantee of success.'⁵⁶ The prosperity of these vampires comes from supernatural manipulation, so narratives featuring vampires who appear privileged underscore the notion that the American Dream is itself a fantasy, despite what Hanson and Zogby conclude is a continuing 'resistance' among U.S. citizens to question its validity and thereby repudiate aspirational

⁵⁴ When posed the question, 'Compared to 10 years ago, do you think it is harder or easier for Americans today to achieve the American Dream?', percentage responses from 1,821 Americans over eighteen years of age overwhelmingly suggested that those surveyed considered it much harder. The results were: Harder, 79.8%; Easier 5.5%; The Same, 11.9%; Don't Know, 2.8%: *Analysis Report: New American Dream Survey 2014* for the Center for a New American Dream, <https://newdream.s3.amazonaws.com/19/fe/3/3867/NewDream_Poll2014_Results.pdf> [accessed 15 October 2015]

⁵⁵ J. Gordon Melton, *The Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia of the Undead* (Detroit, London: Visible Ink Press, 1999), p. 435

⁵⁶ Sandra L. Hanson and John Zogby, 'Attitudes About the American Dream', *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, 74, 3 (2010), 570-584, p. 574

hope.⁵⁷ Thus, vampire Dreams promote fantasy scenarios that, in opposition to the apocalyptic narratives that provide uneasy human triumphs in the Monsters section, enlarge the scope and understanding of this genre by presenting its vampires as participatory citizens carrying the capacity of immortal perfection for select 'lucky' humans.⁵⁸

In section three, vampire Discords further expand ambiguities raised in Monsters and Dreams, signifying contextual ambivalences within narratives that give voice to specifically vampire-based perspectives, with intra-vampiric hostilities, fears, and vulnerabilities forming fantastic mimeses of contemporary (human) culture. Where narratives in the Dreams section are still dominated by vampire-human exchanges, those conforming to a discordant framework of generic and cultural questioning demonstrate hostilities between vampires. Prejudices and antagonisms that stain the illusory image of America as 'the land of the free and the home of the brave' are discordantly rung out through narratives that show vampire-on-vampire viciousness.⁵⁹

In chapters five and six, vampire Discords not conforming to perceived norms are situated as hate targets. Narratives fitting the remit of vampire Discords offer fantastic peeks behind the curtain of U.S. culture in a sub-genre that engages with animosities inherent in societal disconnects, with vampires shown not as monsters or romanticized undead, but fallible and humanized beings that bridge the 'them and us' divide through their assimilation of human attributes (this is presented as a literal assimilation in the case of Butler's *Fledgling* – discussed in chapter six – with the protagonist vampire, Shori Matthews, genetically engineered using human DNA like an undead test tube baby, which inverts Cronin's monstrous vampires, created through the introduction of viral matter

⁵⁷ Hanson and Zogby's survey's conclusions suggest that '[a]lthough trends in public opinion show continued support for the American Dream, there is [sic] an increasing number of Americans who are less optimistic about chances for most Americans to achieve this Dream': Hanson and Zogby (2010), pp. 581, 582

⁵⁸ Desirability of vampires such as Meyer's and Harris's correlate with the perpetually unachievable nature of the American Dream, with the supernatural making ever more evident the unlikelihood of reaching this 'dream' idealized state.

⁵⁹ Francis Scott Key, *The Star Spangled Banner*, (1814), <<http://www.usa-flag-site.org/song-lyrics/star-spangled-banner.shtml>> [accessed 10 November 2014] (1.8)

into humans). More so than either Monsters or Dreams, Discords play with generic and cultural assumptions, their vampire protagonists questioning tropes and traits in both from positions of liminality.

Vampire Discords continue a downscaling from the overarching grand narratives of vampire Monsters to the localized storylines seen in Dreams. Those vampires discussed in this section also have greater narrative authority, they are no longer predominantly subjects of *human* gaze, assumption, or opinion, instead descriptions, attitudes, and judgements are part of commentaries that come from a perspective that acknowledges their individualized differences. The incorporation of human attributes, with Fox's protagonist Jules Duchon's dogging by racial antagonism is also thematically paramount in the narrative arc of Butler's Shori, a literal hybrid whose vampire form is, as already mentioned, spliced with African American human DNA in an attempt to overcome vampiric photosensitivity.⁶⁰ Thus, the vampire novels examined in this section, while not generically *atypical*, are *untypical*, incorporating fantastic attributes, for example, from vampire Monsters in the aggressive self-interests of the antagonists of both Fox's *Fat White Vampire Blues* and Butler's *Fledgling*. Neither the bringers of apocalyptic horrors nor sparkling purveyors of American Dreams, this section arguably houses some of the more unique interpretations within the American vampire genre at the beginning of the twenty-first century, with tensions raised illustrative of prevailing internal threats to cultural unity within the United States.

With an emphasis on race and (vampiric) normativity, the novels in this last section examine animosities based on differences less to humans and more to those vampires who consider themselves closer to perceived undead ideals or authorities. In his discussion of race relations in America from the colonial aberrations of slave trading to the present day, Howard Zinn summarizes, '[t]here

⁶⁰ 'In 2011-2012, the prevalence of obesity in the United States was [...] 34.9% in adults': Cynthia L. Ogden, Margaret D. Carroll, Brian K. Kit, Katherine M. Flegal, 'Prevalence of Childhood and Adult Obesity in the United States, 2011-2012', *JAMA: the Journal of the American Medical Association*, 311, 8 (2014), 806-814; For further information and statistics, see the CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, <<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/index.html>> [accessed 27 June 2015]

is not a country in world history in which racism has been more important, for so long a time, as the United States. And the problem [...] is still with us'.⁶¹ Unlike Monster narratives, Fox and Butler do not present readers with human-vampire / win-lose scenarios, instead Discords are part of a generic highlighting of hypocrisies and inconsistencies within contemporary culture, supernatural representatives of fears as well as aspirations, bigotry alongside liberalism in a generation of ambiguities. At this point, it is worth clarifying that this thesis' understanding of 'race' diverges from it as a biological difference, instead understanding it is as a culturally constructed conflation with ethnicity and thus part of a disquieting ideological means of 'reinforcing a social order that treats racial inequality as legitimate and inevitable.'⁶² As Audrey Smedley and Brian Smedley suggest, 'modern ideology of race' continues to contain a portrayal of 'the social reality of permanent inequality as something that [is] natural'.⁶³ The vampire genre housing creatures that are part of, but apart from, modern American culture, interrogates such inequality and oppression and associated ongoing divisiveness within American culture, their positioning as fantastic creatures negating the ideological stance that inequality is somehow 'natural'. These vampire Discords, in mimicking cultural animosities, test specious assumptions and categorizations, based on arbitrary physical differences within the texts examined here. Consequently, the texts in each of this thesis' three sections all contain narratives that offer insights into the fantastic cyanide seeds of fear and power dynamics lacing the shorthand symbolic 'wholesomeness' of America's 'apple pie' self-image. As Lourdes Fritts suggests, the 'phrase "as American as apple pie" describes something or someone [perceived as...] archetypically American', and is symptomatic of a nation which has, from the outset, fabricated an image of benevolence and liberation despite being built on

⁶¹ Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States 1492 – Present, 3rd Edn* (London and New York: Routledge, [1980] 2013), p. 23

⁶² Andreasen suggests, 'Most constructivists assume that biological realism and social constructivism are incompatible views about race' and goes on to argue that 'the two conceptions can be compatible': Robin O. Andreasen, 'Race: Biological Reality or Social Construct?', *Proceedings of the 1998 Biennial Meetings of the Philosophy of Science Association. Part II: Symposia Papers, Philosophy of Science*, 67 (2000), 653-666, pp. 655, 653

⁶³ Smedley and Smedley (2005), p. 20

foundations of exploitation and cruelty.⁶⁴ Kimberley Kohatsu expands on this as she signposts that ‘apple pie as the quintessential American product may be an apt metaphor after all – it was brought here from foreign shores, was influenced by other cultures and immigration patterns, and spread throughout the world by global affairs’.⁶⁵ And so, with the undead and their narratives ‘*complicit[ous]* with power and domination’, they both critique *and* contribute to the inescapable admixture of early millennial fiction and history: history may not always be written by the victors, but it is written from a position of subjectivity and therefore, like fiction, is designed with a purpose or story to tell.⁶⁶

As this outline of its diversifications suggests, twenty-first century American vampire fiction, as a generic dominant, presents a need for investigation, but criticism of twenty-first century vampire fiction has, so far, shown itself to be somewhat disparate, with focus on parts rather than a broader understanding. Discussion has tended towards considering specifics within the ever-changing vampire genre: for example, see Joseph Crawford’s *The Twilight of the Gothic? Vampire Fiction and the Rise of Paranormal Romance 1991-2012* (2014), which addresses vampire romances – dominated in recent years by Meyer’s *Twilight* series (discussed here in chapter three) – interestingly identifying academic ‘levels of hostility’ that exist in relation to this area of fiction.⁶⁷ No acknowledgement has yet been made of the diversification into distinct sub-generic forms within the American vampire genre identified and discussed in this thesis, instead passing

⁶⁴ Lourdes Fritts, ‘As American As Apple Pie?’, <<http://japansociology.com/2015/01/18/as-american-as-apple-pie/>> [accessed 27 November 2015]

⁶⁵ Kimberley Kohatsu, ‘Why are We “As American As Apple Pie”?’, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/Menuism/why-are-we-as-american-as_b_6227462.html> [accessed 27 November 2015]; Nicholas Ferroni, ‘There Is Nothing More American Than Apple Pie, Right?’, <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nicholas-ferroni/as-american-as-apple-pie_b_2369851.html> [accessed 27 November 2015]

⁶⁶ Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London and New York: Routledge, [1989] 1995), pp. 4, 5

⁶⁷ Joseph Crawford, *The Twilight of the Gothic? Vampire Fiction and the Rise of Paranormal Romance 1991-2012* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2014); Crawford also separately discusses terror as a Gothic trope in *Gothic Fiction and the Invention of Terrorism: the Politics and Aesthetics of Fear in the Age of the Reign of Terror* (London and New York: Bloomsbury 2013); For an introduction to vampire romance (and pun-laden titles), see Tate Hallaway’s ‘Garnet Lacey’ series (2006-2010), with novels including *Tall, Dark and Dead* (2006) and *Dead Sexy* (2007), alongside Katie MacAlister’s ‘The Dark Ones’ series (2003-2013), including *A Girl’s Guide to Vampires* (2003) and *Sex, Lies, and Vampires* (2005)

commentary such as Stephen King's disparaging desire to 'give back the teeth that the current "sweetie-vamp" craze has [...] stolen from bloodsuckers' wrongly suggests that American vampires have lost their bite as diverse and culturally informative entities.⁶⁸ As Charles L. Crow proposes in his broader analysis of American Gothic literature, it 'offers essential insights into the history and culture of the United States', and the vampire narratives examined here approach and appropriate U.S. culture in this ethnographic sense, as fantastic 'insights' into unfixed shared and learned experiences within America's human arena.⁶⁹ This thesis' situating of popular works such as Meyer's *Twilight* series against relatively unexplored novels, such as Fox's *Fat White Vampire Blues* presents a broader understanding of how early twenty-first century American vampire fiction responds to specific fear-based cultural stimuli, alongside their engagement with dominant texts within the generic continuum.⁷⁰ Before briefly focusing on the generic history that informs the texts examined here, discussion turns to a brief consideration of fear and power as narrative drivers, and how their inextricability means the former's existence is reliant on the latter.

⁶⁸ Stephen King, 'Suck on This', in Scott Snyder, Raphael Albuquerque and Stephen King, *American Vampire* (New York: DC Comics, 2010), n.p.; Stephen King specifically denigrates Stephenie Meyer's writing ability (her *Twilight* series is discussed in chapter three below) in a *Guardian* interview with Alison Flood, where he states, 'Meyer can't write worth a darn. She's not very good', but goes on to identify a point of appeal for Meyer's predominantly YA readership as 'a shorthand for all the feelings that they're not ready to deal with yet': Alison Flood, 'Twilight author Stephenie Meyer 'can't write worth a darn', says Stephen King', *The Guardian*, 5 February 2009, <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/feb/05/stephenking-fiction>> [accessed 15 December 2015]

⁶⁹ Charles L. Crow, 'Preface', in *A Companion to American Gothic*, ed. by Charles L. Crow (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2014), p. xvii; For a concise discussion of American Gothic, see Eric Savoy, who proposes, 'the figures it generate[s] are emphatically *neither* conventional nor convenient [...] American Gothic is, first and foremost, an innovative and experimental literature'. As such, it shares strong genetic cousin status with the adaptable and investigational spirit of the American vampire genre: Eric Savoy, 'The rise of American Gothic', ed. by Hogle (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 167-188, p. 168

⁷⁰ For just a fraction of the last few decade's insightful and diverse critical responses to vampire fiction, see *Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*, ed. by Gordon and Hollinger (1997); McNally and Florescu (1994); Skal ([1990] 2004); and critical essays including Christopher Craft's "'Kiss Me with Those Red Lips": Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*', Stephen D. Arata's 'The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization', and Talia Schaffer's "'A Wilde Desire Took Me": The Homoerotic History of *Dracula*' in Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997)

‘truth embodied in a tale’: Vampires, Fear and Power⁷¹

As has already been argued, vampire fiction ebbs and flows with the gravitational pull of contextual fears and power dynamics which have, for America in the long opening decade of the twenty-first century, been dominated by the rippling cultural causation of the events of 9/11. The immediate fear of the unknown when terrorists targeted mainland America, with the real-time coverage of passenger jets crashing into New York’s World Trade Centre (popularly known as the Twin Towers), initially prompted shock and disbelief.⁷² After an early focus on and sympathy for victims came an over-compensational imperative towards ideological empowerment through patriotism among many citizens, with the violent targeting of anyone appearing to be ‘Muslim’ in vigilante attacks undermining a semblance of national unity in its furthering of prevailing internal racial inequalities and antagonisms.⁷³ 9/11 also proved a motivation for the knee-jerk instigation of the USA PATRIOT [sic] Act (hereafter referred to as the Patriot Act): a piece of Congressional legislation signed into law by President George W. Bush within six weeks of 9/11 that authorizes such measures as the indefinite detention of anyone considered a terrorist threat to the U.S. Security Services’ access to individuals’ electronic correspondence and any business records.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Tennyson, ed. by Day ([1991] 2003), XXXVI.7, p. 154

⁷² See Ken Booth and Tim Dunne, *Terror in Our Time* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012); Susan Faludi, *The Terror Dream: Myth and Misogyny in an Insecure America* (New York: Picador, 2007); Jeffrey Melnick, *9/11 Culture* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2009); Marc Redfield, *The Rhetoric of Terror Reflections on 9/11 and the War on Terror* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009)

⁷³ See Jane I. Smith’s identification of an ambivalence towards America’s Muslim community which, in its propensity towards sweeping generalities, captures continuing unconscious WASP-ish social hegemony: ‘The reality of the destruction of 9/11, a defining moment in United States history, has bought major changes both within the Muslim community and in the consciousness and response of the American public. Americans have become aware not only of what they perceive as a growing threat of Islam internationally, but of the reality that Muslims in their own country are their doctors, their scientists, their garage attendants and their children’s teachers’: Jane I. Smith, ‘Islam in America’, in *Muslims in the West After 9/11: Religion, Politics and Law*, ed. by Jocelyne Cesari (London and New York: Routledge, 2010)

⁷⁴ See *Uniting and Strengthening of America by Providing Appropriate Tools required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism* (USA PATRIOT ACT) of 2001 Public Law 107-56 107th Congress, <<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-107hr3162enr/pdf/BILLS-107hr3162enr.pdf>> [accessed 10 April 2012]; In July 2015, the then Republican presidential candidate Donald J. Trump displayed ongoing nationalistic antagonism bordering on xenophobia, ‘calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country’s representatives can figure out what is going on’. Since becoming the forty-fifth president in January 2017, Trump has been

Vampire fiction mostly presents its undead as transgressive creatures, reflecting power dynamics in which fear dominates, as Auerbach proposes, ‘no fear is *only* personal it must steep itself in [...] political and ideological ambience, without which our solitary terrors have no contagious resonance.’⁷⁵ In the fictional narratives discussed here, transgressions involving behaviours such as invasion and coercion place vampires as ranging from carriers of catastrophic threats to American dominion, such as Cronin’s source of contagion ‘the Zero’, to characters whose relations are more insidious or discursive, such as Fox’s vampire antagonist Malice X. Acting out corruptions of power within their own semiotic spaces – as victims as well as villains – the narrative centrality of vampires places them as loci of power-resistance frameworks, whether it is vampire versus human or vampire versus vampire. This idea of power as a corrupting force is far from new, with Lord Acton’s statement in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton (sent in 1887) presenting a sceptical logic that has since become a mainstay of vilifications of those in positions of authority: ‘[p]ower tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely’.⁷⁶ In all three sections of this thesis, vampire power dynamics go hand-in-hand with corruption: vampire Monsters’ (almost) absolute power positions them as corrupt in themselves, corrupting of humans, and of the spaces they inhabit; vampire Dreams’ corruption lies in the power of their attraction of humans as well as representation of unrealistic aspirations; and vampire Discords

thwarted in his attempts to introduce what is considered by many as an unworkable executive order – Executive Order: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States – proposing that ‘The United States cannot, and should not, admit those who do not support the Constitution, or those who would place violent ideologies over American law’: Jeremy Diamond, ‘Donald Trump: Ban all Muslim Travel to U.S.’, <<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/07/politics/donald-trump-muslim-ban-immigration/index.html>> [accessed 15 December 2015]; *Executive Order: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States* (27 January, 2017), <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/27/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states>> [accessed 24 April 2017]; See also Richard Hofstadter, *Trump and the Politics of Paranoia*, BBC Radio 4, 25 January, 2016, 20.00, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06ybnzg>> [accessed 26 January 2016]; Barbara Plett Usher, ‘Trump travel ban: Diplomats register dissent’, BBC News, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-38778261>> [accessed 30 January 2017]

⁷⁵ Auerbach (1995), p. 3

⁷⁶ John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, First Baron Acton, *Historical Essays and Studies*, ed. by John Neville Figgis and Reginald Vere Laurence (London: Macmillan and Co., 1907), <<https://archive.org/stream/a544621300actouoft#page/n519/mode/2up>> [accessed 10 September 2015] (p. 504)

show powers associated with vampirism – such as immortality, strength, speed, and mesmeric influence – as part of intra-vampiric predator/prey tensions.⁷⁷ In line with Auerbach's critical appraisal of the relationship between vampires and Anglo-American culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the vampire fiction discussed here affords a means of understanding prevailing cultural influences, with their differences marking them as pertinent fantastic indicators of frictions within contemporary American culture.⁷⁸

As Slavoj Žižek suggests in his discussion of the 'phantasmic scene' in *The Plague of Fantasies*, far from *opposing* 'reality', fantasy *supports* cultural narratives so that, even in liminality or apparent opposition, vampires tacitly uphold American cultural ideologies and power structures.⁷⁹ However, as the narratives examined in section three show, Žižek's argument that fantasy ultimately maintains or endorses prevailing ideology does not suggest it to be absolute: in 'obfuscat[ing] the true horror of a situation', vampire Discords act as tools for the confrontation of corruption within forms of power.⁸⁰ Louis Althusser, in his discussion 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', suggests that ideology (and those power dynamics housed within) has 'no history of its own', vampire fiction operates as one fictional construct engaging with another, its undead the products of 'the imaginary transposition and distortion of [people's] real conditions'.⁸¹ Continuing this understanding of power as a state of permanent tension, with history prone to distorted responses in both fiction and reality, Michel Foucault argues in 'Power and Strategies', 'there are no relations of power without resistances', and through its vampire narratives, the power relations that dominate all levels of interactions

⁷⁷ The modelling of vampire Monster' as the (almost) possessors of absolute power is a reminder that monster narratives carry within a necessary reassuring potential for defeating the source(s) of fear

⁷⁸ See Auerbach's proposal that vampires 'may look marginal, feeding on human history from some limbo of their own, but [that...] they have always been central': Auerbach (1995), p. 1

⁷⁹ Slavoj Žižek, *The Plague of Fantasies* (London, New York: Verso, [1997] 2008), p. 21

⁸⁰ Žižek ([1997] 2008), p. 5

⁸¹ Louis Althusser, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an Investigation)' in *Mapping Ideology*, ed. by Slavoj Žižek (London and New York: Verso, 1994), pp. 122, 124

within early twenty-first century American culture are opened up to scrutiny here.⁸²

At the forefront of this scrutinizing of power relations are, as already alluded to, the short-lived events of the 9/11 terrorist attacks on mainland America and their enduring cultural after-effects.⁸³ There have been realist fictional interpretations of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, such as Oliver Stone's 2006 film, *World Trade Center* and Michael Moore's 2004 documentary film *Fahrenheit 9/11*. Alongside this, has even been the psychological respite of comedic treatments such as the directors Jon Hurwitz and Hayden Schlossberg's 2008 film *Harold and Kumar Escape from Guantanamo Bay*. Novels such as Don DeLillo's *Falling Man* (2007) and David Halberstam's *Firehouse* (2002), and even graphic novels such as Art Spiegelman's *In the Shadow of No Towers* (2004), reference events surrounding the collapse of the World Trade Center in New York.⁸⁴ Unlike these realist fictional negotiations of this national wound, vampire fiction incorporates undercurrents of repression into the fantastic, from a grand scale need to assert martial dominance to an individualistic need to overcome prejudicial 'bullying', advancing a means of re-visiting trauma less as a specific causal reaction than as a mediating agency for undead characterizations.⁸⁵ Appropriating contemporary fears such as (terroristic) invasion, disaster, and dissent into its power dynamics, contemporary American

⁸² Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972 – 1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 142

⁸³ For example, see the listed critique of xenophobic misunderstanding in 'History of Hate: Crimes Against Sikhs Since 9/11', <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/08/07/history-of-hate-crimes-against-sikhs-since-911_n_1751841.html> [accessed 27 November 2015]

⁸⁴ See also Roger B. Henkle, 'The Social Dynamics of Comedy', *The Sewanee Review*, 90, 2 (1982), 200-216

⁸⁵ Gert Buelens et al. suggest that 'Trauma theory' is both medicalized and politicized term that interprets 'survivor narratives, responses to persecution and prejudice' / 'the concept of trauma is neither fully material or somatic, nor simply psychic, nor fully cultural or easily located in its appropriative or disruptive relation to the symbolic order, nor simply historic or structural, but a point at which all these currents meet. It is precisely because it is a point of intersection, of turbulence, that "trauma" is such a powerful force.' As they go on to also propose of trauma theory within the humanities, it is 'the impulse that underlies deconstruction [...] enacts and responds to trauma'. However, they highlight the difficulty of utilizing 'trauma theory' as a methodological approach, suggesting that 'is perhaps less a field or a methodology than a coming together of concerns and disciplines [...] drawing on literaru and cultural studies, history, politics, sociology, psychology and philosophy': *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*, ed. by Gert Buelens, Sam Durrant and Robert Eaglestone (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1, 2, 3

vampire fiction creates a state of hesitation that distances the realist horrors confronted by the likes of Stone's and Moore's films as well as the individualized effects of 9/11 approached by novels such as DeLillo's, allowing for a cathartic (temporary) confrontation and casting off of concomitant fears through fantasy.⁸⁶ Early millennial vampires symbolize a drilling down into a post-traumatic cultural psyche, often through minimal direct allusion to historical events, presenting fears and desires, consumption and exploitation through distanced fantasy scenarios.

While not always horrifying and despite being unthreatening to realities, in keeping with what Julia Kristeva proposes in *Powers of Horror*, the hyperbolic excesses of vampire narratives are 'far from being minor' parts of culture, instead they represent 'the ultimate coding of our crises, our most intimate [fears] and most serious apocalypses', confronting 'power-seeking ideologies', and exaggerating realities to lay bare potential 'unwillingness to have [...] face-to-face confrontation[s]'.⁸⁷ What cannot always be confronted in reality, may be addressed by vampire fiction, its recognized near-humans providing potential 'confrontations' of powerful aggressors and feared scenarios. Borrowing from Stoker's *Dracula*, vampire fiction sits 'in the midst of [...] humanity [...] shar[ing] its life, its change, its death', coding the cultural reality of which they are an acknowledged part.⁸⁸ Fears that might overwhelm when faced in reality can be confronted through vampire personae and the measured thrills of their narratives. No matter how many times they are staked, beheaded, or burnt, they return like perverse prodigals to provide a fantastic insight into dominant cultural concerns and inform popular and critical fascination.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ See Todorov's chapter 'definition of the fantastic': Todorov, trans. by Howard ([1973] 1975), pp. 24-40

⁸⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, [1980] 1982), pp. 208, 209

⁸⁸ Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. 26

⁸⁹ Alongside film and televised adaptations of del Toro and Hogan's *The Strain*, Meyer's *Twilight*, and Harris's 'Sookie Stackhouse' series (HBO's *True Blood*), recent vampiric offerings include *The Vampire Diaries* (novels by L. J. Smith; television series produced by Julie Plec, Kevin Williamson et al) and the spin off television series *The Originals*; the television series *Van Helsing* (with Kelly Overton as Vanessa Helsing, a descendant of Stoker's Abraham Van Helsing); Laurell K. Hamilton continuing 'Anita Blake' series of novels; and Gerry Bartlett's 'Glory St. Claire' series of novels, beginning with *Real Vampires Have Curves* (2007)

Vampiric reproduction of psycho-emotive fears rather than specific events in recognizable yet uchronic presents conforms to the Marxist assumption that ‘phantoms formed in the human brain are [...] sublimates of their material life-process’, expressing contextual concerns by both telling of and expelling what Rosemary Jackson describes as ‘disturbing element[s]’ within cultural orders: as Jackson goes on to propose, the ‘introduction of the “unreal” is set against the category of the “real” – a category which the fantastic interrogates by its difference.’⁹⁰ The ‘real’ for post-millennial America is, as already suggested, dominated by the 9/11 attacks on U.S. homeland, which mark a moment of cultural transformation, with the nation made aware, through co-ordinated terrorist operations, of its vulnerability to hostile ingressive forces: according to Sonia Baelo-Allué, ‘[a]s a mediated event it was traumatic in a symbolic way, not so much for the actual damage it caused but for what it represented.’⁹¹ What happens on September 11, 2001 abruptly ends assumptions of the U.S. as emblematic of freedom and invincibility as home cedes to the unhomely symbols of this freedom, aeroplanes, hijacked and used as weapons.⁹²

The World Trade Center and the Pentagon (as already mentioned, familiar symbols of America’s financial and military authority) became focal sites for traumatic association, instantly defamiliarized at the point of their attack. As Baelo-Allué states, cultural trauma inflicted by the attacks of that day served to create ‘a wound on group consciousness as a whole’.⁹³ The unhealed traumatic lacerations of 9/11 will forever be at once part and not part of Americans’ known world, the undermining of U.S. global hegemony and the circulating of anxiety understood via mediated accounts seen on television, in newspapers, on the

⁹⁰ Karl Marx, ‘First Premises of Materialist Method’, in *The German Ideology*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_The_German_Ideology.pdf> [accessed 6 July 2016]; Jackson ([1981] 2001) (pp. 3, 5)

⁹¹ Sonia Baelo-Allué, ‘9/11 and the Psychic Trauma Novel: Don DeLillo’s *Falling Man*’, *ATLANTIS Journal of the Spanish Association of Anglo-American Studies*, 34, 1 (2012), 63-79, p. 65

⁹² Although 9/11 looms large as an act of terror that changes American assumptions of freedom from aggressors, in line with the vampire Discords section of this project which presents a link with internal cultural inconsistencies, Gardner makes plain that ‘the September 11 attacks [...] killed less than one-fifth the number of Americans murdered every year by ordinary criminals’: Gardner ([2008] 2009), p. 14

⁹³ Baelo-Allué (2012), 63-79, p. 64

internet, in films, or print, all bleeding into the fantastic vent of vampire fiction. U.S. centric vampire narratives have taken flight (insert bat pun here!) in the opening years of this new century, extending vampire narratives as counter-realist speculative articulations of early millennial cultural nightmares, aspirations, and reproaches. Science and technology-based fears and tensions, ranging from the terror of biological and chemical weapons (see the Bush administration's paranoia about 'Weapons of Mass Destruction' used to justify an invasion of Iraq in 2003) to social inequalities surrounding genetic engineering sit alongside devastating terroristic acts as cultural determinants for the opening long decade of the twenty-first century.⁹⁴ Although, as has been briefly touched on, interpretation of the powerplay of fears in the long opening decade of the twenty-first century cannot be considered as exclusive to vampire narratives, their diversity serves as an ideal medium for signifying trauma. But, it must be remembered that America's vampire fiction exists as part of a generic continuum that has become a cultural shorthand for our darkneses. As such, a brief consideration of the fictional ancestry that informs the twenty-first century texts to be discussed here, with specific focus on the three most prominent narratives of the twentieth century, namely Browning's cinematic translation of Stoker's *Dracula*, Matheson's *I Am Legend*, and Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, is essential to understanding how and why they have become such distinct cultural mirrors.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ In the Chilcot Report (July 2016), Tony Blair (British Prime Minister 1997-2007) was positioned as endorsing President George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq in 2003: 'If we recapitulate all the WMD evidence; add his [Saddam Hussein's] attempts to secure nuclear capability; and, as seems possible, add an Al Qaida link, it will be hugely persuasive here'. Despite a lack of evidence that WMD's existed, Blair went on to espouse a somewhat homogenizing agenda in further correspondence: 'our fundamental goal is to spread our values of freedom, democracy, tolerance and the rule of law, but we need a broad based agenda capable of unifying the world, to get it. That's why, though Iraq's WMD is the immediate justification for action, ridding Iraq of Saddam is the real prize': 'Chilcot report: What Blair said to Bush in memos', <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-36722312>> [accessed 6 July 2016]; for examples of textual links to genetic-engineering, see the biologist Lee Silver's *Remaking Eden*, a discussion of a hypothetical future where the 'GenRich' are genetically modified to suit desires – such as for athletic, scientific, or musical prowess – and, through this, superior to 'Naturals', or non-modified humans, or films like Andrew Niccol's *Gattaca* (1997), which follows the same genetically-modified versus non-modified social structuring as yet another form of 'them and us': Lee M. Silver, 'Prologue: A Glimpse of Things to Come', *Remaking Eden: How Genetic Engineering and Cloning Will Transform the American Family* (New York: Avon Books, [1997] 1998), pp. 1-16

⁹⁵ The choice of two out of these three novels is one that the Horror Writers' Association parallels, with Matheson's *I Am Legend* voted by the HWA in association with the Bram Stoker Family Estate

‘A hollow echo [...] A hollow form’: A Brief History of America’s Pivotal Vampires⁹⁶

As ‘hollow forms’, vampires are, to return to Auerbach, fantastic interfaces with historical change, ‘hollow echoes’ of human fears and powerplays.⁹⁷ In response to contextual fears, America’s vampire fiction has always drawn on familiarities of generic predecessors. Briefly mapping the historical mutability of vampires and their narratives in modern Western culture, it becomes evident that each new vampiric incarnation operates as an accretive entity, rendering it virtually impossible to divorce vampires not only from immediate contexts but also from generic heritage. Thus, America’s undead have assumed a cultural position as ‘utterly betwixt and between anomal[ies]’, assimilated into popular culture as perpetually adaptable entities.⁹⁸ As we can only know the past by what remains of it and, as Linda Hutcheon surmises, it is ‘the conjunction of the present and the past that [...] makes us question [...] both how we make and make sense of [modern] culture’, vampiric ‘history’ presents a series of fictionalized spaces in which processes and effects act as stimuli for the diversification of vampire personae brought forth into fictionalized modern semiotic arenas.⁹⁹

Although American vampire fiction begins in earnest in the 1930s with Browning’s *Dracula*, the history of what is recognized as the modern vampire genre is rooted in eighteenth-century Europe. Since French Benedictine monk Dom Augustin

and the Rosenbach Museum and Library as ‘Vampire Novel of the Century’: ‘Vampire Novel of the Century Award’, <<http://horror.org/2011-bram-stoker-award-winners-and-vampire-novel-of-the-century-award-winner>> [accessed 6 April 2015]; According to Stacey Abbott, this was tantamount to ‘effectively declaring Matheson’s work as [...] the most significant [...] vampire novel to be published in the century since the publication of Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*’: Stacey Abbott, *Undead Apocalypse: Vampires and Zombies in the Twenty-first Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 9

⁹⁶ Tennyson, ed. by Day ([1991] 2003), III.11-12, p. 133

⁹⁷ See Auerbach (1995), pp. 1-10; For an historical insight into the embedding of vampires into modern Western culture, see Markman Ellis’s chapter ‘Vampires, credulity and reason’ in which he states, ‘The vampire has a perverse modernity: a terror of recent invention manifested as a monster from time out of mind, from deep history’: Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), pp. 161-204

⁹⁸ Jerrold E. Hogle, ‘Stoker’s Counterfeit Gothic: *Dracula* and Theatricality at the Dawn of Simulation’, in *Bram Stoker History, Psychoanalysis and the Gothic*, ed. by William Hughes and Andrew Smith (Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press, 1998), p. 206

⁹⁹ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, [1988] 2004), p. 230

Calmet's *Dissertations sur les apparitions des anges, des demons & des esprits, et sur les revenans et vampires de Hongrie, de Boheme, de Moravie & de Silesie* (*Dissertations on the appearances of angels, demons & spirits, and on the revenants and vampires of Hungary, Bohemia, Moravia & Silesia*, 1746) somewhat unintentionally caught popular imagination, there has been a sustained interest in vampiric figures. Calmet's vampires are not nuanced or sophisticated undead but folkloric archetypes feared as corrupting or contaminatory revenants who return from the grave, unkempt, smelling of decay, or bloated.¹⁰⁰ Although, for modern American audiences, these descriptors are more readily connected with zombified beings, earlier folkloric revenants are said to return to their families or communities and prey on those known to them during life.¹⁰¹ Some vampiric revenants were even known to drain cows of their milk – a very real concern for those depending on cattle for sustenance or livelihoods.¹⁰² Despite being on a more intimate scale than the apocalyptic narratives to be investigated in section one, Calmet's revenants are communally and financially damaging entities. These folkloric vampires are also frequently associated with outbreaks of disease, and

¹⁰⁰ See Dom Augustin Calmet, *The Phantom World or, The philosophy of spirits, apparitions, &c, &c*, ed. by Henry Christmas (2009), <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/29412/29412-h/29412-h.htm>> [accessed 28 April 2011]; For further reference, see Summers ([1928] 1929); Melton (1999); Kevin Jackson, *Bite: A Vampire Handbook* (London: Portobello Books, 2009)

¹⁰¹ For those interested in the socio-anthropology of vampires, Simon Mays, a human skeletal biologist leading research for Historic England, discusses the discovery – in Wharram Percy, Yorkshire – of evidence that medieval corpses were mutilated to prevent them rising from their graves, with signs of the dismemberment of bones, knife marks and burning of 'nuisance corpses' (or the 'corpses of people who projected strong ill-will towards their fellow human beings in life'). He places this practice, through radio carbon-dating of remains, to 'a period of time for about the two hundred years after the Norman Conquests [...] from about 1066 to 1300', with churchmen and lay-people believing it 'rooted in folklore' and 'close to the vampire beliefs in Eastern Europe', where corpses were understood to 'rise from the grave of their own volition': John Humphrys' interview of Simon Mays, *Today*, BBC Radio 4, 3 April 2017, 06.00, 01.22.30, 1.24.03, 1.24.22, 1.24.59; 'Wharram Percy bodies mutilated to "stop dead rising"' <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-39477005>> [accessed 3 April 2017]; For a discussion of the connection between vampires and zombies (with Matheson's vampire masses giving rise to modern zombies), see Linnie Blake, 'Consumed out of the Good Land: The American Zombie, Geopolitics and the Post-War World', in *American Gothic Culture: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. by Joel Faflak and Jason Haslam (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016)

¹⁰² Calmet writes that the 'spectre attacked even the animals, and some cows were found debilitated and half dead. Sometimes it tied them together by their tails': Dom Augustin Calmet (2009), <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/29412/29412-h/29412-h.htm>> [accessed 28 April 2011] (p. 262); Vampire cows also make an appearance in the 2000 family friendly vampire film, *The Little Vampire*, where they are drained (of blood) and are eventually seen to somehow defy gravity and use their pats as rather messy air-born weapons: *The Little Vampire*, dir. by Uli Edel (Avrora Media et al, 2000)

the influence of these unkempt plague-carriers as a focus for social neuroses transposes into modern vampire fiction, transgressions corresponding with concerns regarding threats such as sexual diseases ranging from syphilis in the late nineteenth century to, in the last decades of the twentieth century, HIV / AIDS assimilated into the vampire genre.¹⁰³ Alongside folkloric and contagion-based influences, mid-eighteenth century metaphoric perceptions of vampirism also sees a conflation of 'bloodsuckers' with power and authority: use of the noun 'vampire' as a descriptor for forms of capitalistic parasitical monstrosities such as 'landlords and governments' has carried through to modern vampirism where, as with Meyer's Cullen 'family' in *Twilight*, they are often extremely affluent through underhand means (in the case of Meyer's vampire family, this might be considered as 'insider trading' through Alice Cullen's precognitive abilities).¹⁰⁴

These eighteenth-century, predominantly folkloric undead feed into the adaptable identifiers of vampire fiction starting in the early nineteenth century with what is widely recognized as the West's first work of vampire prose fiction, John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819). Polidori's vampire antagonist, Lord Ruthven, is a 'libertine with a few vampiric attributes grafted onto him', combining the arrogant aristocratic attributes of a Byronic hero with the 'superior, infernal power' of a revenant.¹⁰⁵ From the point of publication of Polidori's novella, with Ruthven a mysterious and aristocratic libertine and killer, a generic ambivalence is established that has subsequently seen vampires portrayed as all ages, genders and, to a lesser extent, ethnicities, becoming such things as romanticized lovers, pathetic underdogs, and (anti-)heroes despised as much for being power-hungry despoilers as bloodthirsty haematophages.

Vampire fiction of the nineteenth century such as Polidori's *The Vampyre* and James Malcolm Rymer's penny dreadful series *Varney the Vampire or The Feast of Blood* (1845-47) locate their undead at the heart of the then globally authoritative

¹⁰³ See Darryl Jones, *Horror: A Thematic History in Fiction and Film* (London: Arnold, 2002), p. 75

¹⁰⁴ John Polidori, *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre*, ed. by Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1997] 1998), p. ix

¹⁰⁵ Polidori's vampire, Lord Ruthven, is named after (and shares traits with) the antagonist in Lady Caroline Lamb's 1816 novel, *Glenarvon*, in which she casts her former lover, Lord Byron, as ruinous seducer: John Polidori, ed. by Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick ([1997] 1998), pp. xix, 11

British Empire, with occasional sojourns into Europe, in the form of vampires such as J. Sheridan Le Fanu's 'Carmilla' (*In a Glass Darkly*, 1872).¹⁰⁶ However, although critical responses such as Jeffrey Weinstock's suggest evidence of 'proto vampir[ism]' is present in American fiction prior to the twentieth century, having crossed the Atlantic from Europe, as has been advanced above, American vampire fiction has one clear root: *Dracula*. America's sire of modern vampirism is, as has been alluded to, a palimpsestic entity: the portrayal of Stoker's Count by Hungarian actor Lugosi in Browning's 1931 film adapts the Hamilton Deane and John L. Balderston stage adaptations of Stoker's 1897 novel.¹⁰⁷ Having parasitized this nation from the outset of its global dominion, Dracula's migration across the Atlantic from Britain to the U.S. comes 'in time for the American century'.¹⁰⁸ As each chapter will show and as Weinstock also goes on to recognize, U.S. vampire narratives not only 'insistently allude to, directly reference and innovate on earlier narratives', but the vampire character Dracula, in particular, moves beyond Stoker's novel into position as 'an ur-text', infiltrating and influencing modern authors unable to resist the hypnotic thrall of referencing the Count.¹⁰⁹ To a lesser or greater extent, *all* American vampire novels engage, either positively or negatively, with Dracula as a vampiric trope, with novels such as Fred Saberhagen's *The Dracula Tape* (1975), Elizabeth Kostova's *The Historian* (2005), and Dacre Stoker and Ian Holt's *Dracula the Un-dead* (2009) presenting interpretations of the Count that take on and go beyond Stoker's more monstrous and Lugosi's more suave interlopers. As Elizabeth Kostova advances in her 2005 novel, *The Historian*, which sees the fictional figure of Dracula conflated with the identity of the historical Vlad Dracula, a fifteenth century Voivode of Wallachia: '[t]he extraordinary thing about [...] Dracula is [...] his refusal to die as an historical

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Preskett Prest (also attributed to James Malcolm Rymer), *Varney the Vampire Or the Feast of Blood* ([2005] 2001), <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/14833/14833-h/14833-h.htm>> [accessed 28 April 2011]; J. Sheridan Le Fanu, *In a Glass Darkly* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1995)

¹⁰⁷ Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock, 'American Vampires', ed. by Joel Faflak and Jason Haslam (2016), p. 203; Lugosi first plays Dracula on stage in Horace Liveright's Broadway production in 1927. This dramatic interpretation is amended by John L. Balderston for American audiences from Hamilton Deane's script before Lugosi goes on to portray the Transylvanian Count in Browning's 1931 film: *Dracula*, dir. by Tod Browning (Universal Studios, 1931)

¹⁰⁸ Auerbach (1995), p. 6

¹⁰⁹ Weinstock, ed. by Faflak and Haslam (2016), p. 215

presence'.¹¹⁰ In this manner, modern American vampires remain in constant dialogue with Dracula and, in particular, with the ur-image created by Lugosi.¹¹¹ Thus the novels investigated here cannot be considered as isolated products, but rather evolutionary artefacts, part of a literary generic history that, for American vampires, begins in earnest and remains in constant dialogue with Lugosi's Dracula as the appropriation of Stoker's Count that has become the most widely understood iteration of vampirism.¹¹²

Late twentieth-century critical responses to vampire fiction such as Gelder's and Auerbach's may, respectively, lay clear the problematics of 'pin[ning] the vampire down to one original place and moment' and proffer explorations of their cultural consequence – 'every generation creates and embraces its own [vampires]' – but, however adroit their critical understanding of vampires as protean entities may be, they fail to acknowledge the release of Universal Studios' film adaptation of *Dracula* as the pivotal moment where America 'bids welcome' to vampire fiction.¹¹³ Since Lugosi's appearance on cinema screens as Dracula opened a pulsating vein in American culture, the nation's undead fiction has negotiated the

¹¹⁰ Elizabeth Kostova, *The Historian* (London: Time Warner Books, 2005), p. 59

¹¹¹ The dialogic between twenty-first century vampires and Lugosi's Dracula shows the modern vampires as continually informed by him, his manifold iterations crediting both his recognizability and his malleability. For example, in Andrew J. Fox's *Fat White Vampire Blues* the transgender vampire Doodlebug, while not explicitly referencing Dracula, conjures his image, stating, 'Oh, I used to swim in vampire lore [...] When it came to vampires, I knew what to expect: Vampires sleep in coffins. They need to drink blood every couple of nights or so. They can change into three other forms—bat, wolf, and mist. So when I became one myself, I only tried doing those things I already believed vampires were capable of.' Doodlebug's summation, 'I was limited by what I *thought* I knew', shows both the all-pervading influence of Dracula characteristics and the need for each generation to continue to expand upon and evolve the genre: Andrew J. Fox, *Fat White Vampire Blues* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), p. 232; In a modern cultural environment 'ruled by fictions of every kind', the significance of Lugosi's interpretation on perceptions of Dracula is such that, over six and a half decades later, even the Oxford World's Classics series turn to Lugosi's image to grace the front cover of a paperback edition of Stoker's novel; J. G. Ballard, 'Introduction to the French Edition of *Crash*', Ian Gregson, *Postmodern Literature* (London and New York: Arnold, 2004), p. 2; Stoker, ed. by Ellmann (1998)

¹¹² While this project is concerned with works of *literary* fiction as primary sites of generic evolution, it must be acknowledged that, for America, vampire fiction originates in the cinematic medium described by Maxim Gorki in 1896 as 'a technological vampire that promise[s] a kind of living death': See Skal's account of Maxim Gorki's reaction to 'Lumièrè's Cinématographe in Moscow in 1896': Skal ([1990] 2004), p. 5

¹¹³ Gelder ([1994] 2001), p.24; Auerbach (1995), p. vii; Auerbach does go on to suggest, 'Lugosi's Dracula is the first authentic transplantation of Stoker's character to America. Paradoxically, Dracula was not notably foreign until he became American': Auerbach (1995), p. 112

primogenitary influence of this vampire character. And so, although generationally adaptive novelty helps maintain the popularity of vampire fiction, narratives continue to draw on Dracula as a figure whose narrative continues to be ‘reproduced, fetishized, bequeathed, and obsessed over’ cannot be underestimated.¹¹⁴

Escaping the confines of his paginated demesne, as acknowledged above, Stoker’s Count finds willing ‘Renfields’ in Hamilton Deane’s and John L. Balderston’s aiding his ingress into America.¹¹⁵ Balderston’s rewriting of, in his words, a ‘very badly’ dramatized script by Deane for the American stage sees *Dracula* open on Broadway in 1927, with Bela Lugosi – described by David J. Skal as then being ‘a semi-obscure Hungarian character actor’ – playing the eponymous vampire.¹¹⁶ Stoker’s vampire enters America at a time of economic unrest, with the country experiencing a swing from prosperity into the crisis of the Great Depression, echoed in Dracula’s ‘diabolical scheme’ to bleed dry ‘the very heart of fashionable London’.¹¹⁷ Just a few years after his stage début as Dracula, Lugosi’s cinematic portrayal of Stoker’s Count in 1931 begins a mass infiltration of American popular culture through the widely popular phenomenon of film, reaching out beyond U.S. borders to a global audience as a dark advocate of America’s global dominion.¹¹⁸

A generation after the initial publication of Stoker’s novel in 1897, Hollywood’s adoption of *Dracula* establishes vampires as chief among Universal Studios’ ‘monsters’, followed as it is by films such as *Frankenstein* (1931), *The Mummy* (1932), and *Werewolf of London* (1935). Since Browning’s introduction of *Dracula*

¹¹⁴ Auerbach (1995), p. 63

¹¹⁵ Renfield is the ‘zoophagous’ character that Stoker employs to act as a conduit and ‘index to the coming and going of the Count’, and is later re-commissioned by authors such as Charlie Huston: ‘The Renfields [...] glom on [attach themselves] to us [vampires], half servile and half envious [...] we use the Renfields [...] to serve us and insulate us from the world’: Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), pp. 71, 199; Charlie Huston, *Already Dead* (London: Orbit, [2005] 2008), p. 65

¹¹⁶ Skal ([1990] 2004), pp. 120-122

¹¹⁷ Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p.229; Being produced at a point in American history where its economy slumps into a Great Depression, *Dracula* paradoxically initiates what David Skal cites as ‘one of the most consistently profitable categories in film history’: Skal ([1990] 2004), p. 240

¹¹⁸ Linking early film to the vampiric, Skal writes of Maxim Gorki’s reaction to the ‘Lumière’s Cinématographe in Moscow in 1896’ as ‘deeply disturbed’ by its promise of ‘a kind of living death’: Skal ([1990] 2004), p. 5

into the popular consciousness of Americans, vampire mutability has fulfilled the fear/power dynamics discussed above, what Botting identifies as a 'need for a threat, for some great opposition to affirm one's position, establish[ing] an order that [...] acknowledges its own internal instabilities'.¹¹⁹ This mutability has seen Amero-centric vampirism embrace a capacity to transpose, assimilate, and/or surpass the traits of other Gothic creatures. For example, where Frankenstein's monster is an ersatz man created from reconstituted and reanimated dead flesh, vampires are (often immortal) *undead* in the form of man; modern zombies are the unthinking walking dead controlled by another, whereas modern vampires are often the controllers, foregrounding either the ability to mesmerize and control their victims or appropriate a hive mentality that means the turned follow the will of one dominant vampire; werewolves shape-shift (usually influenced by lunar activity) and are frequently characterized as fast and strong, all of which are attributes afforded to vampires, who are also often capable of transformation into more than *one* other form. Consequently, with Dracula as foremost among undead flexible manifestations of Gothic excesses, generic ancestors inform the mutability housed within America's modern vampire fictions.

Having outlined the 'what' of its ongoing cultural influence, discussion returns to how and why Browning's *Dracula* introduces millions to the thrill of being simultaneously scared and seduced by the fantasy of vampirism. Browning's exaggeration of Dracula's 'foreignness' and placing of the action in Britain puts this vampire 'at a safe distance from the everyday world' of 1930s America, where President Calvin Coolidge's nationalistic propagandizing in his immigration policy of the mid-1920s – citing 'America must be kept for the Americans' – WASP-ishy bridges from the xenophobic paranoia evidenced in Stoker's novel to his 1931 film.¹²⁰ From the outset, Lugosi's Dracula is an unstable antagonistic catalyst for

¹¹⁹ Fred Botting, *Making Monstrous Frankenstein, Criticism, Theory* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), p. 140

¹²⁰ Victor Sage and Allan Lloyd Smith, *Modern Gothic: A Reader* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 91; WASP is the American acronym for White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, a dominant demographic that remains stubbornly persistent within U.S. culture

American socio-economic anxieties, his Old-World European aristocratic status anathema to America's New-World meritocratic ideology.¹²¹

With, as already mentioned, Browning's film incorporating both Deane's 1924 adaptation for the British stage and a further revision by Balderston for American theatre audiences, this palimpsestic treatment demonstrates vampiric dependence 'on transformation for survival'.¹²² As Maud Ellmann goes on to propose, 'each repetition alter[s] the story while preserving its essential elements'.¹²³ Browning's plot has more in common with the stage dramatization of *Dracula* than Stoker's novel; here there is no Boy's Own adventurous 'united moral community of vampire hunters' to facilitate Dracula's destruction, only Van Helsing and Harker.¹²⁴ After the initial introductory scenes between Dracula and Renfield in his castle resplendent in what has become clichéd Gothic cinematic shorthand (cobwebs, decay, bats, a sweeping staircase - the armadillo *not* making the cut), this film confines Dracula's menace to the refined living spaces of a nostalgically-imagined middle-class Britain.¹²⁵ Thus no more than a quick dash next door into the crypt of 'Carfax Abbey' is needed for what Rick Worland suggests is 'the essentially mythic [...] struggle between Van Helsing and Count Dracula' ending in a sanitized anticlimactic off-screen staking of the vampire and beginning a genre in which vampires raise fears but (as already alluded to) must incorporate weaknesses.¹²⁶

¹²¹ For a brief précis of the American Depression, see 'Chapter Five: Politics and the Economy in the 1920s' and 'Chapter Six: The Depression Years', Carole Bryan Jones, *Twentieth Century USA* (London and Chicago: Hodder Education, 2005), pp. 53-77; See also Donald W. White, *The American Century: The Rise and Decline of the United States as a World Power* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996)

¹²² Maud Ellmann, 'Introduction' in Stoker, ed. by Ellmann (1998), p. vii

¹²³ Hamilton Deane's stage adaptation of *Dracula* 'debuted in Derby in June 1924': Melton (1999), p. 220; Maud Ellmann, 'Introduction' in Stoker, ed. by Ellmann (1998), p. vii

¹²⁴ Rick Worland, 'OWI Meets the Monsters: Hollywood Horror Films and War Propaganda, 1942 to 1945', *Cinema Journal*, 37, 1 (1997), 47-65, p. 5

¹²⁵ Browning substitutes R. M. Renfield for Jonathan Harker as the traveller to Dracula's Transylvanian castle, but still utilizes him as the lunatic aid for the Count's ingress into England; While cobwebs, decay, and bats may be now considered Gothic staples, the guest appearance of armadillos in Dracula's castle has never become a regular feature of vampire films

¹²⁶ Gregory Waller suggests that 'Since Browning's *Dracula* does not include the vampire hunters' holy crusade to Transylvania, Carfax Abbey – Count Dracula's Gothic lair in England – becomes a sort of repository for all that most threatens the normal world': Gregory A. Waller, 'Tod Browning's *Dracula*' in Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), pp.382-389 (first publ. in Gregory A. Waller,

Browning's cinematic overwriting of the Count's otherness as an exotic foreigner occludes 'Stoker's adaptable invader'.¹²⁷ He makes no attempt at mimesis; the Eastern European otherness of Lugosi's Count as he rolls out his words with an accent to die for (as a select few do) and the aristocratic mien of his character firmly set him apart. The 'stately, hypnotic cadences' of Lugosi's Hungarian accent, as the first voice of Dracula to be widely heard, conflate the fictional Dracula and the actor Lugosi, reducing what Stoker portrays as stealthy invasive otherness – Stoker's Count stresses a desire to be 'like the rest, so that no man stops if he see me, or pause in his speaking if he hear my words, to say, "Ha, ha! a stranger!"' – still further with three perfectly paced and roundly modulated words: 'I am [melodramatic pause] Dracula.'¹²⁸ Alongside Lugosi giving Dracula his 'voice', this first Hollywood film production, in contrast with the gendered ambiguity of Stoker's vampire, focuses on him as a site of heteronormative erotic attraction and corruption. Browning's film transforms Dracula from Stoker's saturnine patriarch bent on conquering and miscegenating Britain to an exotic aristocrat with a romanticized penchant for middle-class maidens. This romanticizing of vampirism can still be seen in contemporary vampires such as Meyer's Edward Cullen and Harris's Bill Compton and Eric Northman, discussed in chapters three and four, although, with the exception of Northman, they are now American, their exoticism reduced by cultural assimilation. As undead alpha-males, Lugosi's Dracula and those who follow his romanticized lead conform to a myth of hyper-masculine allure: being attractive at a narcissistic base level – manipulative, seductive, strong, confident, intense, and independent – they uphold the phallogocentric illusion that money and power/class equate to unequivocal sexual appeal (a trait that continues, with part of the allure in the portrayal of vampires

The Living and the Undead: Slaying Vampires, Exterminating Zombies (1986)), pp. 387-8; Worland (1997), p. 59

¹²⁷ Auerbach (1995), p. 113

¹²⁸ Auerbach (1995), p. 117; Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. 26; *Dracula* (1931), 00.09.41

such as Meyer's central vampire protagonists resting on their extreme affluence, and the power and 'class' this buys).¹²⁹

Having been invited into America through the medium of film, critical responses to vampire fiction such as David Glover's who, in *Vampires, Mummies, and Liberals: Bram Stoker and the Politics of Popular Fiction*, suggests that 'Dracula's continuing circulation in contemporary popular culture depends upon and sustains a powerful representation of the past as a domain of scandal and error, awaiting exposure by a franker, more enlightened gaze', position Stoker's undead Count as a contrast for the myth of modern open-minded rationality that forms a part of the narratives examined in this thesis.¹³⁰ However, Dracula's continuing generic influence evidences vampire fiction's existence as a means of exposing the 'scandal and error' that are also part of fears in each new present. The 'more enlightened gaze' of recent American vampire fiction continues to reinvent Dracula alongside new forms of the undead, with each reference to this prototypical model of modern American vampirism perverting his form to suit narrative agendas. For example, in Cronin's *The Passage*, a viewing of Browning's

¹²⁹ In line with the Cronin's humans' constant scanning for viral threat, Daniel Freeman et al. suggest of hypervigilance that it is the 'product of the excessive operation of threat-detection mechanisms': Daniel Freeman, Philippa A. Garety, Mary L. Phillips, 'An Examination of Hypervigilance for External Threat in Individuals with Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Individuals with Persecutory Delusions Using Visual Scan Paths', *The Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 53(A), 2 (2000), 549-567, p. 551; Matthew Kimble et al. also suggest, 'hypervigilance and attentional bias play a central role in anxiety disorders and PTSD' and that 'hypervigilance may focus attention on potential threats and precipitate or maintain a forward feedback loop in which anxiety is increased': Matthew Kimble, Mariam Boxwala, Whitney Bean, Kristin Maletsky, Jessica Halper, Kayleigh Spollen, Kevin Fleming, 'The Impact of Hypervigilance: Evidence for a Forward Feedback Loop', *Journal of Anxiety Disorders*, 28 (2013), 241-245, p. 241; See also, Mosher and Tomkin, who define the ideology of hyper-masculine 'machismo' as 'a system of ideas forming a world view that chauvinistically exalts male dominance by assuming masculinity, virility, and physicality to be the ideal essence of real men who are adversarial warriors competing for scarce resources (including women as chattel) in a dangerous world [sic]': Donald L. Mosher and Silvan S. Tomkins, 'Scripting the Macho Man: Hypermasculine Socialization and Enculturation', *The Journal of Sex Research*, 25, 1 (1988), 60-84, p. 64; In discussing hyper-masculinity as part of the 'rape myth', Autumn Shafer et al suggest it 'is the prototype of an exaggerated masculine performance' and 'endorses traditional ideas about the need for men to be highly respected and to gain that respect by being aggressive and unfeminine': Autumn Shafer, Rebecca R. Ortiz, Bailey Thompson, and Jennifer Huemmer, 'The Role of Hypermasculinity, Token Resistance, Rape Myth, and Assertive Sexual Consent Communication Among College Men', *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 62 (2018), S44-S50, p. S45

¹³⁰ David Glover, *Vampires, Mummies, and Liberals: Bram Stoker and the Politics of Popular Fiction* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1996), p. 2

1931 film in a makeshift military camp creates a juxtaposition between the naivety of fearing a lone aristocratic vampire and the apocalyptic plague of vampire Virals that reduce a U.S. population to isolated pockets of hyper-vigilant humanity. In *The Strain*, del Toro and Hogan's Van Helsing-inspired character Abraham Setrakian displays ambivalence, dismissing Lugosi's Dracula as 'a moody overactor in a black satin cape' while simultaneously recognizing him as 'a dashing figure of power'.¹³¹ Defiance of any consensus opinion or definition of Dracula (and Lugosi's portrayal, in particular) is part of an enduring fascination in American vampire fiction that spans from page, to stage, screen and beyond.

Fictional revisions of *Dracula* subsequent to Lugosi's portrayal, including Dacre Stoker and Ian Holt's 'official sequel', *Dracula the Un-dead*, where a recap of Stoker's story reinforces the cinematically-inspired suggestion that a vampire 'will burn to ash if struck by the light of the sun', continue the widely-used trope of fatal vampiric photosensitivity, despite Stoker's Dracula's diurnal functionality: as Van Helsing states, during the day 'this Vampire is limit to the powers of man, and till sunset he may not change', but there is no mention of his possession of fatal photosensitivity.¹³² Such is the seeming compulsion to retain vampires as creatures of the night that, of the twenty-first century texts investigated here, only Meyer's sparkly-skinned undead are fully immune to ultraviolet rays. Nevertheless, Meyer's vampires are still marked as different by the effects of sunlight: the human protagonist/narrator, Bella Swan describes vampire Edward Cullen's skin in sunlight as 'shocking [...] His skin [...] literally sparkled, like thousands of tiny diamonds were embedded in the surface.'¹³³ Despite avoiding the solar vulnerability of most vampires, Meyer's description of Edward's

¹³¹ Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan, *The Strain* (London: Harper Collins, 2009), p. 215

¹³² Dracula's extreme photosensitivity was introduced by the German Expressionist film director F. W. Murnau in *Nosferatu: eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1922) where, in the final scene, Max Schrek's Count Orlok (Dracula renamed) is destroyed by the morning sun as his lust for the blood of Ellen Hutter (an approximation of Stoker's Mina Harker) proves fatal; Dacre Stoker and Ian Holt, *Dracula the Un-dead* (London: Harper, 2009), p. 2; Waller in Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), pp. 387-8

¹³³ Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight* (London: Atom, [2005] 2008), p. 228; the 'sparkling' skin of Meyer's vampires directly correlates their wealth with vampiric perfection as markers of the unattainability of the American Dream. The Cullens, as already alluded to, represent a state of complete perfection that remains beyond the scope of America's human population.

‘shocking’ diamond-like skin very clearly places him as supra-human, even if less overtly menacing than more monstrous types in the vein of those inhabiting del Toro and Hogan’s or Cronin’s series. Of the tales discussed here, it is only Butler’s human-vampire hybrid Shori Matthews (*Fledgling*) who comes close to a level of daytime functionality without appearing physically different to humans. Her genetic assimilation of African American human DNA to prevent the destruction by ultraviolet rays that befalls so many undead expands the generic depiction of vampires to include genetic modification as well as simultaneously returning to Stoker’s depiction of Dracula’s ability to function during the day.

As this brief discursive overview goes some way to showing, Stoker’s novel and Lugosi’s cinematic portrayal are instigators of a series of generic ‘Chinese whispers’, with each subsequent iteration building on its predecessors, but vampires ‘resettling in twentieth-century America [become...] subject to the dominant American market’, a market in need of its own undead as proof of its status as global superpower.¹³⁴ Post-World War II, this comes through the U.S. gaining its first vampire citizens in the form of Matheson’s suburban undead masses in *I Am Legend* (1954). This first all-American vampire novel engages with the dominant cultural fear of the 1950s: the Cold War. McCarthyistic cultural propagandizing positions the East, specifically communist U.S.S.R, as hostile binary power to an American ideal. The fear of communism overwhelming U.S. culture manifests in Matheson’s undead devastation of suburbia as the product of an unspecified pandemic: ‘Historians wrote of bubonic plague. Robert Neville was inclined to believe that the vampire had caused it.’¹³⁵ The contemporary McCarthyistic targeting of those considered un-American creates a ‘paradoxical culture of fear that seize[s] a nation at the height of its power’.¹³⁶ as Ted Morgan

¹³⁴ Auerbach (1995), pp. 6, vii

¹³⁵ Seeing it as a socio-political and ideological threat, America was the last major world power to recognize the U.S.S.R. as valid in 1933: Bryan Jones (2005), p. 32; Richard Matheson, *I Am Legend* (London: Gollancz, [1954] 2001), p. 81

¹³⁶ Although, as M. J. Heale argues, ‘[Senator Joseph] McCarthy’s significance has been ludicrously exaggerated [...] He did not inspire the anticommunist cause, to which he came very late. He contributed no new ideas, fashioned no legislation, commanded no coherent organization [...] and his tactics [encouraging ‘red-baiting’] did lasting harm to his own mission’, as he goes on to state, ‘it was McCarthy who became the personification of [1950s] American anticommunism’: M. J.

suggests in *Reds: McCarthyism in Twentieth-Century America*, the environment in which Matheson publishes his vampire tale is one in which:

McCarthy capitalized on the fears in American society – fear that the Russians had stolen the atomic bomb, fear of spies in government, fear due to the loss of China, and fear of the Korean War. His party was the party of fear. He mobilized the masses of the alarmed.¹³⁷

Although these fears bolster Matheson's story, this is not so much a paralleling of the paranoia of 'Red[s] under the bed', but a massed targeting of the last human American in a metaphoric capturing of 'alarm' raised by the potential of Communism to devastate capitalist dreams.¹³⁸ Matheson's narrative space harbours what Margaret Marsh defines as 'symbol[s] of conformity' to the 'racial, ethnic, and class patterns that [characterize] suburban communities', perverting 'American archetype[s]' in a relocation of Cold War threats such as invasion and biological warfare into a suburban setting.¹³⁹

At the point of initial publication, Matheson's *I Am Legend* projects vampirism twenty-two years into a 1970s uchronic future that itself engages with the fantastic elements of Stoker's *Dracula*, attempting to rationalize and reduce him to a 'tenuous legend'.¹⁴⁰ Inversion of the vampire-human ratio in *I Am Legend* has, as with *Dracula*, been influential on a broader scale – most notably in George A. Romero's zombie films, beginning with *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), where *blood-sucking* undead masses are transposed into *flesh-eating* undead masses. Thus, its inclusion here as a profound influence on later undead fiction, particularly the novels examined in the Monsters section of this thesis, where America is once again overrun by undead masses in narratives that prompt questioning of culpability and notions of monstrosity.¹⁴¹ In blurring the boundaries

Heale, *American Anticommunism: Combatting the Enemy Within, 1830-1970* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1990), p. 150

¹³⁷ Ted Morgan, *Reds: McCarthyism in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Random House [2003] 2004), p. xiv

¹³⁸ Bryan Jones (2005), p. 142; As Boris Sagal's 1971 cinematic interpretation of *I Am Legend* makes evident, Neville is *The Omega Man*

¹³⁹ Margaret Marsh, 'Reconsidering the Suburbs: An Exploration of Suburban Historiography', *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 112, 4 (1988), 579-605, pp. 582, 605, 579

¹⁴⁰ Matheson ([1954] 2001), p. 23

¹⁴¹ In an interview in 2008 with Mariana McConnell, George A. Romero discusses Matheson: 'When I did *Night of the Living Dead* I called [the zombies] ghouls, flesh eaters [...] zombies were just those

between human and vampire ‘masses’, Matheson amplifies the generic legacy of Dracula, remodelling vampire fiction and demonstrating that in ‘supernatural disguise [...] almost any “unwholesome” topic might walk freely’.¹⁴² And so, in creating a vampire narrative for an early Cold War generation, Matheson’s *I Am Legend* shows how, from the perspective of vampiric neo-suburbanites (the suburban being a shorthand for modern American culture), it is a human who becomes scapegoated legend; a ‘terror born in death’ for an altered ‘majority concept’ of normality.¹⁴³

Through thematic focus on wholesale vampirism, science, and infection, Matheson moves vampirism away from functioning as ‘[s]omething black and of the night [...] crawling out of the Middle Ages’, instead citing ‘the germ [as...] the villain’ and linking U.S. vampire narratives to an indiscriminate blanket victimhood through mass vampiric infection.¹⁴⁴ By inverting the human-vampire ratio and positioning its protagonist Neville as the last (white American male) human demonized by a newly undead population intent on his destruction, Matheson marginalizes (U.S.) humanity in a post-anthropocentric overwhelming of recognizably modern suburban spaces. In creating a post-human suburban orthodoxy, Matheson’s undead neo-Americans rewrite what Skal describes as a ‘suburbanized, plasticized’ conservative existence driven by a fear of non-conformity to cultural ideals (the all-American textbook ’50s nuclear family with the perfect house, car, children, fridge, television, pet dog...). Matheson’s (almost)

boys in [the] Caribbean doing the wet-work for Bela Lugosi. So I never thought of them as zombies. I thought they were just back from the dead. I ripped off the idea for the first film from a Richard Matheson novel called *Am Legend* [sic] [...] Richard starts his book with one man left; everybody in the world has become a vampire. I said we got to start at the beginning and tweak it up a little bit. I couldn’t use vampires because he did so I wanted something that would be an earth-shaking change. Something that was forever, something that was really at the heart of it. I said, so what if the dead stop staying dead?': Mariana McConnell, 'Interview: George A. Romero on *Diary of the Dead*', <<http://www.cinemablend.com/new/Interview-George-A-Romero-On-Diary-Of-The-Dead-7818.html>> [accessed 16 December 2015]; Alongside Romero, Matheson’s *I Am Legend* has provided a fruitful point of reference for film adaptations that span more than half a century, including Ubaldo Ragona’s *The Last Man on Earth* (1964), Boris Sagal’s *The Omega Man* (1971), and Francis Lawrence’s *I Am Legend* (2007): all are centred on the psycho-social fears of overriding what is understood as America’s global dominion, and highlight concerns surrounding medical science and epidemiology

¹⁴² ‘Reviews and Reactions’ in Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. 363

¹⁴³ Matheson ([1954] 2001), p. 160

¹⁴⁴ Matheson ([1954] 2001), pp. 23/82

post-humanist narrative possesses what Francesca Ferrando suggests is ‘a critical and deconstructive standpoint informed by the acknowledgement of the past, while setting a comprehensive and generative perspective to sustain and nurture alternatives for the present and for the futures’; this might be considered a synopsis of not only Matheson’s dystopian U.S. but also of those antecedent vampire narratives to be deliberated in section one, where the monstrous threat of a post-anthropocentric world models moral cautions of consumerism in extremis.¹⁴⁵

Matheson’s inversion of the lone vampire narrative for a mid-twentieth century American readership takes the genre away from the elitist notions of *Dracula* and towards a democratized ‘natural and eternal justification’ of vampirism as a ‘germ that hid behind obscuring veils of legend and superstition, spreading its scourge while people cringed before their own fears’; this is not, like *Dracula*’s motivation, an individual’s bid for dominion, but vampirism as the latest in a line of species adaptations to assume global dominion, seemingly relegating humans to the position of neo-dinosaurs.¹⁴⁶ Stoker’s *Dracula* and subsequent adaptations are dismissed by Neville as ‘a hodgepodge of superstition and soap opera clichés’ as Matheson’s protagonist rationalizes and medicalizes vampirism as a disease he dubs ‘vampiris’.¹⁴⁷ This vampirism is a ‘bacillus [that...] is anaerobic and [...] symbio[ytic]’ and, when aerobic, is ‘virulently parasitic [and...] eats the host’.¹⁴⁸ Matheson takes what Stoker’s Van Helsing begins – locating vampires, customarily associated with superstition, as creations that can be considered from a scientific

¹⁴⁵ If we take Neil Badminton’s slightly tongue-in-cheek suggestion that ‘posthumans are far more exciting, far sexier than humans’, then vampires, being creatures that fulfil the remit of being *post*-human, ‘reveal the internal instabilities, the fatal contradictions, that expose humanism is forever rewriting itself as posthumanism. Repetition [...] can be a form of questioning: to restate is not always to reinstate’: Neil Badminton, ‘Theorizing Posthumanism’, *Cultural Critique*, 53 (2003), 10-27, pp. 15-16; Francesca Ferrando, ‘Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms Differences and Relations’, *Existenz: An International Journal in Philosophy, Religion, Politics and the Arts*, 8, 2 (2013), 26-32, p. 32

¹⁴⁶ Barthes ([1957] 2000), p. 143; Matheson ([1954] 2001), p. 82

¹⁴⁷ Matheson ([1954] 2001), pp. 23, 79

¹⁴⁸ Matheson ([1954] 2001), p. 135; symbiosis, or the mutualistic living together of two different species or entities, as opposed to the more usual conflation of vampirism and parasitism, is also part of Butler’s *Fledgling*, to be discussed in the Discords section, where humans are ‘willing’ companions and blood donors to her vampires and referred to as Symbionts

mode of understanding – and intensifies it to suit an increasingly secularized techno-scientific modern environment.

From Matheson's novel, where vampires are legion but begin to occasion sympathy (as Neville recognizes the vampiric 'germ' as the true 'villain'), this brief historical journey moves forward to the third influential work of expansion in American vampire fiction: Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976).¹⁴⁹ Alongside the inspiration of *Dracula* and Matheson's *I Am Legend*, Rice's first novel in her 'Vampire Chronicles' series provides a major variant in twentieth-century U.S. vampire fiction, enhancing the concept of vampires as romanticized (begun with Lugosi's portrayal) and self-critical figures, bloodlust in tension with questioning and angst.¹⁵⁰ Centring action in New Orleans lends intra-American geographical distinction to Rice's narrative and, through her work, American vampires have become associated with the history of the southern state of Louisiana and, to a lesser extent, Southern Gothic.¹⁵¹ While Southern Gothic is preoccupied with *human* unconventionalities, abnormalities, and deviancies, typing 'vampire New Orleans' into an online search engine presents an array of societies, discussions, hypotheses, guides, tours, and shops, all pointing to an environmental specificity that bears a strong influence upon American vampire fiction, as seen through the centrality of (Southern) place in subsequent texts such as George R. R. Martin's *Fevre Dream* (1982), Poppy Z. Brite's *Lost Souls* (1992), and Fox's *Fat White Vampire Blues* (2003), based as they are in Mississippi, North Carolina and New

¹⁴⁹ Matheson ([1954] 2001), p. 82

¹⁵⁰ Rice's 'Vampire Chronicles' series spans from 1976 to 2016 (see 'further selected reading' in the bibliography below)

¹⁵¹ Peggy Dunn Bailey defines Southern Gothic as 'characterized by obsessive preoccupations – with blood, family, and inheritance; racial, gender, and/or class identities; the Christian religion (typically, in its most "fundamentalist" forms); and home – and a compulsion to talk (or write) about these preoccupations [...] themes of family/blood as destiny, the importance of place (both geographical and socio-economic); the inscription of identity through cultural models of gender, class, and ethnicity, and the powerful attraction to [...] religious experience': Peggy Dunn Bailey, 'Female Gothic Fiction, Grotesque Realities, and *Bastard Out of Carolina*: Dorothy Allison Revises the Southern Gothic', *The Mississippi Quarterly*, 63, 1/2 (2010) 269–290, p. 271; Susan Castillo Street and Charles L. Crow suggest 'the South is a region that has always been obsessed with crossroads and boundaries, whether territorial [...] or those related to gender, social class, sexuality and particularly race [...] Southern Gothic is a genre that arises from the area's often violent and traumatic history' and is 'characterised by [...] conflict and contradictions, and flashes of valuable and unsettling insight': *The Palgrave Handbook of the Southern Gothic*, ed. by Susan Castillo Street and Charles L. Crow (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 2, 6

Orleans. Investigated in chapter five, Fox's portrayal of a distinctly unglamorous side of New Orleans is, in part, reason for inclusion in the Discords section of this thesis. The vampire Jules Duchon, Fox's protagonist, has strong ties to location. Having never travelled far beyond his immediate locale – the Ninth Ward of New Orleans – for most of his existence, Duchon's behaviour and emotions are strongly linked to and influenced by specific environmental determinants.¹⁵²

Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* also disrupts the dominance of heterosexual patriarchal authority within vampire fiction, with her central protagonists Louis de Pointe du Lac and Lestat de Lioncourt creating an undead ersatz household as a homosocial 'alternative model to the nuclear family', containing two 'fathers' and an eternally child-sized, although far from 'child-brained', daughter, Claudia.¹⁵³ This alternative clan-building is a theme later explored in Brite's *Lost Souls* in which these vampires, as a separate species to humans, bear similarities to those in Butler's *Fledgling* (see chapter six, below). These novels display non-conventional relationship patterns such as polyamory, hedonism, and homoeroticism (see Brite's description of characters Molochai, Twig, and Zillah indulging in what is described as 'their game of spit and skin and passion, of slippery hands and soft bites').¹⁵⁴

In terms of narrative form, Rice updates the epistolary novel – previously used by Stoker in *Dracula*, whose human characters assume authority over Dracula's story through a variety of media including diaries, letters, newspaper articles, and phonograph – giving readers an audiotaped interview between the vampire Louis and an anonymous human boy (eventually identified in the third novel of the 'Vampire Chronicles' series, *The Queen of the Damned*, as Daniel Molloy). She also continues the extension of American vampire fiction beyond Dracula's distinct entity but, in contrast with the mass infection of Matheson's *I Am Legend*, she

¹⁵² Jules's residence in a near-derelict house in the far-from-glamorous Ninth Ward of New Orleans is his only home as human and vampire

¹⁵³ Candace R. Benefiel, 'Blood Relations: The Gothic Pervasion of the Nuclear Family in Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 38, 2 (2004), 261-273, p. 263; Stoker's Van Helsing first describes Dracula as the possessor of a 'child-brain' in Chapter XXIII: Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. 264

¹⁵⁴ Poppy Z. Brite, *Lost Souls* (London: Penguin, [1992] 1994), p. 83

introduces an almost élite sub-cultural, insular, society of vampires. Rice's modification of vampirism continues the widespread generic trope of undead reliance on (not always human) blood for sustenance, but the metaphysical beliefs associated with Dracula – a fear of Christian paraphernalia and its destructive power – are, as with *I Am Legend*, dismissed as 'Bull-shit [...] No magical power whatsoever', mirroring a cultural shift towards secularizing undeath.¹⁵⁵ Further to this, Rice keeps the destructive quality of sunlight – 'The sun will destroy the blood [...] in every tissue, every vein' – prevalent in the vampirism of Matheson's *I Am Legend* and, as already alluded to, retained in most of the novels examined here.¹⁵⁶

Alongside being consumers of blood, Rice's vampires are consumer-driven in line with the novel's 1970s context, their 'luxurious and primitive' lives described as ruled by the 'gods of most men. Food, drink, and security in conformity.'¹⁵⁷ This 'conformity' to U.S. consumerist ideology, alongside Rice's characterization of a more sympathetic vampire in Louis adds a generic element that continues into twenty-first century vampire narratives, most notably in the conspicuous extravagance of Meyer's central protagonists in the *Twilight* series, scrutinized in chapter three. Unlike Meyer's portrayal of her vampires' decadence as consistent with American Dreams, in a story riddled with self-indulgence and profligacy, the lifestyles of Rice's vampires are shown as imperfect, hollow and, at times, disappointingly unromantic. The hedonism of Rice's central protagonists is often guided by boredom as they are reduced to attempting to overcome hypo-stress by becoming conspicuous consumers of both people and commodities, feeding on an 'endless train of magnificent strangers' and buying 'the very latest imports from France and Spain'.¹⁵⁸ And so, Rice's principal addition to the development of this genre lies in a sympathetic narrative where the thoughts and feelings of her vampires are positioned as paramount, but where a mocking tone positions the 'magnificence' of immortality and consumption as fallacious – these are not

¹⁵⁵ Anne Rice, *Interview with the Vampire* (New York, London: Time Warner, [1976] 2006), p. 27

¹⁵⁶ Rice ([1976] 2006), p. 29

¹⁵⁷ Rice ([1976] 2006), p. 30

¹⁵⁸ Rice ([1976] 2006), pp. 109-10

merely monsters, they are supra-humans carrying into undeath the thoughts and behaviours of their previous lives.

As this brief précis of what are arguably the three most influential works of twentieth-century American vampire fiction shows, the genre functions as an evolving field of mutable fantastic metaphors for contemporary ideological tensions, each interpretation introducing a reflection of its environment into the generic continuum. Since the publication of Polidori's *The Vampyre* nearly two centuries ago, vampire fiction has been the most adaptable and enduring of Gothic genres, with wide-ranging critical responses linking the undead to all areas of the cultures they reflect from such concerns as gender, race, and class, to psychological analyses, technophobia, and capitalism / consumerism / consumption. The twenty-first century vampires considered here, incorporating the key influences introduced above, operate as products of time, place, and generic ancestry. Never wholly monstrous, these fantastic beings have always possessed elements of attraction, as well as instabilities. As touched upon, the three sections of this thesis go from the monstrosity of large-scale apocalyptic effects of vampires that connects to America's national identity – 'American exceptionalism itself entails the belief in the special and unique role [...] the United States is meant to play in world history' – to the increasingly localized narrative of self-discovery and judgement, where cultural fears are considered on an individual scale.¹⁵⁹ Accordingly, having advanced the three sub-genres that form America's twenty-first century vampire fiction model as a recent generic evolution in need of critical exploration, along with highlighting the generic history and contemporary fears that inform them, discussion now turns to del Toro and Hogan's *The Strain* as the starting point for investigating modern American vampire Monsters as possessors of what Erik Butler describes as 'the power to move between and undo borders otherwise holding identities in place'.¹⁶⁰ The centrality of deific manipulation and apocalypse in del Toro and Hogan's vampire

¹⁵⁹ Hilde Eliassen Restad, 'Old Paradigms in History Die Hard in Political Science: US Foreign Policy and American Exceptionalism', *American Political Thought*, 1, 1 (2012), 53-76, p. 54

¹⁶⁰ Erik Butler, *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film: Cultural Transformations in Europe, 1732 – 1933* (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2010), p. 1

narrative amendment of the genre locates their vampire, the Master, as identifiably part of the wider vampire genre but also as a repository of terroristically-centred contemporary American fears.

Section One:
Vampire Monsters

Chapter One:
'In the face of such terror':
Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan's *The Strain* Trilogy¹

‘The dead have risen [...] What we are discussing here is nothing less than the fate of the human race [but...] this is America—where everything is known and understood, and God is a benevolent dictator, and the future must always be bright’ (Abraham Setrakian, Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan’s *The Strain*)²

‘the monstrum was that wonder-making person or event, the “omen portending the will of the gods.” [...] the monster signifie[s] civic crisis.’ (Edward J. Ingebretsen, ‘Staking the Monster’)³

Vampire Monsters are bringers of terror, that intellectual and emotional state which carries a necessary element of the unknown and, according to David Punter, ‘demonstrate[s] that fear is at its fiercest when it is seen to invade the everyday contemporary world’, disrupting it through the introduction of ‘extreme situations’ and ‘the unadmitted’.⁴ The monstrous undead are governed by their

¹ Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan, *The Fall* (London: Harper Collins, 2010), p. 116

² Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan, *The Strain* (London: Harper Collins, 2009), pp. 207, 216; The name Abraham is not only central to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, but also suggests a link to *Dracula* through its author Abraham ‘Bram’ Stoker and lead vampire hunter (Abraham) Van Helsing: see Genesis 12 onwards for the story of Abraham, which leads into the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (the events occurring at Sodom will be discussed in relation to del Toro and Hogan’s vampire monster below). Abraham Setrakian is the Van Helsing figure within del Toro and Hogan’s ‘Crew of Light’ – a collective term, coined by Christopher Craft, to describe the group of characters who take it upon themselves to chase and destroy Dracula in Stoker’s novel. Here, this new ‘Crew’ consists of Setrakian, Ephraim ‘Eph’ Goodweather and Nora Martinez, both doctors working for the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is a nationwide agency broadly tasked with protecting citizens from health, disease, and biological security threats (for further information, see <https://cdc.gov>), Vasilij Fet (a pest controller), and Augustin ‘Gus’ Elizalde (a petty criminal): see Christopher Craft, ‘Kiss Me with Those Red Lips’: Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*,’ *Representations* 8 (1984), 107-33

³ Ingebretsen’s title ‘Staking the Monster’ metaphorically pins monstrosity to a method of dispatch most frequently associated with vampires, reinforcing the bond between the undead and monstrosity: Edward J. Ingebretsen, ‘Staking the Monster: A Politics of Remonstrance’, *Religion and American Culture*, 8, 1 (1998), 91-116, p. 94

⁴ David Punter, *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the present day, Volume 1 The Gothic Tradition* (London and New York: Longman, 1996a), pp. 3, 8, 18; As discussed in the introduction, monstrosity represents something beyond the norm, abhorrent, and morally or physically deviant as well as a tool of demonstration (‘monster’ deriving from both the Latin

function as hollow beings that exist in negative relativity to humans. Ever-ready vessels for personifying whatever political, psychological, or morally antithetical attitudes are culturally pertinent within a given generation, they are convenient scapegoats whereby their blame, as cultural 'outsiders' builds group loyalties which, in turn, assists social cohesion.⁵ As harbingers of 'them and us' assumptions, vampire Monsters are positioned less as evidentiary and more as emotive responses to perceived cultural patterning that, according to Robert Mighall, 'testifies to one culture's views about its perceived [...] antithes[es]'.⁶ As this chapter and the next argue, twenty-first century American vampire Monsters and the apocalypses that accompany them are extreme fantastic responses to post-9/11 terroristic unpredictability, antithetical to an overconfidence in America's global hegemonic status. Destabilization and devastation of uchronic contemporary Americas is manifested through undead terroristic aggressors as exemplifiers of underlying fears of usurpation. Vampire Monsters thus interact with the cultural ripples of 9/11 as 'central symbols of terror of [this] age', to create a fantastic form of what Ingebretsen labels 'civic crisis'.⁷ Unlike earlier U.S. vampire narratives that stay within national borders, such as Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*, early twenty-first century vampire Monsters 'go large', the devastation they cause starting in the U.S. before affecting humanity on a global scale. The narratives' examined in this chapter and the next focus on an engagement with national powerlessness in the face of unknown instigators of terror, supersizing violence and bloodshed to apocalypse and an engulfing of humankind. Narratives centred round vampire Monsters – fundamentally anathema to human life – are a means of exploring the loss of global hegemony, as an undeclared inevitability for any superpower, through the safely distanced medium of fantasy. Although the dystopian Americas represented in the novels

'*monstrum*', as well as '*monere*'); Terror, a dread of what a situation *might* involve sits apart from horror, in which fears are based in an immediacy of repulsion or abhorrence. For example, a child might feel terror at what might come out of the darkness when they are alone at night, but feel horror at the sight of a rat sitting on their bed

⁵ See Mary Douglas, *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, [1992] 2003)

⁶ Robert Mighall, *A Geography of Victorian Gothic Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. xv

⁷ Punter (1996a), p. 100; Ingebretsen (1998), p. 64

discussed in this and the next chapter are conjunctions of contemporary cultural fears and generic tropes that produce chronicles of cataclysms, their central vampires are sites of ambiguity, with the apocalypses they evoke realized through (American) human corruption and carrying a questioning of perceptions of what constitutes terroristic activity. Discussing monsters per se, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's view extends Punter's claim that they 'invade the everyday contemporary world', positioning them as 'pure culture', frameworks for dominant anxieties.⁸ Projections that embody contemporary threats, exploiting displacements and hesitations, vampire Monsters are revenant products of the 'intricate matri[ces]' of the times and places in which they appear.⁹

The primary focus of this chapter, Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan's *The Strain* trilogy – *The Strain* (2009), *The Fall* (2010), and *The Night Eternal* (2011) – draws on the narratives of generic forerunners *I Am Legend* and *Dracula*, their respective storylines of mass vampirism and aggressive individualized threat, antecedent to the challenges of post-9/11 cultural tensions that also show as influences. Alongside this, del Toro and Hogan's vampire antagonist, the Master and his turned minions confront contemporary concerns as 'central symbols of terror', products of America's two dominant ideologies: religion (predominantly Christianity, in the form of the vampire Master as a blood product of a fallen archangel) and capitalism (in the form of the Master's 'Renfield', the solipsistic billionaire businessman, Eldritch Palmer).¹⁰ The Master is a catalyst in line with

⁸ Punter (1996a), p. 3; Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Monster Culture (Seven Theses)' in *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, ed. by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (London and Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), p. 4

⁹ Punter (1996a), p. 3; Cohen, ed. by Cohen (1996), p. 5

¹⁰ Punter (1996a), p. 100; The '1996 General Social Survey (GSS)' reports '55% of the respondents said that being a Christian is either somewhat or very important in making someone a true American': Deborah J. Schildkraut, 'The More Things Change... American Identity and Mass and Elite Responses to 9/11', *Political Psychology Special Issue: 9/11 and Its Aftermath: Perspectives from Political Psychology*, 23, 3 (2002), 511-535, p. 514; America's ideological conflict can be seen in the conflated abstruseness of U.S. currency bearing the inscription 'In God We Trust'. The motto 'In God We Trust' first appeared on American coinage in 1864 and on paper money in 1957: see 'History of "In God We Trust"', <<https://www.treasury.gov/about/education/Pages/in-god-we-trust.aspx>> [accessed 10 March 2017]; On the U.S. dollar bill, 'the "All-Seeing Eye" located above the pyramid suggests the importance of divine guidance in favor of the American cause. The inscription *ANNUIT COEPTIS* translates as "He (God) has favored our undertakings," and refers to the many instances of Divine Providence during our Government's formation. In addition, the inscription *NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM* translates as "A new order of the ages," and signifies a new

Ingebretsen's 'will of the gods', punishing modern America as a 'new world' built on undying consumption.¹¹ The Master is a 'rogue' among seven 'Ancients', vampires born of the blood of banished deviant archangel Ozryel, also known as the 'Angel of Death', who is determined to usurp the role of godhead and create a world in his image.¹² As Stephen T. Asma argues, the 'concept of [monstrosity] has evolved to become a moral term in addition to a biological and theological term', and the Master is a biological weapon of apocalyptic moral as well as theological judgement, a product of a god's anger at humanity's disregard in favour of capitalist and consumerist idols.¹³ Del Toro and Hogan's Master conforms to Asma's proposition that to 'be a monster is to be an omen [...] a display of God's wrath, a portent of the future' – del Toro and Hogan's vengeful God creates in the Master a punishment for a secularized modern worshipping of money and things.¹⁴ While the Master affects 'God's wrath', he does so from supra-Christian origins – the archangel Ozryel is acknowledged in all three of the Abrahamic religions (Judaism and Islam, as well as Christianity). The source of del Toro and Hogan's soldier of God is acknowledged as:

Sariel. In certain Enochian manuscripts he is [also] named Arazyal, Asaradel. Names all too similar to Azrael or Ozryel [...] Muslims call him 'he of the four faces, the many eyes, and the many mouths. He of the seventy thousand feet and four thousand wings.'¹⁵

Coming from the blood of Ozryel, the Master is a rogue vampire intent on using the U.S. (and Palmer) as the springboard for a global devastation of humanity and,

American era': 'What is the significance of the symbols on the back of the one-dollar bill? I'm particularly interested in the eye and the pyramid', <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/faqs/Currency/Pages/edu_faq_currency_portraits.aspx> [accessed 03 April 2013]; Alexis de Tocqueville's post-1830 predictive commentary on America proposes, 'there is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America': Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1954), p. 314; del Toro and Hogan have also adapted *The Strain* into four series for the small screen on FX Network / Twentieth Century Fox (2014-2017)

¹¹ Ingebretsen (1998), p. 94; del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 299

¹² del Toro and Hogan (2011), pp. 187 141; del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 278; As Evelyn Oliver and James Lewis propose, in 'tales of horror and magic, the stubborn and cruel angel of death [Ozryel] is a kind of antihero, somewhat like Dracula [...] the angel of death can be defeated': Oliver and Lewis, *Angels A to Z, 2nd edn* (Detroit: Visible Ink, 2008), p. 20

¹³ Stephen T. Asma, *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 7

¹⁴ Asma (2009), p. 13

¹⁵ del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 197

as an aid to his plans, the Master's mass turning of humans produces a very literal interpretation of his archangelic source's 'many eyes, and [...] mouths' in his penetration of America.¹⁶ This deific root of terroristic devastation augments a reading of the Master's vampiric monstrosity and, through him, also shines a light on post-9/11 insecurities concerning the insidiousness of terroristic sources. As Richard Hofstadter proposes in the mid-twentieth century, distortions of judgement (in *The Strain*, these are based around too much faith in the trappings of modern culture, such as science and technology) projected onto a common enemy act as a focus for fears and paranoias, and vampire Monsters, even those with an archangelic source such as the Master, offer a culturally recognizable metaphor for collective enmity putting a name and face on a terror.¹⁷

The (broadly Christian) religious foundation of the Master's vampirism, which acts as a dark mirror to the hypocrisy of purportedly Christian nation's trusting in God but culturally adhering to cardinal vices such as avarice and pride, is paralleled in Hofstadter's identification of fear surrounding subversion of cultural equilibrium from corporate and religious domains.¹⁸ Palmer who, as already alluded to, is a billionaire businessman and Renfield-like character whose venality facilitates the

¹⁶ An example of ongoing unrealistic assumptions surrounding terrorism has seen the federal courts challenge President Donald Trump's Executive Order for a 'travel ban' which has been stated as 'violat[ing] federal immigration law' and being 'discriminatory against Muslims in violation of the U.S. Constitution.' Prejudiced and narrow understanding, prevalent within American culture since the events of 9/11, finds voice and ignorant populist support in Trump's early use of presidential Executive Order(s), with wider criticism clearly acknowledging his EO as 'a discriminatory "Muslim ban."': Lawrence Hurley and Andrew Chung, 'Supreme Court breathes new life into Trump's travel ban', <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-court-immigration-idUSKBN19H1OR>> [accessed 28 June 2017]; see also *Executive Order: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States* (27 January, 2017), <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/27/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states>> [accessed 24 April 2017]; '582 U. S. (2017) Per Curiam Supreme Court of the United States Nos. 16–1436 (16A1190) and 16–1540 (16A1191) [June 26, 2017]', <<http://fingfx.thomsonreuters.com/gfx/rngs/SUPREME-COURT-TRAVEL/010041SD3W9/supremecourt.pdf>> [accessed 28 June 2017]

¹⁷ For further discussion of the political notions of persecution and conspiracy that he identifies as part of America's cultural make-up, see Hofstadter's 'The Paranoid Style in American Politics' in his essay collection: Richard Hofstadter, *The Paranoid Style in American Politics* (New York: Vintage Books, [1952] 2008), pp. 3-40

¹⁸ 'A law passed by the 84th Congress (P.L. 84-140) and approved by the President on July 30, 1956 [...] declar[ed] IN GOD WE TRUST the national motto of the United States': 'History of "In God We Trust"', <<https://www.treasury.gov/about/education/Pages/in-god-we-trust.aspx>> [accessed 10 March 2017]

Master's cultural subversion and global totalitarian take-over.¹⁹ Through Palmer, del Toro and Hogan present the dark side of capitalism as he cynically perverts control bought by wealth and power – arguably fundamentals of American Dreams discussed in section two – for the possibility of immortality:

People [...] will accept any system, any order, that promises them the illusion of security [...] once you seize control of the top, the rest of the organization simply follow orders.²⁰

Palmer's breaking of moral and legal cultural contracts, particularly in his exploitation of wealth and position to illegally harvest organs for his own use, reflects Asma's positioning of monstrosity as a moral deviation from what is perceived as 'normal', with his portrayal one of cynical catalyst for a biblical-style apocalyptic judgement of modern America's citizens. Thus, del Toro and Hogan make clear that the Master's terroristic attack on American citizens is only made possible by internal collaboration and, in Palmer, the collaboration comes from the zenith of capitalist power.²¹ In 'The Patriot Act and Civil Liberties: A Closer Look', Howard Johnston advances that the legal merging of those who 'afford material support' and those who commit terrorist acts makes little differentiation between offenders.²² As facilitator for the Master's purgation of humanity, Palmer's character demonstrates a 'deep-seated complicity', his terroristic abetting of the Master an exaggeration of the fears within America arising from the potential of post-9/11 unknowns.²³ And so, while this chapter also investigates del Toro and Hogan's vampire Monster (narrative) as an interrogation of generic

¹⁹ While Browning introduces R. M. Renfield as the character who visits Dracula in Transylvania instead of Jonathan Harker, both his and Stoker's Renfields find themselves inmates in Dr Seward's asylum, both zoophagous and servile to the vampire Count and, as opposed to del Toro and Hogan's physically infirm and maliciously solipsistic Palmer who is kept alive through illegal organ harvesting, described by Seward as possessing 'great physical strength' and 'morbidly excitable' as well as of 'sanguine temperament': Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, ed. by Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal (New York. London: W. W. Norton, 1997), p. 62

²⁰ del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 221

²¹ Palmer is both representative of America's dominant and its shadow: as an archetype of the darkness fomented within this superpower, he is the catalyst for the Master's violence and 'that (unwittingly) terroristic imagination which dwells in all of us': Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, trans. by Chris Turner (London, New York: Verso, [2002] 2003), p. 5

²² Howard A. Johnston, *The Patriot Act and Civil Liberties: A Closer Look* (Carlisle, PA: Ft. Belvoir Defense Technical Information Center, 2006), <<https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=469628>> [accessed 17 November 2011] (p. 11)

²³ Baudrillard, trans. by Turner ([2002] 2003), p. 6

heritage, as Auerbach recognizes, 'what vampires are in any given generation is a part of what [...] times have become', and del Toro and Hogan's vampire is, foremost, a tool for a metaphoric reflection on post-9/11 fears and powerplays, incorporating capitalism and religion as America's two foremost cultural drivers.²⁴

Having been perceived as monstrous within Western popular culture since the eighteenth century, as Markman Ellis maintains, vampires come from a cultural perception as synonymous with all things tyrannical, corrupt, and perverse. Citing *The Craftsman*, Ellis discusses essays from 1732 which again link the monstrous agency of vampires to cultural immoralities, stating:

The vampire figures modernity [...] articulated both in economic and moral dimensions: venal business practices, autocratic government, tyrannical taxation, moral laxity, and sexual perversion.²⁵

As this list makes evident, vampiric a-historicity incorporates and articulates modernities that, from the early eighteenth century, have reinforced Western capitalist monstrosities through 'morally lax' autocratic oppressions ranging from political to private, from corporate to carnal. As Ingebretsen asserts, a 'social order reveals the limits of its imagination [...] in the methods of fear by which it constructs the unspeakable (the "monstrous" or the "inhuman")' and 'in the means [...] used to repudiate and silence that energy'.²⁶ Here, del Toro and Hogan, in line with previous generations' iterations, address the limits of contemporary American imagination with a basic overcoming the monster narrative that conforms to the 'unspeakability' of inhuman acts through Palmer's catalytic actions: rather than an overt figuring of modernity, the Master perverts it, exploiting the 'venal business practices' of Palmer as catalyst for a 'viral pandemic' and revealing an underlying distrust of unfettered capitalism.²⁷

²⁴ Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 1

²⁵ Markman Ellis, *The History of Gothic Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 167

²⁶ Ingebretsen goes on to add 'to "write" the civic monster means spelling out, quite literally, what a populace fears [...] The monster, then, is an important civil actor [...] the ritual of transgression by which the monster is first identified and then ritually effaced is a crucial agency of civil formation, yet one equally at home either in politics or Gothic fiction': Edward J. Ingebretsen (1998), pp. 91/109

²⁷ Markman Ellis (2000), p. 167; del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 115

Turning to an outline of del Toro and Hogan's trilogy, as stated, it follows an 'overcoming the monster' plot arc – a monster appears; disbelief allows for monstrosity to take hold; a rallying of those who understand the threat posed leads to its apparent defeat.²⁸ The Master is flown into New York's JFK airport courtesy of a billionaire capitalist, conjoining undead incursive aggression with Palmer's home-grown occult misanthropy, turning those on board Regis Air 'Flight 753, Berlin (TXL) to New York (JFK), 9/24/10' and instigating a rapid infection of America and eventually the world via the gateway city of New York.²⁹ With the modern bogeyman of 'Terrorist sabotage [...] suspected as the cause', a nuclear winter is eventually introduced to blot out the sun and enable the unleashing of a global spread of vampirism:

*The nuclear explosions triggered earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Tons and tons of ash were injected into the stratosphere, along with sulfuric acid and massive amounts of greenhouse gas carbon dioxide [...] the ash-saturated stratosphere, cycling over the planet, absorbing sunlight at levels reaching 80 to 90 percent.*³⁰

Despite a somewhat pragmatic evaluation, listing the effects of nuclear explosions around the planet, and explaining the results, science is shown as usurped by religion: from this comes '*chaos and the certainty of the Rapture*'.³¹ The trilogy ends with a showdown that sees this vampire routed but regaining archangelic status, a 'spirit again, flesh no more', leaving behind a few humans to begin again, some seeking revenge, some claiming 'to have taken down the *strigoi*', some determined to learn: 'embark[ing] upon "the Setrakian Project," curating and posting the entirety of the old professor's writings and source materials on the Internet, free for all' (as a brief aside, Abraham Setrakian is the source of vampiric knowledge and, as such, is the source of power needed to defeat the antagonist Master).³² But, as with all vampire Monsters narratives, the conclusion contains

²⁸ See Christopher Booker, 'Overcoming the Monster', in *The Seven Basic Plots; Why We Tell Stories* (London and New York: Continuum [2004] 2005), pp. 21-30

²⁹ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 9; In what cannot be a coincidence, the airline name, Regis (from the Latin verb meaning to govern or rule / noun meaning king or ruler), foreshadows the Master's aspirations towards global dominion

³⁰ del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 304

³¹ del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 305

³² del Toro and Hogan (2011), pp. 364, 370; '*Strigoi* (female, *strigoaica*) is closely related to the Romanian word *striga* (a witch), which in turn was derived from the Latin *strix*, the word for a

an underlying capacity for revenant terror should lessons not be heeded, or complacency (or in this instance, secularized 'sinfulness') dominate once more.

This outline frames a vampiric totalitarian surveillance network, where the Master 'psychically [...] see[s] through' any of the eyes of his 'Brood', with a degree of influence and control that goes beyond anything contemporaneously attempted by either instigators of the Patriot Act or those controlling available technologies, particularly those used for communication: 'The Master is creating minions by the thousands [...] His strain is spreading. These are beings you cannot control, not through power or influence.'³³ These vampires are a mass extension of a terroristic event, literal manifestations of the causal spread of post-9/11 fear, shown and re-shown, talked about and documented almost ad infinitum in the days, weeks, months and years after September 2001.

Beginning under a solar occultation – a portentous 'creeping blackness' with 'the image of the sun subordinated to the moon' – acts as a metaphor for humanity subordinated to the numinous power of vampirism and is a 'prelude to [...] devastation'.³⁴ This is the portent for the nuclear winter touched on above, del Toro and Hogan's supernatural terror spreads under a perpetual night brought about by a series of nuclear explosions that blot out the benefits of a 'weapons grade' sun, whose 'short-wave UVC [rays are...] Germicidal, used for sterilization' and can destroy vampiric 'DNA bonds'.³⁵ The linguistic aggressiveness of 'subordination', 'devastation', and 'weapons' speaks of a fear-laced power struggle between humans and undead as this vampirism turns a modern (pseudo-religious) faith in the sovereignty of science and materiality on itself, drawing on

screech owl that was extended to refer to a demon that attacked children at night': J. Gordon Melton, *The Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia of the Undead* (Detroit, London: Visible Ink Press, 1999), pp. 575-576

³³ del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 187; del Toro and Hogan (2011), p. 370; del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 233

³⁴ del Toro and Hogan (2009), pp. 77, 91

³⁵ del Toro and Hogan (2009), pp. 239, 240; Again, linking vampiric terror to the events of 9/11, a BBC news report in 2002 proposed that 'Al-Qaeda initially planned to fly hijacked jets into nuclear installations - rather than the World Trade Center and the Pentagon - according to an Arab journalist who says he interviewed two of the group's masterminds': 'Al-Qaeda "plotted nuclear attacks"' 8 September 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/2244146.stm> [accessed 28 June 2017]

notions such as Andrew Smith's, who locates it in 'language of the apocalypse and a fallen world' of an America that 'may well be beyond redemption' as del Toro and Hogan present an overwhelming of all human environments.³⁶

Aside from regular flashback sections, which focus on vampire hunter Setrakian's history and, through him, revelations of the Master's earlier parasitical interactions in Europe – for example his preying on extermination camp internees during World War II as a microcosmic precursor to his eventual globalized parasitism – action in this trilogy is set in a recognizable contemporary environment. At the time of publication, events centre round a near-future America, with New York, JFK airport, and the ruins of the World Trade Centre as spaces strategic to the Master's apocalyptic impetus and unsubtle reminders of ongoing fear-power dynamics after 9/11.³⁷ Setrakian's personal history and musings in the flashbacks play a pivotal choric role in explaining the Master's history and weaknesses. The prologue conflates fairy tale, folklore, and *Dracula* as the source material for a modern vampire narrative, presented as a moment in Setrakian's childhood back-story. Set in Romania approximately ten years before World War II, Setrakian (and readers) first learn of the Master through 'A bubbeh meiseh, a "grandmother's story." A fairy tale. A legend.'³⁸ From this more traditional imagery, the introduction jumps forward, in a temporal and spatial shift from Old World Eastern Europe to New World New York with Regis Air 'Flight 753' as the Master's means of ingress, exploring a paranoia surrounding air travel that plays on a collective memory of the 9/11 hijacking of aeroplanes for use as

³⁶ Biblically inspired self-loathing has been a persistent presence in American fiction: See Andrew Smith, 'Locating the self in the post-apocalypse: the American Gothic journeys of Jack Kerouac, Cormac McCarthy and Jim Crace', in *Ecogothic*, ed. by Andrew Smith and William Hughes (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 136; A brief consideration of 'faith' implies subjectivity, which is arguably the default setting for human understanding. Empiricism and rationality may imply an impetus towards objectivity, but is it truly possible to separate self from situation? Sentience / perception are necessary parts of human interpretation. Post-Enlightenment belief or faith in science, medicine and materiality may be all-pervading in modern culture, but faith in the supernatural, in deities that cannot be seen or proved continues to govern human behaviour

³⁷ The Nazi World War II extermination camp Treblinka is described as 'a fertile feeding ground', where the Master 'would graze on the unnoticed, the forgotten, the inconsequential': del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 118

³⁸ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 1; See "'They exist even before we dream of them": A Brief Introduction to Vampires and America's Key Vampire Fiction' in the introduction above

weapons alongside a post-9/11 trepidation that even the most heightened security cannot prevent the actions of individuals determined to commit acts of terror.³⁹

The Master arrives in New York – referred to as ‘the crossroads of the world’ – to instigate a global coup, eradicating those humans who either pose a hindrance (such as intellectuals, political leaders, and scientists) or serve no purpose as food sources (untended humans become livestock, interred in ‘Human stockyards. Blood farms spread out across the country, the world’), and turning the rest into controllable ‘drone[s]’.⁴⁰ The ‘drone’ insect / surveillance metaphor is extended as the newly turned vampires are described by Setrakian as ‘part of a hive. A body of many parts but one single will’, expendable extensions of the Master’s monstrosity.⁴¹ In a perversion of capitalist ‘vampire thirst for the living blood of labour’, each member of this hive is sucked dry of humanity and, on becoming undead, reduced to being part of the pathways of a vast neural network, used as the Master’s eyes, ears, and voice whenever desired.⁴² This puppetry develops Setrakian’s description of Ozryel as ‘he of [...] the many eyes and the many mouths’; this vampire ‘has as many tongues as there are men on earth [which...] speaks of how he can multiply, how he can spread’.⁴³ Despite imagery that carries a correspondence to compound fly eyes, the synecdochal repetitiousness of

³⁹ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 9; del Toro and Hogan’s *The Strain* unites generic novelty and continuity as, for example, the folkloric premise that vampires ‘cannot cross running water’ is made part of the Ancients’ ‘very origin’ – ‘this seventh piece [of the sundered Ozryel] was flung into the ocean, submerged many leagues deep’ – and positioned as the reason behind these vampires ‘remain[ing] trapped between moving bodies of water’ unless assisted. Where Dracula ‘ingeniously creates weather conditions that allow him to land’ in Whitby harbour, Palmer circumvents any close contact with water by aiding the Master with air travel: del Toro and Hogan (2011), pp. 188-189; Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. 77, f. 9; See ‘Sec. 801. Terrorist Attacks and Other Acts of Violence Against Mass Transportation Systems’, *Uniting and Strengthening of America by Providing Appropriate Tools required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT ACT)* of 2001 Public Law 107-56 107th Congress, <<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-107hr3162enr/pdf/BILLS-107hr3162enr.pdf>> [accessed 10 April 2012]

⁴⁰ Humans are interred in facilities such as ‘the Black Forest Solutions meatpacking facility in Upstate New York’: del Toro and Chuck Hogan (2009), p. 84; del Toro and Hogan (2010), pp. 286, 95

⁴¹ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 231

⁴² Karl Marx, *Capital A Critique of Political Economy Volume I Book One: The Process of Production of Capital*, <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Capital-Volume-I.pdf>> [accessed 14 January 2010] (p. 175)

⁴³ del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 197

'many' eyes, alongside mouths, and tongues enhances the representation of exponential multiplication, lending the Master an omniscience that resonates profane Godhood, deifying this consumption of consumers. Whatever the divine root may be, this is a vampire apocalypse that employs man-made technology against humanity (a theme that is central to chapter two's discussion of Cronin's man-made vampires), the first American victims – those passengers of Regis Air Flight 753 – effectively become biological dirty bombs, spreading the vampire virus throughout New York as the Master uses the U.S. as a springboard for a world-wide extermination of American-influenced modern human culture.

Captured in Catherine Spooner's summary of U.S. Gothic as an exploration of threats within the 'dark side of the American dream of liberty and transcendence', del Toro and Hogan present a U.S. prey to rapid breakdown of normative social patterns as the Master's fascistic undead new world order takes hold: through exploitation of Palmer as an embodiment of capitalism, the Master leapfrogs from earlier individualized exploitations reminiscent of *Dracula* to a global dictatorship.⁴⁴ However, *The Strain* concludes on a (dangerously banal) note of hope for resuming humanity, the remaining members of del Toro and Hogan's Crew of Light, Martinez and Fet, espousing a replacement for capitalist complacency with a belief that 'love [is] the answer to everything'.⁴⁵ The somewhat pyrrhic victory over monstrosity (this is, after all, a devastated post-nuclear U.S.), as with *Dracula*, to which discussion will now turn, is paired with a warning: 'Old faiths had been shattered; others had been reaffirmed. But everything was open to question.'⁴⁶ There is no return to a modern western pretence of stability, built in the impossibility of capitalism's dangerous insistence on perpetual economic growth and 'progress'. At the end of this trilogy, what is offered as an alternative to vampiric catastrophe harbours a possibility of new monstrosity – a disquietingly proscriptive heteronormativity of idealized coupling complete with children in an oxymoronic post-apocalyptic-come-bucolic setting.

⁴⁴ Catherine Spooner, *Contemporary Gothic* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p. 163

⁴⁵ del Toro and Hogan (2011), p. 371

⁴⁶ del Toro and Hogan (2011), p. 369

‘at once both familiar and monstrous’: Exploiting and Extending Generic Knowns⁴⁷

Discussion now turns to a consideration of the interplay with generic identifiers present within del Toro and Hogan’s trilogy as a means of understanding how the Master, as a post-millennial undead antagonist Monster, integrates into the vampire fiction continuum. The Master, as aggressor, and the terror manifested in apocalyptic mass vampirism of *The Strain* expands from two of the three key generically influential texts identified in the introduction: the primer that is *Dracula* and Matheson’s *I Am Legend*. *The Strain* carries forward fears of trespass and transgression evident within *Dracula* as well as the mass infection of *I Am Legend* in its confrontation of contemporary American concerns surrounding (bio)terrorism and the potential downfall of America as superpower, its global hegemony reduced to being a ‘ground zero’ for an annihilation of humanity.⁴⁸

That *Dracula*, specifically the metafictional image of Lugosi’s portrayal as the model that has shaped popular U.S. perceptions of vampires since the 1930s, is a direct influence on *The Strain* is evidenced in an outline by Setrakian that places the character as a simultaneously indicative *and* misleading paradigm for del Toro and Hogan’s vampire Master:

Think [...] along the lines of a man with a black cape. Fangs. Funny accent [...] Now take away the cape and fangs. The funny accent. Take away anything funny about it.⁴⁹

Through Setrakian, del Toro and Hogan at once acknowledge *and* distance the Master from what have become sometimes risibly distinct aspects of Lugosi’s abiding characterization (the cape and ‘funny’ Hungarian accent). Lugosi may be used as a concept for understanding that the Master is a vampire, but his

⁴⁷ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 306

⁴⁸ In post-9/11 American culture, Ground Zero is understandable as a shorthand not only for a focal point of terroristic activity but also as a motivation for retaliatory impulses. As Davis explains, ‘Ground zero, the term now used to designate the rubble of what was once the World Trade Center, was the term coined in Alamogordo, New Mexico to identify the epicenter where the first Atomic Bomb was detonated. It was then used to locate the same place in Hiroshima and Nagasaki so that we could measure with precision the force of the Bomb and gauge its effects’: Walter A. Davis, ‘Death’s Dream Kingdom: The American Psyche After 9-11’, *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society*, 8, 1 (2003), 127-132, p. 127

⁴⁹ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 196

appearance and characterization, repeatedly undermined as ‘funny’ are denuded of any dread. In this, there is an attempt to manifest through this character a terror of what, in *American Vampire*, America’s principal contemporary horror writer Stephen King declares to be the darker side of contemporary cultural ideology: ‘a grasping, stop-at-nothing hunger for [...] power.’⁵⁰ Far from Stoker’s small-scale aristocratic terrorizer of genteel Victorian drawing rooms, the Master is an aggressive instigator of ‘painful, catastrophic changes’ that produce a ‘new state of being’ emanating from New York as the core of modern capitalism and therefore the focal point of a deified wrath meted out through the Master.⁵¹ In highlighting this recognizable modern vampiric archetype as a clichéd form (in interview, del Toro voices a disdain for Lugosi’s Count as his ‘least favourite vampire [...] all [he] saw was an uncle in a cape’), del Toro and Hogan reinvigorate vampiric monstrosity, extending understanding of the undead into a matrix of devastation emanating *from*, rather than *antithetical to*, a Christian source that is sent by a vengeful deity to punish this supposedly Christian superpower’s thrall to the modern gods of capitalism and consumerism.⁵²

The symbolic placement of vampiric incursion at the geographical and ideological heart of the modern Western world further demonstrates an intertextuality with *Dracula*, which illustrates *fin de siècle* British Imperialist paranoia. As Moretti states in discussing the influence of place on novels:

geography is not an inert container [...] where cultural history “happens”, but an active force that pervades the literary field and shapes it [...] a semiotic domain around which a plot coalesces and self-organizes.⁵³

⁵⁰ Stephen King, ‘Suck on This’, in Scott Snyder, Raphael Albuquerque and Stephen King, *American Vampire* (New York: DC Comics, 2010), n.p.

⁵¹ My emphasis: del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 196

⁵² Ned Hinkle interviews Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan about the second novel in *The Strain* trilogy: Ned Hinkle, ‘Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan – *The Fall*’, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQ3i35X44DI&ebc=ANyPxKrQcyHRPJHhfRR45Ope2dnIHVB9MNBKqxYew92e_o34451TOexrn96_wNn44_1y1seYknzH_rei8g73XWjeAQ6yUpiu0w> [accessed 29 March 2016] (00.26.03); although del Toro professes to a level of disdain for Lugosi’s *Dracula*, there exists a narrative ambivalence, with the Master himself, as a ‘huge being wearing a long, dark cloak’, modelling Lugosi’s image: see Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan (2009), p. 350

⁵³ Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (London and New York: Verso, 1998), pp. 3, 5

Dracula's 'invasion of the heart of London [in...] a decade in which national, racial, and even human boundaries appeared increasingly permeable', and the concerns surrounding his ingressive reflection of the potential for undermining British global hegemony, find equivalencies in fears associated with a threatening of the international authority held by twenty-first century America raised by the nebulosity of terrorist bogeymen.⁵⁴ This placement in New York, with much of the action taking part in and around JFK International Airport and the World Trade Centre / Ground Zero site, bases narrative action at the nexus of the modern world. Del Toro and Hogan's embracing of the destabilizing 'specter of 9/11' on American culture echoes the 'imperial decay' of a late nineteenth-century London targeted by Dracula's threatening incursion: as Baudrillard suggests of the Twin Towers, its 'symbolic collapse' represents an 'internal fragility' whereby America becomes party to its own 'liquidation' and 'joined in the game of terrorism'.⁵⁵ That which is most feared, the loss of global status, is destroyed from within through Palmer's illegitimate aid of the Master's monstrosity.

Despite del Toro's apparent negativity towards Lugosi's portrayal, this trilogy's plot arc follows the same fundamental dynamic as *Dracula*: vampiric incursion – hesitation / peril – human victory. Fundamental to this plot arc is a modelling of Stoker's Crew of Light's quest to destroy Dracula as the monster. Del Toro and Hogan's vampire narrative sees CDC doctor Ephraim 'Eph' Goodweather (whose character can be seen to loosely equate with that of Van Helsing's follower Jonathan Harker) lead an inverted pursuit and destruction as, although *Dracula* and *The Strain* trilogy both show defeat of their vampires, del Toro and Hogan's Master effectively becomes chaser and those who seek to destroy him the

⁵⁴ Skal and Auerbach, 'Preface', in Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. xi

⁵⁵ Within the story, some of those Port Authority HAZMAT officers dealing with the bodies taken from Regis Flight 753 are also said to have been involved with the Ground Zero site after 9/11, their post-traumatic stress remaining unresolved: 'The specter of 9/11 still hung over many of these Port Authority officers, and the current bewildering mass-casualty situation had brought it crashing down again': Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan (2009), p. 58; Stephen D. Arata, 'The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization', in Stoker ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), pp.462-470 (first publ. in *Victorian Studies* (Summer 1990): 627-34), p. 465; Baudrillard, trans. by Turner [2002] 2003), p. 45

chased.⁵⁶ An updating of transportation methods, with trains and horses transposed into cars and helicopters – water-based transport being the only shared form – and the destination of an island shaped like a biohazard symbol situated on Lake Ontario do little to disguise this adherence to the antecedent tale, and the new/old Ground Zero site where the archangel Ozryel's blood 'seeped into the earth and [...] the blood worms were born', like Dracula's homeland, becomes the location of both vampiric beginning and end.⁵⁷

Here, as discussed above and in divergence from Stoker's Count who is capable of withstanding exposure to sunlight, vampires adhere to the mythology that they possess a lethal level of photosensitivity in line with cinematic adaptations of *Dracula* beginning with the German Expressionist horror film *Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens* (1922). Del Toro and Hogan use scientific jargon, such as 'UVC' (Ultraviolet radiation type C) and 'DNA' (deoxyribonucleic acid – the genetic building material present in all living organisms), to create a degree of pseudo-plausibility for modern, more scientifically aware, readers. This tension between technology and science on one side and the supernatural / folkloric on the other can be seen in *Dracula* – where the latest innovations such as 'shorthand, typewriters, dictating machines, [and] cameras' are used against a vampiric 'ancient enemy' – and continues into the mass infection of Matheson's *I Am Legend*.⁵⁸ Matheson's protagonist human, Neville, offers a continuation of Stoker's tension between science and the supernatural. Where Stoker employs technology such as trains and typewriters *alongside* religious paraphernalia like holy water, communion wafers, and crucifixes in the defeat of Dracula's vampiric menace, Matheson contests superstitious tropes such as 'The cross [...] The soil [...] Running water [...] Sunlight [...] The stake [...] The mirror [...] Garlic', as Neville

⁵⁶ In *The Night Eternal*, Goodweather, his son Zach, and Quinlan (a 'born' vampire) are chased by the Master to his point of origin – an island on Lake Ontario – and destroy him: See Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan, 'Awakening to Fire', in *The Night Eternal* (London: Harper Collins, 2011), pp. 275-365

⁵⁷ del Toro and Hogan (2011), p. 304; The biohazard symbol is one that is a prominent motif within this series of novels, adorning its covers and the section breaks within. The symbol speaks of mass infection that links back to Matheson's *I Am Legend* and more recent infection narratives such as *28 Days Later* and *28 Weeks Later*

⁵⁸ Auerbach and Skal 'Preface', in Stoker ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. x

rants about God's punishment 'for our great transgressions!'⁵⁹ Vampirism as 'the terrible force of His almighty wrath!' is also an infection or 'a bacillus [...] a cylindrical bacterium [...] a facultative saprophyte'.⁶⁰ This conflicted understanding reads as a forerunner for del Toro and Hogan's efforts to bring scientific plausibility to a vampire born of archangel blood: this vampirism is a 'capillary parasite that reproduces in the infected', despite the source of this 'blood worm' being a fantastic 'six-winged angel, wearing a crown of thorns, with a face both blind and mouth-less – but with multiple mouths festooning each of its wings.'⁶¹ In this way, del Toro and Hogan maintain the generic precedent of dissonant classification of the undead in *Dracula* and *I Am Legend*, their vampire monster understandable as both scientifically justified if not explicable as well as supernatural. The hesitation to acknowledge the supernatural within modern secularized U.S. culture provides a catalyst for the 'terrible force' of the Master in a conflation of Christianity and capitalist consumption that is part of a pastiche of biblical judgement which, by *The Night Eternal*, morphs into an allegorical tale of divine punishment, using humans and their technological advances against humans.

In contrast with its intertextual allusions to the individualized menace of *Dracula*, the dominant theme of apocalypse in del Toro and Hogan's trilogy shows a tracking back to the mass infections and rapid breakdown of normative social patterns that continues this turning of humans against humans in Matheson's *I Am Legend*. Matheson's protagonist Neville becoming the last human reverses the model of vampirism in a post-human one against the many.⁶² As part of this, Matheson appropriates descriptors for Neville more usually associated with undead antagonists, ironically locating this human 'of English-German stock' with 'bright blue [...] eyes' as a 'black terror to be destroyed'.⁶³ Matheson's Cold War

⁵⁹ Richard Matheson, *I Am Legend* (London: Gollancz, [1954] 2001), p. 85

⁶⁰ Matheson ([1954] 2001), pp. 85, 106, 133, 135

⁶¹ Attempting to bring scientific plausibility to supernatural beings is also a central theme of Octavia Butler's *Fledgling*, discussed in chapter six, where the central protagonist is a genetically modified female vampire; del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 218; del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 193

⁶² This theme is, as previously mentioned, the influence for the 1971 film adaptation, *The Omega Man*

⁶³ Matheson ([1954] 2001), pp. 8, 160

influenced tale of the destruction of suburban America by a rapid expansion of vampirism sees the American *human* become a locus of antagonism in a newly formed vampire culture and, in much the same way, del Toro and Hogan's few remaining vigilante humans are a focus for the Master's vampire-minion masses. Matheson's vampiric neo-suburbia represents the fear of a potential routing of America as capitalist superpower by the Communist bogeymen, perceived as hiding in the shadows or 'under the bed', like all good Monsters. Neville's statement about vampires – 'They are loathed because they are feared' – mirrors the then cultural acquiescence to a construction of 'Commies' as an ideological threat, with hatred born of terror, of the unknown, creating a Freudian 'realm of the frightening' and 'evok[ing] fear and dread.'⁶⁴ Like Matheson, del Toro and Hogan also reflect contemporary cultural concerns in their portrayal of the mass spread of vampirism from New York out across the globe as a fantastic metaphor for the contagious sweep of Americanization followed by a post-9/11 fear of terrorism: fear of what might be either repeated or amplified is shown in a reference to 'four designated Centers for Bioterrorism Preparedness Planning in New York City.'⁶⁵ It is somehow assumed that a terroristic event might follow a familiar pattern, despite the very nature of terror being centred round the unknown. And it is to the Master as fantastic conduit for an unexpected and unknown devastation of Amero-centric power dynamics, and fears of a terroristic laying waste to the U.S. that discussion now turns.

'the Angel of Death': The Master as Post-9/11 Terror'⁶⁶

Essential to a narrative that takes the hostility of an (an all-too-literal) vampiric 'puncturing' to the cataclysmic, the Master stretches immediate fears of

⁶⁴ As Neville states in his 'thesis': 'Vampires are prejudiced against [...] search your soul, lovie – is the vampire so bad? All he does is drink blood [...] Normalcy was a majority concept, the standard of many and not the standard of just one man': Matheson ([1954] 2001), pp. 26, 160; Freud, trans. by McLintock (2003)

⁶⁵ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 63

⁶⁶ del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 197; Harvard history professor Lisa McGirr suggests that, in America, the apocalyptic is linked to what she terms 'religiosity': Michael Goldfarb, 'Donald Trump and the Politics of Paranoia', <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-35382599>> [accessed 24 February 2016]

terroristic hostility and a potential usurpation of U.S. global dominance into the fantastic in a subordination of America to an overwhelming interloping terror. Fear and power dynamics in *The Strain* exploit a tension between secularized capitalist consumerism and Christianity, with the Master manipulating Palmer's solipsistic assumption that immortality can be bought to gain access to New York and, through it, spread vampirism across the globe. Although seemingly self-governing in his dark desire for dominion, it must be remembered that the Master is an instrument of punishment, the puppet of a capricious Christian God sent to devastate a U.S. population in thrall to the small-'g' gods of consumer-driven culture. Revealing hackneyed despotic sovereign / theocratic ambitions that speak of the imperative of generic predecessors such as Dracula as much as they are antithetical to U.S. claims to republican authority, the Master states, '*I seek domination [...] All relationships are based on power. Domination and submission [...] No equality [...] There is only one king in a kingdom*'.⁶⁷ This autocratic aim for absolute global authority, ridding the world of its '*glorified little monkeys*', is an Old Testament-style fire and brimstone punishment for what, at best, is a complacency towards, and at worst, is a cultural dominance of capital vices (pride, greed, lust, gluttony, sloth, wrath, and envy).⁶⁸

Del Toro and Hogan's conjuring of a vampiric near-destruction of humanity 'spreading [...] throughout the country and across the globe', positions the Master as what Ingebretsen suggests of Monsters: he is a site of 'contested meaning', created from the sacred but enabled by the profane.⁶⁹ As alluded to above, this monstrous tension is evidenced from the outset. In the prologue, Josef Sardu – aristocratic son of a Polish nobleman – becomes a parasitized host body for the Master. Sardu's revenant form is turned from a benevolent giver of gifts, with 'so much compassion – for the poor, for the hardworking, for the sick [...] and much beloved by his people' to a malign taker of lives, draining local villagers for his undead sustenance.⁷⁰ As J. Hillis Miller discusses in 'The Critic as Host', the giving

⁶⁷ del Toro and Hogan (2011), p. 314

⁶⁸ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 307

⁶⁹ del Toro and Hogan (2010), pp. 153-154; Ingebretsen (1998), p. 109

⁷⁰ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 2

and taking of gifts is a complicated correlation.⁷¹ Sardu's receipt of the Master's unwanted 'gift' (which translates from German as a noun meaning poison or toxin) of vampirism is a toxic act that irrevocably binds together both giver and receiver.⁷² With the 'underweight and sickly' boy Setrakian and Sardu/the Master as a 'giant', the 'bubbeh mesieh' fairy tale opening presages a 'giant killer' reassuring ending in which the giant/monster must be slain.⁷³ Sardu's description as a humble and compassionate 'gentle giant', who is 'much beloved by his people' is quickly nullified as, once host body for the Master, his appearance is de-humanized:⁷⁴

A thin, black shadow [...] Its skin was shriveled and dark, blending with the fold of its dark, loose robes. Much like an animated blotch of ink. The Thing moved effortlessly, a weightless phantom gliding across the floor.⁷⁵

Del Toro and Hogan's monstrous repetition of amorphously dark imagery in the account of this 'animated' Rorschach test's spectrality distinguishes the Master as a numinous vehicle for fear. The Master's power is made evident in his possession of 'great strength, matching his superhuman size' and leaving his village 'accursed', but this is balanced by the familiar generic trope that is the incapacity to tolerate sunlight; all small-scale precursors of the devastation to come.⁷⁶ His mutation, courtesy of 'capillary parasite[s]', contrasts a delicate human with 'a giant who prowls the moonlit land like a god of the night.'⁷⁷ Sardu's 'legend' is thus recognizable as conforming to the plastic vampiric traits introduced into American popular culture in the decades since Tod Browning's *Dracula* horrified cinema-goers: like Dracula, the Master takes the form of a preternaturally strong Eastern European nobleman firmly associated with nocturnal and animalistic behaviour patterns. Like his own 'Renfield' Palmer, the Master is a demonstration of the corruption of power, a democrat turned despot.

⁷¹ J. Hillis Miller, 'The Critic as Host', *Critical Inquiry*, 3, 3 (1977), 439-447

⁷² Hillis Miller (1977), p. 445

⁷³ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 1

⁷⁴ del Toro and Hogan (2009), pp. 1, 2

⁷⁵ del Toro and Hogan (2009), pp. 26, 116

⁷⁶ del Toro and Hogan (2009), pp. 3, 4

⁷⁷ del Toro and Hogan (2009), pp. 218, 4

Moving from the Master to his human opposition displays a trail of homeland security agents, with contextually recognizable acronyms, such as 'CDC', 'OCME', and 'TSA', all pertaining to various authorities set up to monitor and contain such things as biological hazards and terroristic threats within American jurisdiction.⁷⁸ The assumed authority of these security agents is based on a faith not in organized religion but in logic and science and allows for an obligatory hesitation. As a standard trope in Gothic fiction, unpreparedness permits the ingress of fantastic beings into a recognizable world, explained by Tzvetan Todorov as 'that hesitation experienced by a person [or persons] who knows [or is willing to acknowledge] only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event.'⁷⁹ Instead of considering the possibility of Gothic or deific Monsters, del Toro and Hogan's authority figures advance modern scientific investigatory methods that, as expected, offer little defence against the spread of this vampire's 'blood worms'. The assumption that modern medical science can find a cure for a 'parasite that reproduces in the infected' draws the plot towards conforming to the generic tradition begun in the mass infection of *I Am Legend* (discussed above), with this vampirism 'overwhelm[ing] and transform[ing] the victim', and un-death 'consuming' the population of New York before going global.⁸⁰

When faced with a darkened aeroplane which has seemingly lost all power on the runway after landing at JFK airport, the CDC investigators and central protagonists Goodweather and Martinez turn to proven (and temporarily foregrounded) possibilities such as hijacking, hostages, and bombs. The non-professional character of baggage handler Lorenza Ruiz, who is first to approach the aeroplane, is the first human afforded instincts that suggest a supernatural cause: the technological comprehension of the plane is subsumed by corruption as it appears like 'a large, rotting corpse [...] a festering carcass; a dying leviathan.'⁸¹ Ruiz's foreboding makes plain the association with the vast aeroplane with death, the

⁷⁸ The acronyms are: CDC – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; OCME – Office of the Chief Medical Examiner; and TSA – Transport Security Administration

⁷⁹ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. by Richard Howard (Cleveland and London: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1973), p. 25

⁸⁰ del Toro and Hogan (2009), pp. 218, 277

⁸¹ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 15

adjectival connection to monstrous decomposition at odds with the image of an aeroplane as modern technological paradigm. Doctors from the CDC initially assume the ‘plane full of corpses’ are victims of ‘some kind of [...] totally new emerging pathogen [...] something *man-made*.’⁸² Indeed, as raised at the start of the introduction above, vampire narratives *are* man-made, originating from human cultures across the world and across time, but del Toro and Hogan expand the vampiric through assimilation of modern bio-thriller tropes, referred to by Ruth Mayer as ‘discourse[s] on communication, contact, and contamination’ that speculate upon biological threats, to inform the formative direction of vampirism in *The Strain*.⁸³ The plot dominance of this vampiric bio-threat is a contrivance mostly confined to the first book’s obligatory hesitation, the title of which is alluded to by the character Pete O’Connell, CDC ‘chief of Infectious Disease Pathology’:

It’s a viral *strain* [...] A remarkable bit of genetic acid [...] The glycoprotein has amazing binding characteristics [...] This little bugger doesn’t merely hijack the host cell, tricking it into reproducing more copies of itself. No—it fuses to the RNA [...] it’s making a copy of itself mated with the host cell [...] It could change its host [...] These vampires were viruses incarnate.⁸⁴

O’Connell’s language is redolent not only of how vampire fiction has ‘fused’ and ‘mated’ with American culture but also of a widely held pragmatic belief in medical science (what might be considered as pretext for a jealous deity reduced to angry parent figure providing the premeditation of creating the means for an apocalyptic punishment, which is disregarded by most characters until the end of book two, *The Fall*). Adjectives such as ‘remarkable’ and ‘amazing’ display an exaggerated fascination that is deflated by the reductive and anticlimactic description of this devastating contagion as a ‘little bugger’. This pair-bonding of pseudo-scientific terminology with scare-mongering, using terms such as ‘host cell’ and ‘RNA’ alongside ‘hijacking’, ‘tricking’ and ‘reproducing’, continues to blend bio-thriller and Gothic generic traits, coalescing modern understanding of genetics and mutation with superstitions surrounding plagues and monstrosity.

⁸² My emphasis: del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 60

⁸³ Ruth Mayer, ‘Virus Discourse: The Rhetoric of Threat and Terrorism in the Biothriller’, *Cultural Critique*, 66 (2007), 1-20, p. 2

⁸⁴ My emphasis: del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 277

As part of this, in contrast with Stoker's Count's capacity for withstanding exposure to sunlight, as already referred to, these vampires adhere to the twentieth-century cinematically-stimulated myth that they possess a lethal level of photosensitivity, with UVC as 'weapons grade' containing bellicose echoes of George W. Bush's misguided 'war on terror' (both arguably products of fantasy). Through over-confidence in scientific understanding, viral contamination instigated by the Master is unwittingly allowed to become a global anti-anthropocentric purgative, undoing all the knowns of modern human culture as del Toro and Hogan assimilate fears of the destructive force of terrorist activity – both domestic and incursive – into tropes of invasive parasitism, binding American culture to its terrors through the undead.

Unthinking widespread faith in science and technology, such as air travel and nuclear energy / ordnance, reflects in the unpreparedness that allows for incursion of the fantastic into a known world through hesitation, disbelief, and denial amongst government agencies, media and rank-and-file citizens alike. Coming back to this trilogy's engagement with the possibility of acts of terrorism on the scale of 9/11 or greater as a benchmark fear in modern mainland America, the assumption that the apparent deaths on Regis Air Flight 7-5-3 represent 'a "closed universe" mass disaster [...] with a fixed and knowable number of casualties' correlates with Parker and Stern's 2002 suggestion that there had been an 'overconfidence and complacency' in security systems, particularly airline security leading up to the terrorist hijackings in 2001.⁸⁵ In the opening of *The Fall*, faith in something beyond material understanding – a U.S. sense that their (culturally specific) version of reality is the only correct one – is mocked and discredited online, with Goodweather noting in a diary entry that his "*uncontestable video evidence*" [was...] *drowned in thousands of smirking rebuttals and parodies that YouTube'd [them] beyond all hope.*⁸⁶ This widespread denouncement uses the novelty of online technology to lend recognizable

⁸⁵ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 69; Charles F. Parker and Eric K. Stern, 'Blindsided? September 11 and the Origins of Strategic Surprise', *Political Psychology, Special Issue: 9/11 and Its Aftermath: Perspectives from Political Psychology*, 23, 3 (2002), 601-630, p. 606

⁸⁶ del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 1

contemporary credence to a frustration of this vampire monster's challengers. An unbelieving public 'drowning' of 'uncontestable' audio-visual confirmation implies an active assurance that the members of del Toro and Hogan's twenty-first century Crew of Light struggle to gain credence or assistance before their necessary triumph against this formidable intruder.

As the melodramatic Setrakian quotation at the start of this chapter suggests, del Toro and Hogan's vampire Master targets humanity in a fantastic exaggeration of terroristic behaviour: 'What we are discussing here is nothing less than the fate of the human race'.⁸⁷ Like terroristic unknowns, this alien threat is in tension with what is disparaged as an overconfidence in an assumed sacrosanct superpower: 'this is America – where everything is known and understood, and God is a benevolent dictator, and the future must always be bright'.⁸⁸ While the Master holds direct sway over 'the fate of the human race', del Toro and Hogan present a modern America where knowns are not guaranteed. Instead God is the source of the Master's malevolence and the future is enveloped in the darkness of a nuclear winter. In directing aggression towards America and, through it, the 'human race', the Master negatively reinforces the nation's globally dominant status alongside exposing 'God' as far from the benevolent divine champion of American exceptionality – he is brutally authoritarian root of this vampire monster's apocalyptic rampage. By supersizing Gothic techniques such as sensation and tyranny, del Toro and Hogan create a hellish Piranesian world 'degenerated into toxic prisons', with large swathes of humanity obliterated or held in captivity, thereby providing a controlled hit of fantastic anxiety that identifies America as the modern metaphorical global jugular.⁸⁹

The Master's tyrannical ambition to overthrow humanity on a global scale takes to a terrestrial extreme Franco Moretti's proposal that vampires are 'impelled towards a continuous growth, an unlimited expansion of [their] domain'.⁹⁰ The

⁸⁷ del Toro and Hogan (2009), pp. 207, 216

⁸⁸ del Toro and Hogan (2009), pp. 207, 216

⁸⁹ del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 305

⁹⁰ Franco Moretti, '[A Capital Dracula]', in Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), pp.431-444 (first publ. in Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders: On the Sociology of Literary Forms*, trans.

Master, whose name is a none-too-subtle indicator of his seemingly ‘unlimited’ ambitions, is essentially, as already identified, the product of a deviant archangel’s blood, described in abstracted terms by the Van Helsing-style character Abraham Setrakian as ‘savage [...] holy [...] The hideous transcendent’.⁹¹ In its vampiric penetration of a global dominant, *The Strain* expands the vampire mythos through the Master’s ‘savage’ holiness. Far from the image of pudgy putti frequently turned to as representatives of the angelic, his ‘holiness’ stems from a being possessed, as mentioned above, with ‘four faces, [...] many eyes, and [...] many mouths [...] seventy thousand feet and four thousand wings.’⁹² The Master’s archangelic origins, as heavenly warrior, are incorporated into the vampiric as, for example, he is shown to be vulnerable to silver because it is ‘closest’ to the archangel Michael’s blood drunk by Ozryel in ‘[t]ranscendent perversion’, and sunlight ‘UVC’ is extremely damaging, bordering on fatal, as ‘the closest thing to God’s face on earth’.⁹³ The Master, then, is a reminder that the Archangel Ozryel, from whose blood he originates, has nothing to do with cherubs and putti, instead he is a ‘hideous’ and superior bringer of terror and death.

After the Old Testament fire and brimstone razing of Sodom and Gomorrah, Ozryel’s bloodlust attack of the archangel Michael gives rise to a punishment by God, and angelic succeeds to vampiric as Ozryel’s blood – taking the form of Ancients, or ‘the dark angels at the end of time’ – spends millennia confined to darkness until needed as proxy (or patsy) for a deifically-inaugurated apocalypse.⁹⁴ Apocalypse, taken from the Ancient Greek *apokalypsis* as a

by Susan Fischer, David Forgacs and David Miller (London and New York: Verso, [1983] 2005, pp.90-98), p. 432

⁹¹ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 310

⁹² del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 197

⁹³ del Toro and Hogan (2011), p. 188

⁹⁴ ‘Ozryel could not control his impulses [...] and fell upon his brother [Michael...] tearing open the archangel’s throat and drinking his luminous, silvery blood [...] God’s vengeance was swift’: del Toro and Hogan (2011), p. 188; del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 58; Of all the places that God could bury what remains of Ozryel, he pre-emptively choses America millennia before it becomes what we understand to be America, implying a predetermined knowledge of its modern cultural thrall to all cardinal vices: see Genesis 19, which begins, ‘And there came two angels to Sodom at even’: Genesis 19:1; See also Genesis 19.24: ‘Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from [...] out of heaven’; In a serendipitous link, the city to which Lot – who harbours the two angels sent to Sodom and Gomorrah – is directed is Zoar which, in Genesis 14:8, is also known as Bela which, in turn, is the first name of the Hungarian actor Lugosi whose portrayal

revelation, here tells of a biblical judgement, with the Master as a conduit revealing God's wrathful contempt for a modern cultural dominance of consumerism. Thus, the Master, while initially appearing to be an 'evil' autonomous antagonist, is himself a pawn – an 'intermediary [...] between god and humanity', an instrument doing the predetermined work of an unmerciful Christian God punishing his creations (angelic as well as human) for their deviations from dogma.⁹⁵ Del Toro and Hogan's vampire narrative plays out underlying fears of a consumer-driven modern America, with the punishment of consumers being to become the consumed.

In contrast with America's vampire ur-text of *Dracula*, where 'good' humans are in opposition to an 'evil' vampire, the Master represents a limbo site of good *and* evil. The angelic origins of del Toro and Hogan's Master are reinforced by descriptions that suggest a sensory omnipresence: he is able to see 'everything' and endowed with the often referenced vampiric ability to speak 'directly into [...] mind[s]'.⁹⁶ While his large stature, 'onyx eyes' and 'pearlescent flesh' may enhance the image of the Master as something aw(e)ful, this 'Strigoï' also possesses attributes that are more overtly monstrous, such as a stinger that shoots out 'well over four and up to [...] six feet' and engorges on feeding, 'taloned hand[s]' in 'beastlike fists', a 'ghoulishly lean' physique, and 'dizzying speed'.⁹⁷ The Master is a monstrous being, but the archangel from whose blood he was born is equally monstrous. In a straightforward augmenting of his 'savage' and 'holy' origins and monstrous behaviour, the Master's description incorporates physical elements of what can be considered terrifying:

The head was hairless and colorless. Its eyes, lips, and mouth were all without hue, worn and washed out, like threadbare linen. Its nose was worn back like that of a weathered statue, a mere bump made of two black holes. Its throat throbbled in a hungry pantomime of breathing. Its skin was so pale that it was translucent. Visible beneath the flesh, like a blurry map to an ancient, ruined land, were veins that no longer carried blood. Veins that pulsed with red. The

of *Dracula* in 1931 has been an arguably abiding influence on all subsequent American vampire fiction

⁹⁵ Oliver and Lewis (2008), p. xiv

⁹⁶ del Toro and Hogan (2009), pp. 266, 306

⁹⁷ del Toro and Hogan (2009), pp. 385, 388, 230, 385, 388, 389

circulating blood worms. Capillary parasites coursing beneath the Master's pellucid flesh.⁹⁸

This depiction accentuates the extreme age of this undead being, linking him to the cadaverous through lack – no hair, almost no colour, eroded features. The Master's body is a metaphorical bridge to a mythic past, a 'blurry map' of a 'ruined land'. His veins 'coursing' with parasitical 'worms' rather than blood serve to remind readers of his corrupted origins. All of this is enhanced by the repeated use of the pronoun 'it' adding to this vampire's abjection from both human and divine. The Master, then, is something of a dissonant Monster: punished product of a jealous and angry divinity, apparently 'rejected' by his God for aberrant actions, as well as a tool of punishment effecting a mass smiting of a materialistic humanity.

In contrast with the blighted destructiveness of the Master, the six other Ancients have returned to the earth, living in 'a nether-world a few hundred feet below the surface of the Pennsylvania woods [...] Their bodies, over time [...] worn smooth as river stones, their movements slowing nearly to imperceptibility'.⁹⁹ The multi-millennial time the Ancients spend suspended in a purgatorial state has them 'worn smooth' of Ozryel's aberrance – they have served penance. Although being '*neither born nor created [but...] Sown from an act of barbarity. A transgression against the high order*', unequivocally positions del Toro and Hogan's undead Ancients as delinquent, the other Ancients are also established as ready to atone through self-sacrifice, aiding this series' twenty-first century Crew of Light in the destruction of their rogue.¹⁰⁰ In an act of contrition worthy of any confessional box, they furnish Setrakian with necessary information for the Master's destruction – being born from 'The Fallen Light, *Occido Lumens*', these vampires can 'be consumed by it'.¹⁰¹ Not only is the 'Fallen Light' a nominal connection to

⁹⁸ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 351

⁹⁹ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 393

¹⁰⁰ del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 278; del Toro and Hogan's own 'Crew of Light' echo a wider ethnic diversity in America, with characters representing White American, Hispanic, European, and Ukrainian origins, but no indigenous Americans. While beyond the scope of this discussion, concerning the representation and treatment of indigenous citizens within American culture, it might be asked what are the effects of an invasion narrative in which the 'heroes' are themselves 'invaders', albeit not necessarily first generation?

¹⁰¹ del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 268

Lucifer, with both the Ancients' original form, the archangel Ozryel, like Lucifer (from the Latin adjective, *lucifer*, light bringing), cast out of heaven for transgression but also, in line with many twentieth-century vampiric incarnations and as already alluded to, the ultraviolet can prove their undoing. In moving from the shadows / unknown into the light / known, these Monsters lose their power. Vampiric power, then, dominates while these vampires remain unknown or partially-known, with knowledge and understanding of what they are the means of refuge and redress. In this way, del Toro and Hogan's Master corresponds to Christine Yao's positioning of monstrosity as being 'generated by deviant acts' that push at the margins of what is known – assumptions of capitalist ideals and monotheistic trust are challenged through the deviance of a liminal being: the Master is driven by an imperative to dominate, to be godhead for a race 'created in its own image', with angelic blood a twisted modifier of humanity.¹⁰²

Liminality brings with it a dis-ease, its potential for undermining of U.S. culture also part of the post-Cold War political-martial fall of the U.S.S.R. as primary focus for U.S. cultural enmity. Modern America's lack of a clear-cut binary oppositional entity against which they can both define themselves and unite raises the need for a universal threat (as already argued, terroristic entities are necessarily nebulous). As Fred Botting suggests in *Making Monstrous*:

The need for a threat, for some great opposition to affirm one's position, establishes an order that, tacitly at least, acknowledges its own internal instabilities [...] in giving an excessive amount of power to those that it would suppress, a dominant position constructs the continual possibility of its own downfall.¹⁰³

In terms of 'giving an excessive amount of power' to an antithetical entity, the fantastic form of a vampire born to enact a deity's wrath plays on the destabilizing fears of a nation that, as global dominant, has only one way to go. Dominance is an impermanent state so, faced with the events of 9/11 highlighting vulnerabilities and demonstrating threat of loss, narratives of global destruction such as del Toro

¹⁰² Christine Yao, 'Gothic Monstrosity: Charles Brockden Brown's Edgar Huntly and the Trope of the Bestial Indian', ed. by Joel Faflak and Jason Haslam (2016), p. 25; del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 299

¹⁰³ Fred Botting, *Making Monstrous Frankenstein, Criticism, Theory* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp. 140-141

and Hogan's as well as Cronin's, which is investigated in chapter two, speak of a nihilistic preference for self-destruction, taking all with it, as opposed to a lumbering loss of power.

This 'Angel of Death' shadows what Richard Gray argues in *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11*, that 'lingering' terroristic stressors 'puncture America's belief in its inviolability and challenge its presumptions of its innocence, the manifest rightness of its cause'.¹⁰⁴ The Master's very literal vampiric puncturing of America is a direct challenge to an assumed inviolability, and any purported 'innocence' or 'rightness' is negated by Palmer who, as an archetype of American capitalism, is essentially instrumental to the Master's infiltration: 'The Master [...] could not have traveled unaided. A human ally [...] is why this incursion is so shocking. And so fantastically threatening.'¹⁰⁵ Del Toro and Hogan's vampire monster exploits an exploiter, his 'shocking' use of Palmer's materialistic character as an 'ally' for mediation of culturally traumatic 'indelible marks upon [...] group consciousness' stemming from the potential for terroristic acts.¹⁰⁶

In fashioning the vampire Master as an extreme terroristic menace to America's primacy, del Toro and Hogan construct a fantastic counter to the U.S. as global hegemon, their narrative of national downfall providing a simulation of fears that continue to affect reality, principally through the institutionalized xenophobia of the Patriot Act and the tenuous prejudices it incorporates.¹⁰⁷ The Master's overwhelming of America develops from an event showing the influence of 9/11 – undead terror coming in via aeroplane – to demonstrate a shared imprudence

¹⁰⁴ Richard Gray, *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), p. 11; For further discussion, see Richard Gray, 'Open Doors, Closed Minds: American Prose Writing at a Time of Crisis', *American Literary History*, 21, 1 (2009), 128-148; Michael Rothberg, 'A Failure of the Imagination: Diagnosing the Post-9/11 Novel: A Response to Richard Gray', *American Literary History*, 21, 1 (2009), 152-158

¹⁰⁵ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 220

¹⁰⁶ Jeffrey C. Alexander, 'Towards a Theory of Cultural Trauma', in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. by Jeffrey C. Alexander et al (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2004), p. 1

¹⁰⁷ An example of a continuing political fear-mongering can be seen in president Donald Trump's press release 'calling for a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States': 'Donald J. Trump Statement on Preventing Muslim Immigration', <<https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/donald-j.-trump-statement-on-preventing-muslim-immigration>> [accessed 4 February 2016]

between del Toro and Hogan's fictional American security services and those caught in reality by what is identified by Charles F. Parker and Eric K. Stern as a 'strategic surprise [...] defined as a victim's lack of preparedness based on erroneous judgements of whether, when, where, and how [they] would be attacked'.¹⁰⁸ Using the Master as catalyst, this trilogy fantastically exaggerates contemporary fears of a nation that, up to the point where the first aeroplane strikes the North Tower on the morning of 11th September 2001, seemed relatively immune to major attack on home land by external aggressors.

With the occult instrumental to terror, the enabling of the downfall of del Toro and Hogan's America by Palmer, who epitomizes hidden, often unsuspected, dark impulses extends this incarnation of vampirism beyond the Master's fantastic monstrosity. Palmer nominatively and conceptually borrows from Philip K. Dick's 1964 SF novel, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, in which his (albeit inverse) namesake is also accused of 'beginning [...] another plague'.¹⁰⁹ Following Dick's 'plague' trope, del Toro and Hogan's catastrophic spread of vampirism corresponds also with the imagery of bio-terror raised soon after 9/11 by Richard Haass, the one-time representative of the U.S. Department of State. On 15th October 2001, Haass stated:

Like a virus, international terrorism respects no boundaries - moving from country to country, exploiting globalized commerce and communication to spread. It can be particularly malevolent when it can find a supportive host.¹¹⁰

Haass's bio-terror metaphor not only finds an all-too-close mirror in del Toro and Hogan's description of spreading vampirism – 'The plague was spreading faster every hour now, throughout the country and across the globe' – but also finds a parallel in Palmer, as the Master's 'malevolent [...] host'.¹¹¹ Palmer's egocentric behaviour and lust for immortality are disquietingly conjoined with his influential position: he is not just an enemy within, as the archetype of capitalist 'success', he is a traitor to American ideology: 'willing to risk everything – even the future of

¹⁰⁸ Parker and Stern (2002), p. 603

¹⁰⁹ Philip K. Dick, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (London: Gollancz, [1964] 2003), p. 14

¹¹⁰ Mayer (2007), pp. 3, 5

¹¹¹ del Toro and Hogan (2010), pp. 153-154

the human race – in order to further his own ends'.¹¹² For Palmer, everything has its price, and for the potential of immortality he reduces fellow Americans to commodities to be bought and sold for his own ends. Palmer's capitalist immorality – he appears to be an 'esteemed investor, businessman, theologian' with a wealth compared to Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, but is corrupted by a potency born of a fiscal hegemony that allows him to vampirize fellow humans, not drinking their blood but illegally harvesting organs – is indirectly (and very viscerally) punished by God through the Master.¹¹³ Palmer thus simultaneously represents the zenith and nadir of capitalism that, in line with Marx's nineteenth-century critique of it as 'vampire-like, liv[ing] only by sucking living labour', brings about the near collapse of del Toro and Hogan's America as swathes of its citizens, as finite sources, are either killed, farmed, or turned.¹¹⁴

Adherence to the capitalist ethos of individualized wealth accumulation and profiting through an exploitation of the many by the few exhibits a paradox at the heart of this version of American culture whereby worshipping consumer gods ends in consumption. Palmer's hubristic assumptions foreshadow the 'illusion' of his own falsely promised immortality – he is killed alongside the large swathes of America's citizens he disparages and dehumanizes as 'a herd' who are 'easily led, and wonderfully predictable. Capable of selling, turning, killing those that they

¹¹² del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 339; Capitalism lies at the heart of the American Dream, an ideology that has its origins in Walter Lippmann's *Drift and Mastery: An Attempt to Diagnose the Current Unrest* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, [1961] 2015) – see the introduction above for further details

¹¹³ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 23; 'The donor [of Palmer's seventh liver] had been a teenage Salvadorian runaway, tested to be disease-, drug-, and alcohol-free [...] His body went through them the way coffee machines go through filters [...] Currently, there was no medical way to compensate for its absence in the body – which was most unfortunate for the reluctant Salvadorian donor [...] His body was a hive of other people's organs, and in that way he was not dissimilar from the Master, who was the embodiment of a hive of undead souls': del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 37; In del Toro's first feature-length film, *Cronos* (1993), the character, Dieter de la Guardia, can be seen to preclude Palmer as a wealthy, dying businessman, who seeks immortality through the exploitation of his wealth. Although there is no explicit evidence de la Guardia harvests the organs of others, his display of what he deems as 'his' expired organs in glass jars carries the inference that, as he is obviously still alive, he contains third-party organs: *Cronos*, dir. by Guillermo del Toro (October Films, Producciones Iguana and Ventana Films, 1993)

¹¹⁴ Karl Marx, *Capital: An Abridged Edition*, ed. by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 149

profess to love in exchange for peace of mind or a scrap of food.’¹¹⁵ Once his purpose is served, this aberrant strigoi-human ‘alliance’ viscerally draws on the blueprint of that between Dracula and Renfield, with the Master ripping off Palmer’s head, in an act of throwaway consumption that neatly dispatches this solipsistic capitalist archetype once his purpose is served: ‘with one firm crack, it [the abstract pronoun once again drawing attention to the Master’s non-human status] ripped Eldritch Palmer’s head from his torso.’¹¹⁶ Despite Palmer’s assumptions and assistance, del Toro and Hogan promote the lack of allegiance shown by both human and vampire Monsters. The U.S. reputation for conspicuous consumption is taken up by the Master, magnified, and turned back on the nation through the dispatching of this avaricious facilitator. Palmer’s capitalist pre-eminence and exploitative status see him punished, his selfishness and greed marking him as more gullible and arguably as ‘predictable’ as those ‘easily led’ citizens he squanders for personal gain. He is thus an expendable conduit of a vampiric exploitation of the dark side of a capitalism described by Jean-François Lyotard as ‘inherently possess[ing] the power to derealize familiar objects, social roles, and institutions’.¹¹⁷ Palmer’s manifestation of corporate America is rendered uncanny as his treasonous act of abetting the Master, fuelled by his exploitative desire to buy immortality, draws attention to a socio-political discordance: this America’s apparent democracy, governed and run for, by, and of the people, is shown to be manipulated from the shadows by those with the funds to buy power.

Channelling and refashioning contemporary psycho-historical traumas into supernatural entities and ‘what if’ situations, del Toro and Hogan follow the culturally reflective tradition of vampires as metaphorical mirrors for cautions: the

¹¹⁵ del Toro and Hogan (2010), pp. 264-265

¹¹⁶ ‘The Master’s hand pressed onto Palmer’s bony shoulder like a vulture’s talons onto a twig. Its other hand gripped the crown of Palmer’s head, turning it to one side, fully extending the old man’s neck and throat [...] with one firm crack, it ripped Eldritch Palmer’s head from his torso. It released the head and gripped the spurting body and tore Palmer in half, the body splitting apart easily where the bones of the hips narrowed to the waist’: del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 265

¹¹⁷ Jean-François Lyotard, ‘Answering the question: what is postmodernism?’, trans. by Régis Durand in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader 3rd Edn*, ed. by David Lodge and Nigel Wood (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2008), p. 414

‘physical property of the silver [backing of antique mirrors] projects these virus-laden atrocities with visual interference – like a warning.’¹¹⁸ Where, as with Palmer, there are often no predictive or obvious indicators of human ‘corruption’, depictions of vampire Monsters such as the Master make plain their hostility towards humanity. In *The Strain*, the plot domination of this potential harm, occluded by a pervasive fear of terrorism (that is, a fear of *potential* as opposed to *actual* threat), as has already been stated, echoes contemporary beliefs in the years spanning from 2001 to the publication of *The Strain* in 2009: an average of 42.4% of Americans believed that they or a member of their family would ‘become a victim of terrorism’.¹¹⁹ Read as a response to fears rather than actualities of victimhood held by nearly half of America’s citizens in the early twenty-first century, del Toro and Hogan’s trilogy calls attention to the contradictions housed within a nation whose very name suggests unity should be culturally supreme. However, the incursive vampire terror, necessarily hidden and unknown to del Toro and Hogan’s American populace – it takes until the end of book two for ‘terms like “vampirism” and “plague” [to] finally [be] uttered by those in positions of power and influence’ – does not manifest a direct fear of assumptions surrounding threats emanating from the middle east, but interprets the dichotomy of a nation that simultaneously encourages and is destroyed by consumption in its most potent form: a vampire apocalypse born from the conjunction of the twin American religions of capitalism and Christianity.¹²⁰ Thus,

¹¹⁸ del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 6; Instead of the more usual lack of reflection, in old silver-backed mirrors these vampires appear as if their ‘bod[ies] were in the throes of something furious [...] vibrating too hard and too fast to be visibly rendered’: del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 229

¹¹⁹ For further details, see Lydia Saad, ‘Post-Boston, Half in U.S. Anticipate More Terrorism Soon’ (2013), <http://www.gallup.com/poll/162074/post-boston-half-anticipate-terrorism-soon.aspx?g_source=fear%202008&g_medium=search&g_campaign=tiles> [accessed 5 February 2016]; A Gallup poll conducted in 2005 shows fear among American teenagers (as those citizens quite literally growing up alongside increased concerns surrounding terrorism) to be dominated by the threat of “‘terrorism” or “terrorists,” [...] some nam[ing] specific horrors, such as “biochemical attack,” “chemical terrorist attack,” “biological warfare,” or “another incident like 9/11.”” After ‘terrorist attacks’ as the top fear come ‘death/dying/being killed’, ‘war’, ‘crime/criminals/gang violence’, ‘the future’, and ‘nuclear war’ – all fears that are touched on in del Toro and Hogan’s trilogy: Linda Lyons, ‘What Frightens America’s Youth?’, <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/15439/What-Frightens-Americas-Youth.aspx>> [accessed 5 February 2016]

¹²⁰ del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 303; For a vague, simplistic and ill-conceived over-reaction to perceived external threat, see Dan Merica’s report for CNN after Trump’s first failed executive order *Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States* where the naïvely

as an example of Gothic monstrosity regularly turned to as a repository of dread, del Toro and Hogan's vampire Master and the narrative he occupies conform to what Teresa Goddu states of 'gothic stories': they are 'intimately connected to the culture that produces them', in dialogue with its anxieties, and part of a blurring of boundaries between fantasy and reality.¹²¹

This blurring of fiction and historic context(s) feeds into what Baudrillard deems (in *The Illusion of the End*) a 'recurrence of a sequence of meanings': repetitions of parasitism and terror, both fictional and real.¹²² Del Toro and Hogan's supernatural apocalypse corresponds to Baudrillard's interrogation of terrorism, and specifically 9/11, which he defines as a disruption of the 'play of history and power'.¹²³ A revenance of 'meanings' in which modern cultural reality itself becomes a series of repeated crises – witness since America became the global dominant, it has always had a 'them' against whom it could affect an 'us': World War II gives way to a decades long Cold War harbouring the threat of nuclear annihilation which, in turn, gives way to a more nebulous animus in the form of non-governmental groups such as al Qaeda and ISIS. These repetitions bleed into del Toro and Hogan's apocalyptic elaboration of concerns that further acts of terror on American soil might lead to 'a point of no-return'.¹²⁴ In this way, *The Strain* negotiates contemporary fears in an accessible manner in the way that straightforward cultural 'theory' cannot and, in doing so, its narrative 'gains

nationalistic president states, 'I am establishing new vetting measures to keep radical Islamic terrorists out of the United States of America [...] We don't want them here': Dan Merica, 'Trump signs executive order to keep out "radical Islamic terrorists"', <<http://edition.cnn.com/2017/01/27/politics/trump-plans-to-sign-executive-action-on-refugees-extreme-vetting/index.html>> [accessed on 3 February 2017]; *Executive Order: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States* (27 January, 2017), <<https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/01/27/executive-order-protecting-nation-foreign-terrorist-entry-united-states>> [accessed 24 April 2017]

¹²¹ Teresa Goddu, *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 2; For further discussion of the blurring of fantasy and reality, see Alan Bryman, who discusses hybrid consumption – a blending of fiction and reality – as a 'trend [...] associated with different institutional spheres [...] interlocked [...] and increasingly difficult to distinguish': Alan Bryman, 'The Disneyization of Society', *The Sociological Review*, 47, 1 (1999) 25-47, p. 33; Fred Botting, 'Hypocrite Vampire...', *Gothic Studies*, 9, 1 (2007), 16-34

¹²² Jean Baudrillard, *The Illusion of the End*, trans. by Chris Turner (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 2

¹²³ Baudrillard, trans. by Turner [2002] 2003), p. 4

¹²⁴ Baudrillard, trans. by Turner (1994), p. 2

substantially in real affinity with the present system.'¹²⁵ Affinity *does not* require empiricism, but a sympathy between human culture(s) and those products that speak of it. The exaggerated monstrosity of del Toro and Hogan's vampire apocalypse performs as a perception of the 'fundamental immorality' of terroristic acts as stimuli for the Master's invasive mass destruction.¹²⁶

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks on mainland America, instigation of the Patriot Act appears as a talismanic glossing by a global superpower faced with unknown enemies; shadowy figures capable of being anywhere at any time. This fear that terrorists might be lurking in the shadows induces what Mark Borg describes as 'chronic trauma [that...] can develop characteristic ways of interacting that work to [...] decrease awareness of overwhelming levels of anxiety within [a] culture'.¹²⁷ Or, to put it another way, 'chronic trauma', that low level constant fear that pervades a culture in the form of controlled manifestations of terror in its fictions finds, in vampire Monsters narratives, a fantastic means to confront and moderate the potential for anxiety overload. The historic positioning of *The Strain* as demonstrative tool, as suggested, is entrenched in an overshadowing of cultural activities by the fear of terroristic actions. The 9/11 destruction of the World Trade Centre, located as 'a powerful *image* of national achievement and aspiration', and striking of the Pentagon (as well as a foiled strike on Washington D.C., home of the White House), undermines the three symbols of America's authority: capitalism, security, and politics.¹²⁸ As with the negative effects of Palmer's avaricious individuality already discussed, in post-9/11 culture, the negativity of

¹²⁵ Baudrillard, trans. by Turner (1994), p. 3

¹²⁶ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. by Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, [2004] 2006), pp. 16, 15

¹²⁷ Mark B. Borg, 'Psychoanalytic Pure War: Interactions with the Post-Apocalyptic Unconscious', *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society*, 8, 1 (2008), 57-67, p. 60

¹²⁸ While there have been smaller terrorist acts perpetrated on U.S. soil, such as the Boston Marathon bombing on 15 April 2013 and the shootings in San Bernardino, California on 2 December 2015, it is the multiple bombings of 9/11 (2001) that remains uppermost in the collective consciousness of Americans. On 11 September 2001, four American aeroplanes were hijacked by al Qaeda terrorists. Two planes were flown into the north and south towers of the World Trade Center in New York, one hit the Pentagon in Virginia, and the last, destined for Washington D.C., came down in a field in Pennsylvania. Almost three thousand people were killed and over twice as many injured. America responded with measures such as the *USA Patriot Act* and president George W. Bush's oxymoronic 'war on terror'; Gray (2011), p. 5

monstrosity equates with power and strength yielded *against* America rather than *on its behalf*.

As a force for 'good', CDC doctor Goodweather's initial face-to-face encounter with the Master places him in a position of near powerlessness, individualizing the fears of a nation: what-if background disturbances of the everyday that raise doubts about retaining authoritarian credibility when faced with an ingress of terror. Taking Goodweather as a personification of American authority through his role as a member of the CDC, not only does he require a united nations of assistance to defeat the Master – European, Mexican, Ukrainian – but as a metaphor, he made a puppet in the hands of the Master, a 'giant [...] with Eph in his grip [...] dangling by his head', whose alliterative description as 'Monstrous' and 'Mesmerizing' sets up a soft consonance with a tone of languid satisfaction often associated with both complacent domination and savouring consumption as part of the Master's bravura belief in his monstrous invincibility.¹²⁹ However much the Master is a reflection of contemporary American culture, it remains clear he is part of generic lineage in which the undead carry with them an ambivalent frisson of fear and fascination for those in positions of power.

Identifying the Master and his hordes as targets against whom 'patriots' can coalesce, the taboo of being seen as unpatriotic, or indeed critical in any way, is shown for its fallaciousness in del Toro and Hogan's trilogy. If, as Stephen Greenblatt postulates, there are 'no transcendental or timeless [...] representations' and 'no art without social energy', the ingress of vampiric monstrosity echoes a reality in which even the passing of a law that allows for the morally reprehensible rounding up of 80,000 people cannot withstand unknown terrors in the shadows.¹³⁰ Those characters who make up del Toro and Hogan's

¹²⁹ del Toro and Hogan (2009). p. 353

¹³⁰ Stephen Greenblatt, 'The circulation of social energy', in *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader 3rd edn*, ed. by David Lodge and Nigel Wood (Harlow: Pearson Longman ([1988] 2008), p. 564; In *Freedom for Sale*, John Kampfner's study of the erosion of liberty in return for the promise of security and prosperity, he reports that 'some 80,000 people were rounded up in dragnets across [America]. Most were of Middle Eastern origin [and...] not a single [one of them secured a] terrorism conviction' in the months following 9/11: John Kampfner, *Freedom for Sale* (London: Simon and Schuster, [2009] 2010), p. 235

updated Crew of Light are concerned with the philanthropic fighting of a common enemy that politicized procrastination does nothing to halt or even slow: *'By the time the crisis went to Congress, and was analyzed, legislated, and ultimately vetoed, we had already lost. The night belonged to them.'*¹³¹ As an open criticism of a lack of imagination – *'All the usual scarecrows were trotted out as distractions: economic woes, social unrest, the racial scapegoating, terrorist threats'* – within political / security groups, *The Strain* tells of a wider cultural incomprehension concerning possible terroristic triggers existing beyond immediate understanding.¹³² Crisis is exacerbated by the procrastination of self-interested politicians, unwilling to consider the possibility of a super-cultural source beyond the mundanity of 'economic woes', 'social unrest' and 'racial scapegoating'. The 'scarecrows' are based on what is known, what has gone before, with the result that preparations for terroristic behaviour can never be.

In her discussion of fear, rhetoric, and 'scapegoating' of 'Arab/Muslim[s]' as 'discredit[ed] and dehumanize[d]', Sue Veres Royal concentrates on the influence of 9/11 and its aftermath in terms of its cognitive effect, with assumptions of power amongst those she labels as the 'persuadable middle of the American public', positioned as believing that they 'would not or could not be attacked (on a large scale) at home', confounded by the 'chaos and danger that had been an ocean away [but is] now all around'.¹³³ Her examination of the psychological consequences in terms of the cultural narratives that have formed around them relies on 'the deeply entrenched good-vs.-evil narrative that [has] dominated World War II, the Cold War, and subsequent frictions.'¹³⁴ Royal's discussion of research into episodes of cultural fear leads her to conclude that 'once one story is activated [...] it is very difficult to shift paths', which corresponds to the persistence of a cultural narrative built up around the terrorist acts of 9/11 and

¹³¹ del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 1

¹³² del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 1

¹³³ Royal suggests the 'prominent story about Arab/Muslim men that Hollywood and others had been telling for years was a critical element of the story told in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 attacks as a new framework began to emerge that sought to define, discredit, and dehumanize this "enemy."': Sue Veres Royal, 'Fear, Rhetoric, and the "Other"', *Race/Ethnicity: Multidisciplinary Global Contexts*, 4, 3 (2011), 405-418, pp. 406, 407-8

¹³⁴ Veres Royal (2011), p. 407

the rapid drafting and passing of the USA Patriot Act as well as a cultural understanding of vampire monstrosity.¹³⁵ Through terroristic behavioural patterns and his portrayal as a stealthy and unsettling figure, the Master links contextual uneasiness identified by Royal to Gothicized tropes of darkness, violence, and occultation. When first seen on American soil, he is described as ‘A sliver of black [...] A seam of shadow, like a tear in the hull of the aircraft.’¹³⁶ The hiss of sibilance alongside the destructive imagery of a ‘tear in the hull’ plays on the terroristic othering that defines pervasive anxieties discussed by Royal.

Returning to *The Strain* as ‘a border territory in which different cultures meet, collide, and [...] collude’, determined by both the physical and ideological spaces of modern America, sympathy between del Toro and Hogan’s vampire monster and what Gray deems the ‘irreducible reality’ of 9/11 as a ‘myth of the fall’, where ‘the deep rhythms of [culture have] been interrupted’ finds narrative enactment in a ‘fall’ to vampiric violence, which acts as a cathartic medium for expunging the terrors of reality (if only temporarily) with a measured dose of *fantastic* terror.¹³⁷ The title of del Toro and Hogan’s *The Fall*, second in their trilogy, suggests simultaneous collapse of divinity *and* of humanity – the Master is a manifestation of the fall of archangel Ozryel and, in turn, he instigates a fall of humanity to vampirism. By evoking contemporary concerns surrounding the terroristic methodology of hijacking planes to underpin the Master’s initial entry into New

¹³⁵ For twenty-first century Americans, the unspeakably inhuman appears in the form of a shadowy terrorist enemy, al Qaeda and, until his death in May 2011, Osama Bin Laden, was identified by Michael Burleigh as ‘the mythic poster boy of global militant Islam’, becoming a culturally constructed bogeyman; a focus for national fears. In an attempt to ‘repudiate and silence’ the anxieties surrounding the amorphousness of ‘terrorist activities’, the *Patriot Act* (a reactionary Bill conceived and passed in under six weeks of September 11th 2001) defines terrorism as ““(VI) to commit an act that the actor knows, or reasonably should know, affords material support, including a safe house, transportation, communications, funds, transfer of funds or other material financial benefit, false documentation or identification, weapons (including chemical, biological, or radiological weapons), explosives, or training – “(aa) for the commission of a terrorist activity; “(bb) to any individual who the actor knows, or reasonably should know, has committed or plans to commit a terrorist activity””: *Uniting and Strengthening of America by Providing Appropriate Tools required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT ACT) of 2001 Public Law 107-56 107th Congress ‘Title IV – Protecting the Border Subtitle B – Enhanced Immigration Provisions Sec.411 Definitions Relating to Terrorism’* (Oct. 26, 2001, 115 STAT. 347 Congressional Record, 147 (2001)), <<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107publ56/pdf/PLAW-107publ56.pdf>> [accessed 10 April 2012] (p. 77)

¹³⁶ del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 26

¹³⁷ Gray (2009), p. 135; Gray (2011), p. 2

York's JFK airport, del Toro and Hogan utilize the indistinctness of liminal spaces (with aeroplane, airport and New York itself gateway sites) to devise a vampire-based terror affected by what lies between real and unreal, fact and illusion, materiality and faith. Through the potential of marginality – spaces, experiences, beliefs – del Toro and Hogan's vampire monster uses what Punter in *The Literature of Terror* deems to be Gothic root constituents, barbarism and violence, to interpret distressing actualities, expanding undead terror to create a global liminality that mirrors post-9/11 uncertainties.¹³⁸ Barbarism's etymological root reinforces an early twenty-first century American nationalistic fear of hostile ingress: from the Ancient Greek *barbaroi*, it is used to describe anyone non-Hellenic (or, in this instance, un-American) – the *barbaroi* role allowing rumination about identity within a nation state and amounting to 'stranger danger' on a national scale is transposed by del Toro and Hogan to show an America laid low by an unpredicted and unpredictable antagonist, invading space and shaking faith in the dichotomous U.S. cultural fundamentals of materialism and divine protection.¹³⁹ Ultimately, where reality carries no guarantees of victorious interaction with marginal figures' disruption of American culture, del Toro and Hogan's vampire monster narrative carries a reassuring promise of defeating undead terrorizing wrongdoers, albeit with a loss of what can be recognized as modern American culture and the revenant codicil of lessons unlearned inviting fresh monstrosities.

This tale of warning continues the repetitive traumatic cultural blockage that 9/11 has provoked, the parallels between del Toro and Hogan's focus on the fantastic destabilization of America and the reality of the anxieties underpinning post-9/11 American culture remaining clear to the end of the third novel. The contextual uncertainties of never knowing if, where, and how a new terrorist attack might be perpetrated find a supernatural resonance in the Master as '*a perverse being [who...] loves to take root in pain. To subvert and corrupt*', but it is here, in a tale of vampiric monstrosity, that a 'bubbeh meiseh' fairy tale ending is played out

¹³⁸ Punter (1996a), p. 8

¹³⁹ Jonathan M. Hall, *A History of the Archaic Greek World ca. 1200-479BCE*, 2nd edn (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), p. 293

as the Master's strain is destroyed: 'the nuclear device detonated. Everything around the flashpoint evaporated – bodies, sand, vegetation, helicopters – all gone. / Purged.'¹⁴⁰ Although del Toro and Hogan use the Master to demonstrate the ease with which a negative force can 'fly under the radar' and cause devastation on American soil, they also present a conservatively reassuring story in which vampirism is vanquished. Goodweather's heroic suicidal eradication of the Master through the detonation of a do-it-yourself nuclear device at his place of origin provides a semi-cathartic outlet for latent cultural post-traumatic fears by moving from a fate controlled by the Master, to the capacity for wholesale destruction, briefly becoming a monstrosity masquerading as redeemer. Finally, this release of tensions upholds earlier types of vampire narratives – the monster is overpowered, and survivors may begin anew.

Having fulfilled his role as the 'angel of death', Ozryel is escorted back up into the skies by the *deus ex* figures of archangels Gabriel and Michael, and the double negative of the Master and nuclear destruction provoke a positive whereby all turned and corrupted humans are 'vaporized at the moment of [the Master's] immolation', although this is not a wholesale 'happy ending' as what is left behind – 'Uncertainty' – is judged as a 'new plague' (one that replaces the vampirically liminal state of undeath that has been overcome with a parallel to the uncertainty that underpins early twenty-first century U.S. culture in fear of 'terror').¹⁴¹ While not going as far as demonstrating a complete annihilation of American cultural ideologies, a narrative dominated by cataclysmic visceral destruction serves as a form of globalized 're-set', ridding the planet of U.S. hegemony but leaving behind a post-apocalyptic neo-Adam and Eve in the form of pest exterminator Fet and CDC doctor Martinez to begin the cycle once more in a proscriptive heteronormativity of idealized coupling in an oxymoronic post-apocalyptic-come-bucolic new Eden, as touched on above. As already touched on, this trilogy ends with a replacement to capitalist complacency with an identification of affection and kinship as paramount attributed to Fet and Martinez that '*love [is] the answer*

¹⁴⁰ del Toro and Hogan (2011), pp. 356, 363

¹⁴¹ del Toro and Hogan (2011), pp. 363, 369

to everything' dovetailed with a caveat that 'everything was open to question.'¹⁴² This vampiric monstrosity begins and ends in uncertainty, blurring boundaries and understanding, with contemporary fears based in xenophobic scapegoating, pinning post-9/11 terrors on what has degenerated in subsequent years into a risibly narrow and jingoistic condemning of externally situated 'radical Islamist terrorists'.¹⁴³ Vampire Monsters and the narratives they inhabit examined in this chapter and the next are manifestations of a conservative undying fear that forms an ever-present part of America's assumptions of authority and privilege, where threat of change through undermining or usurpation manifests as terrors apocalyptically affecting uchronic spaces: if 'America' is defeated then, in its role as global hegemon, it takes all others with it into apocalypse. From del Toro and Hogan's *external* terror invited in by Palmer, as illustrative of capitalist excess,

¹⁴² del Toro and Hogan (2011), p. 369

¹⁴³ See Peter Holley, "'Radical Islamic terrorism'" Three words that separate Trump from most of Washington', <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/02/28/radical-islamic-terrorism-three-words-that-separate-trump-from-most-of-washington/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.39eb979b101e> [accessed 18 September 2017]; del Toro and Hogan's masses of undead are born of a cultural disquiet and abuse of authority, the subsequent destabilizing presence of President Trump evidencing that the terrors projected onto those outside of modern U.S. culture also exist within. As Holley suggests, 'Former president Barack Obama used the phrase "violent extremism," which severed the violence carried out by terrorists from any immediate association with theology. Trump and many of his associates, meanwhile, have been explicit about their belief that Western democracy is at war with Islam': Peter Holley, "'Radical Islamic terrorism'" Three words that separate Trump from most of Washington', <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/02/28/radical-islamic-terrorism-three-words-that-separate-trump-from-most-of-washington/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.39eb979b101e> [accessed 18 September 2017]; Trump's destabilizing effect can be seen in the steady stream of antagonistic coverage of his political misdemeanours, his crass lack of diplomatic understanding initiating a move by the 'group behind the famed Doomsday Clock', who adjusted 'the countdown to the End of it All [...] 30 seconds closer to midnight – the closest the clock has been to Doomsday since 1953, after the United States tested its first thermonuclear device, followed months later by the Soviet Union's hydrogen bomb test.' Shortly after Trump's inauguration as U.S. president, Peter Holley, Abby Ohlheiser and Amy B. Wang noted that 'the [Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists] organization [...] cited the election of President Trump in changing the symbolic clock [...] "Making matters worse, the United States now has a president who has promised to impede progress on [nuclear weapons and climate change]," theoretical physicist Lawrence M. Krauss and retired Navy Rear Adm. David Tittley wrote in a *New York Times* op-ed on behalf of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. "Never before has the Bulletin decided to advance the clock largely because of the statements of a single person. But when that person is the new president of the United States, his words matter."': Peter Holley, Abby Ohlheiser and Amy B. Wang, 'The Doomsday Clock just advanced, 'thanks to Trump': It's now just 2½ minutes to 'midnight', *The Washington Post*, 26 January 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2017/01/26/the-doomsday-clock-just-moved-again-its-now-two-and-a-half-minutes-to-midnight/?utm_term=.bd4fd1441e66> [accessed 18 September 2017]

discussion now turns to an *internally* manufactured terror, with an examination of America's vampire Monsters in chapter two focusing on Justin Cronin's *The Passage*. Cronin's trilogy centres on another uchronic America but his national destruction is wholly self-inflicted, founded in the fear of a potential loss of global martial supremacy and, along with it, the cultural-political hegemony that comes with superpower status.

Chapter Two:
'behind the monstrous':
America's home-made vampires in Justin Cronin's *The Passage*¹

"9/11" has become the most important question and answer shaping American cultural discussions' (Jeffrey Melnick, *9/11 Culture: America Under Construction*)²

'the superstition of yesterday can become the scientific reality of today' (Van Helsing, Tod Browning's *Dracula*)³

'The monsters of men's hearts shall be made flesh, devouring all in their path. And they shall be called Virals' (Justin Cronin, *The Twelve*)⁴

With the focus of this chapter on the whys and hows of vampiric monstrosity in Justin Cronin's trilogy – *The Passage* (2010), *The Twelve* (2012), *The City of Mirrors* (2016) – his vampires, like del Toro and Hogan's, reflect prevailing cultural psychodynamics, particularly the fears and powerplays surrounding terroristic activities, alongside generic dominants, demonstrating ab-normalities and deviances through terror and the unknown. This dystopian America, like del Toro and Hogan's discussed above, is an aggregate of contemporary cultural fears and generic tropes that produces a devastating monstrosity, but this apocalypse is realized not through an abetted aggression but through (American) military-scientific fears and corruption. Again, like del Toro and Hogan's narrative, Cronin's

¹ Justin Cronin, *The Passage* (London: Orion, 2010), p. 698

² Jeffrey Melnick, *9/11 Culture* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2009), p. 3

³ *Dracula* (1931), 00.31.08

⁴ Justin Cronin, *The Twelve* (London: Orion, 2012), p. xi; Cronin's vampires are most often referred to as 'Virals' – a direct allusion to their infectious origins – but they are also variously known as 'Glow-sticks', 'Sticks', 'Smokes', 'Jumps', 'Flyers' and 'Dracs', depending on which group of humans are in connection with them and the cognitive dominance of certain characteristics. For example, those humans working in the military laboratory where they are 'created' use the descriptivist term 'glow-sticks' or 'sticks' based on the primary characteristic of 'former death row inmates who glowed in the dark and scared the shit out of absolutely everybody' as an attempted diminution of anxieties about their vampiric 'glowing, infectious cargo'. As the epistolic 'Journal of Ida Jaxon ("The Book of Auntie")' reveals, 'There's lots of names for them now, of course, flyers and smokes and drinks and virals and such, but we called them jumps on account of that's what they did when they got you. They jumped': Cronin (2010), pp. 87, 83, 250, 251

plot carries an ambiguity regarding what constitutes terroristic activity. Cronin's undead continue a conformity to Punter's understanding of fear being 'at its fiercest when it is seen to invade the everyday contemporary world', dealing with 'extreme situations' and 'the unadmitted', but here the 'them and us' of aggressive ingression is abrogated by a 'them' that is manufactured out of and by an 'us' erupting from within.⁵ In response to post-9/11 fears – Melnick's 'most important question and answer shaping [modern] American cultural discussions' – Cronin's vampire Monsters extend fear / power dynamics from the more traditional ingressive form of del Toro and Hogan's Master to show the terror as erupting from within.⁶

Both the vampire Monsters narratives in chapter one and this chapter create semiotic domains implying a victimhood for America which, through the provision of enmity, make visible counterfeit politicized martial-scientific 'good guys' façades.⁷ However, these narratives reflect non-binary re-workings of the dynamics of undead monstrosity. Cronin supersedes the singular internal culpability of del Toro and Hogan's human billionaire capitalist Palmer, who follows the dynamic of *Dracula's* Renfield as an internal collaborative presence. Cronin's vampire Virals are the products of a politically-sanctioned martial subterfuge whereby the misuse of scientific experimentation instigates devastation of a recognizable modern America. From an imaginary president down, those in charge employ subterfuge, exploitation, and deception in an attempt to maintain global dominance. As Browning's cinematic interpretation of Stoker's character Van Helsing declares, 'the superstition of yesterday can become the scientific reality of today' and Cronin's genetically-engineered vampire 'Virals' incorporate scientific unknowns of 'yesterday', such as extended lifespans,

⁵ See introduction above: Punter (1996a), pp. 3, 8, 18

⁶ Melnick (2009), p. 3

⁷ In a link to the next section, Vampire Dreams, the presidentially-endorsed misinforming of American citizens and a false claim for terroristic victimhood is antithetical to American dreams. An 'irresistible temptation to do evil' is anathema to what Jennifer Hochschild suggests are 'the tenets of the American dream [...] the recipe for an equilibrium between too much and too little [personal and political] responsibility': Jennifer L. Hochschild, *Facing Up to the American Dream: Race, Class, and the Soul of the Nation* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. xiv

excessive strength, and an ability to self-heal, to become agents for an apocalyptic infection that turns millions of U.S. citizens into vampires and mutates to kill billions of humans globally.⁸

As a primary justification for the ill-conceived genetic engineering of vampires, Cronin makes direct reference to the events of 11 September 2001 (9/11) as ‘that glorious and terrible day – watching the planes slam into the towers, *the image[s] repeated in endless loops.*’⁹ The post-traumatic psychology of this ‘endless’ repetition forms the basis of a pretext for endeavouring to create superhuman vampire soldiers central to Cronin’s vampire narrative: ‘now the war was everywhere, metastasizing like a million maniac cells run amok across the planet, and everyone was in it.’¹⁰ The melodramatic shamelessly mixed simile of ‘metastasizing [...] maniac cells’, linguistically combining cancer, psychosis, and terrorism, is a direct appeal to the apprehension that continues to affect American culture. What is used to reinforce an exaggerated and alarmist simile that suggests a vulnerability to carcinogenically rapid multiplication of terroristic unknowns, presages Cronin’s uchronic superpower’s self-defeat through vampiric destruction. A fear embedded in a martial weakening of America’s global dominance is the generating force behind a cataclysmic miscalculation, with Cronin’s Virals the undead monstrous products of an assumed worst-case scenario; the covert creation of man-made vampires necessary to a cycling round to reset the clock for America as the devastation leaves behind a few humans to escape, allowing for later return and re-colonization. The ‘rising role played by vague and diffuse “security fears”’, and the lack of ‘logic [in] power struggles’ as

⁸ *Dracula* (1931), 00.31.08; The premise of using a vampiric virus to attempt the creation of super-soldiers is not new – it is used in Kurt Wimmer’s 2006 film *Ultraviolet*. Instead of the protracted lifespans of Cronin’s vampires, Wimmer’s ‘haemophages’ exist for approximately twelve years as superfast, super-strong, and super-intelligent beings. Children are also key in both stories: in *Ultraviolet*, a laboratory cloned boy named Six is central to the plot, and in *The Passage* the abandoned girl Amy Harper Bellafonte is experimented on in the military laboratory that produces the original Twelve vampire Virals: *Ultraviolet*, dir. by Kurt Wimmer (Screen Gems, Ultravi Productions, 2006)

⁹ My emphasis: Cronin (2010), p .84; The reckless, and ultimately self-destructive, embarking on this genetic experimentation could itself be seen as symptomatic of a cultural PTSD: see ‘Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): What are the Symptoms?’, <<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/symptoms-of-ptsd/#.Wv6Tq0xFwS8>> [accessed 15 February 2018]

¹⁰ Cronin (2010), p. 84

elements of what the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman describes as “‘frontier-land’ conditions’ that have overtaken the sovereignty of ‘modern states’ can be seen in Cronin’s martial fears surrounding U.S. security.¹¹ Cronin’s portrayal of scientific ‘consumerist’ assumptions sees those humans used as genetic guinea-pigs positioned as ‘invalid or unviable human[s...] born with the mark of impending wastage.’¹² Bauman’s interrogation of what or who might constitute cultural ‘outcasts’ and how ‘modernity’ rids itself of these ‘waste products’ can be seen in Cronin’s turning of human ‘waste’ (a damaged scientist, death-row criminals, and an abandoned child) into neo-dominants, instrumental to the destruction of a recognizable modern world.

As with chapter one’s examination of *The Strain* trilogy, Cronin’s narrative centres round contemporary influences on the catastrophic effects of vampiric monstrosity. Here, doubt is cast on perceptions of what constitutes terroristic activity through narrative access to the conspiratorial misinformation of those in positions of political and military authority. Again, this cultural corruption is tied to a foregrounding of Christianity within the narrative as Cronin uses biblical language and allusion – the most obvious of which being the naming of the covert experiment: ‘Project Noah’.¹³ And again, Cronin, like del Toro and Hogan, demonstrates the generic influences of *Dracula* and *I Am Legend*, particularly their inclusion of human complicity, threat and mass infection. But, Cronin extends his vampire Monsters plotline to include discordant elements: the narrative is dominated by heroine, Amy Harper Bellafonte, a child deliberately infected in the laboratory who, as a Viral siding with humanity, belies monstrosity: she is the liminal ‘Girl from Nowhere’ character that, in Cronin’s own words, ‘saves the world’.¹⁴ Alongside Amy as the ‘*omega to [his] alpha*’, the Zero, as primary

¹¹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts* (Cambridge, Oxford, Malden, MA: Polity, 2004), p. 7

¹² Bauman (2004), p. 7

¹³ See the biblical story of Noah and the flooding of the world: Genesis 6-10

¹⁴ ‘*The Passage*: Q & A with Justin Cronin’, <<http://enterthepassage.com/the-passage-q-a-with-justin-cronin/>> [accessed 3 January, 2013]; Although the Zero and Amy are Cronin’s central vampiric pro/antagonists, the Twelve vampires manufactured from death row human males, alongside the approximately ‘42.5 million [...] bloodthirsty bastards’ that they turn, as well as other semi-vampiric characters such as Alicia ‘Blades’ Donadio, ‘The New Thing [...] Neither one nor the

antagonist, is instrumental in this overwhelming of a modern U.S. seemingly prepared to go to any lengths to retain global authority.¹⁵ The Zero is ‘accidental’ source of Cronin’s monstrosity as first to be infected when bats numbering ‘hundreds of thousands, a huge swarm that blotted out the stars’ attack a military-funded expedition to Bolivia, of which he is part, as they originally search for the source of a ‘family of viruses [...] that could significantly lengthen human life span and increase physical robustness’.¹⁶ Starting with a Zero (the former human scientist Tim Fanning’s Viral self) that has, since 9/11 become tied to the phrase ‘Ground Zero’ as a point in space and time that marks the epicentre of what is understood in modern America as terroristic activity, terror in Cronin’s trilogy is less definitively othered in relation to the U.S., with its source being – as already mentioned – the very military expected to protect national interests.

Cronin’s covertly manufactured vampire Virals erupt from a secret experimental facility somewhere near Ouray, Colorado (a mountainous region in west central America), their violence creating an ‘extreme situation’ in the ensuing apocalypse which, as alluded to, stems from an ‘unadmitted’ politico-martial desire to remain globally dominant.¹⁷ The Virals’ rampage across America, destroying its citizens, infrastructures, and global dominance, is euphemistically deemed an ‘*Unprecedented Terroristic Threat*’ in a politicized misdirecting of blame towards an unidentified-unidentifiable external force.¹⁸ Linguistic duplicity intrinsic to governmental self-preservation imputes external animosity, with ‘terroristic’ an adjectival qualifier that diverts attention away from the subjectivity of naming a source, indicating acknowledgement of actions resembling terrorism but misleading American citizens through engaging with pre-existing post-9/11 fears

other, but somehow both’, and Red-eyes all aid Cronin’s extension of the form: Cronin (2010), pp. 305, 739

¹⁵ In *The Twelve*, Amy hears Zero’s voice saying she is his and the Twelve other Virals’ ‘*sister in blood [...] the omega to my alpha*’: Cronin (2012), p. 412

¹⁶ Cronin (2010), pp. 24, 86

¹⁷ Punter (1996a), pp. 8, 18

¹⁸ Cronin (2010), p. 223; As discussed in chapter one, above, creating / blaming an external aggressor assists compliance and social cohesion: see Mary Douglas, *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory* (London: Routledge, [1992] 2003)

of potential invasive terroristic actions.¹⁹ As with del Toro and Hogan's vampires, Cronin's signal emotive responses (dominated by fears) to terroristic events on home soil alongside a post-9/11 cultural patterning of 'civic crisis', here dominated by a desire to maintain martial potency in response.²⁰ As part of this, in turning millions of Americans, Cronin's Twelve (the death-row criminals who become 'the Babcock-Morrison-Chávez-Baffes-Turrell-Winston-Sosa-Echols-Lambright-Martínez-Reinhardt-Carter') vampire antagonists alongside the Zero become 'symbols of terror', products of a military imperative and medico-scientific arrogance, with Amy as a homoeopathic, like-cures-like, remedial entity.²¹ As argued in chapter one, in America's post-9/11 culture, the negativity of monstrosity is often equated with power and strength yielded *against* America rather than *on its behalf*, but Cronin's vampire Monsters are literally made 'of the people, by the people' and thus embodiments of self-destruction.²²

Following on from chapter one's discussion of monstrous vampirism in del Toro and Hogan's *The Strain* series, *The Passage* trilogy's 'overcoming the monster' plot arc has a group of synthetic vampires escaping a laboratory, swiftly infecting and killing swathes of humans; lies touted by authority figures, including the U.S. president, and widespread disbelief as points of hesitation that allow for monstrosity to take hold in a quarantined America; and a rallying of those who

¹⁹ As discussed in chapter one, a Gallup poll conducted in 2005 shows fear among American teenagers who have growing up alongside increased concerns surrounding terrorism to be dominated by the threat of 'another incident like 9/11': Linda Lyons, <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/15439/What-Frightens-Americas-Youth.aspx>> [accessed 5 February 2016]

²⁰ Edward J. Ingebretsen, 'Staking the Monster: A Politics of Remonstrance', *Religion and American Culture*, 8, 1 (1998), 91-116, p. 94; Cronin's *USA Today* 'news report' suggests of the 'Terroristic Threat' that 'President Hughes vowed tonight to take "all necessary measures" to contain the spread of the so-called Colorado fever virus and punish those responsible, declaring, "The righteous anger of the United States of America will swiftly befall the haters of liberty and the outlaw governments that give them harbor."' This laboured counterfeit rhetoric is reminiscent of 'alternative facts', a phrase created by presidential aide Kellyanne Conway in an attempt to lend credence to Donald Trump's exaggeration of crowd sizes at his January 2017 presidential inauguration: Justin Cronin (2010), p. 223; 'US cinemas to show film 1984 in protest against Donald Trump', <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-39492167>> [accessed 8 April 2017]

²¹ Cronin (2010), p. 569; Punter (1996a), p. 100

²² This paraphrasing of President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address acts as a summary of an Armageddon in which 'government of the people, by the people, for the people' sees not only freedom perish, but the people 'perish from the earth': *The Gettysburg Address*, <<http://showcase.netins.net/web/creative/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm>> [accessed on 8 August 2012]

understand the threat posed leading to a defeat of the Virals, but only after a millennium of vampiric dominion in which the global human population is brought close to extinction.²³ And so, Cronin's storyline is, as with del Toro and Hogan's, once more shaped by widespread apocalypse – this time spanning just over a thousand years, from the present ('the Year Zero') to the discussion of apocalyptic artefacts such as 'The Book of Sara' at an academic conference in the 'Indo-Australian Republic' in '1003 A.V.' – the years counted not under the Christian edict of Anno Domini or as the secularized Common Era, but After Vampires.²⁴ This fractured back and forth across a millennial narrative timeline reflects an overarching psychological shattering of U.S. culture through apocalypse which, in turn, is augmented by delayed expositions, often disclosing details through the free indirect voices of those with a first-hand involvement: for example, readers only access the Zero's full background as academic Tim Fanning in book three, *The City of Mirrors*.²⁵ A millennium after the Virals first start turning humans, the vampire apocalypse is addressed in much the same way as modern scholars might investigate medieval plague outbreaks: 'the Third Global Conference on the North American Quarantine Period' takes place at the 'Center for the Study of Human Cultures and Conflicts / University of New South Wales, Indo-Australian Republic', suggesting that global power dynamics have indeed shifted to favour a power sharing between India and Australia, reinforcing the self-fulfilling prophecy of America's politico-martial fears of usurpation.²⁶

Where del Toro and Hogan's mass vampirism is born from an *individualized* incursive monstrosity, Cronin's Monsters explode as a plurality from within as a means of exploring potential American self-defeat. Both vampire Monsters stories are predicated on a basic reaction to anxieties located in loss of power, whereby

²³ See Christopher Booker, 'Overcoming the Monster', in *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories* (London and New York: Continuum [2004] 2005), pp. 21-30

²⁴ Cronin (2010), p. 250

²⁵ As Walter A. Davis suggests in his discussion of the American psyche after the events of 9/11, '[s]omething more is needed for an event to create trauma in the collective psyche. Images from the present must speak to other images that are tied to memories buried deep in the national psyche; to things forgotten, ungrieved, vigorously denied; things in the past that have never been confronted and worked through': Walter A. Davis, 'Death's Dream Kingdom: The American Psyche After 9-11', *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society*, 8, 1 (2003), 127-132, p. 127

²⁶ Cronin (2010), p. 250

an underlying authoritarian arrogance suggests that without America as hegemon modern humanity cannot persist – put simply, twenty-first century vampire Monsters narratives demonstrate a cultural egocentrism based on an all-or-nothing response to a threat to U.S. superpower status. In *The Passage*, as mentioned, this takes the form of secret military experimental creation of creatures that, rather than being a stepping-stone to anticipated compliant super-soldiers, are vehicles for a planet-wide plague, routing humanity and taking it to the verge of extinction.

Originating from the clandestine military-based ‘Project Noah’, Cronin’s narrative employs a flawed logic that vampirism can be controlled by humans: vampires are predominantly portrayed as predatory rather than passive creatures, with even those who covertly or overtly assimilate into American culture who are discussed in the Dreams section below remaining autonomous entities. Experimentation on death-row criminals, ‘men between the ages of twenty and thirty-five with no living first-degree relatives’ that the character in charge of Project Noah, Richards, coldly describes as ‘human recyclables’, present a different form of monstrosity to those discussed in chapter one.²⁷ Although not strictly eugenic, this human vivisection shows an America willing to resort to the manipulation of vulnerable citizens that continues from a history of eugenics dating back to the early twentieth century. Harry H. Laughlin’s *Eugenical Sterilization* (1922) was the definitive source for decisions regarding sterilization of those considered to be defective as humans, such as the mentally subnormal, clinically insane, criminals, the blind, the deaf, or epileptics. Cronin’s military scientists continue Laughlin’s eugenic assumptions that criminals are suitable for use in experimentation in the selection of death-row prisoners to be used as guinea pigs: because they are institutionalized with no chance of being released, to all intents, they are already undead. And so, these test subjects are not soldiers, trained to follow orders, instead they are convicts with nothing and no-one to lose, the only thing they have

²⁷ Cronin (2010), p. 88; ‘The story of Noah and the ark. See how long he lived [...] *And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years*’: Cronin (2010), pp. 88, 44; See Harry H. Laughlin, *Eugenical Sterilization in the United States* (Chicago: Psychopathic Laboratory of the Municipal Court of Chicago, 1922)

of value being themselves. They sell their lives, which have already been legally, if not physically, taken. This flawed experimentation, as an emotive response to (potential) loss leads to an actualized destruction of the modern world, consigning America to examination as a series of historical artefacts and accounts for academics a millennium after the initial Viral escape. No longer global, or even national citizens, Cronin's undead 'recycled' test-fodder reduce the American population to pockets of isolated and commune-based humans. What is meant to solidify U.S. global authority gives rise to the remains of humanity subsisting in a state of hyper-vigilant perpetual alert, their primitive routines displaying a disruption to 'identity, system, [and] order' brought about by the abject forms of Virals.²⁸

In contrast with the deific origins of del Toro and Hogan's Master, Cronin's vampirism, courtesy of the experimentation instigated by the American military forces Special Weapons Division, comingles the abject and traumatic in Viral form to tear apart American society. Stretched beyond their martial capacity by global unrest in the early years of the twenty-first century, the 'United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (USAMRIID)' commandeers a team of paleovirologists' scientific expedition to Bolivia to search for a viral agent that can 'significantly lengthen human life span and increase physical robustness', slowing aging and prompting the carrier's body to swiftly restore itself, with a 'hugely accelerated rate of cellular regeneration [...] curing *everything* [...] no cancer, no heart disease, no diabetes, no Alzheimer's'.²⁹ Notwithstanding being created through scientific endeavour, longevity, strength, and invincibility are undead traits recognized by those aiming to exploit its use as such: 'risky [...] vampire stuff, though no one at Special Weapons ever used the word.'³⁰ In Cronin's America, the military are (covertly) governmentally funded in their instigation of the disappearance of death row criminals for subjection to testing with vampire viruses in a demonstration of despotism masquerading as

²⁸ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, [1980] 1982), p. 4

²⁹ Cronin (2010), pp. 18, 86

³⁰ Cronin (2010), p. 86

democracy. This barbarism from within U.S. borders expresses a cycling of terrors begetting terrors.

After devoting the opening chapter of book one to the background of his pivotal vampire character Amy, who '[b]efore she became the Girl from Nowhere – the One Who Walked In, the First and Last and Only, who lived a thousand years [...] was just a little girl in Iowa', Cronin turns to a modernized epistolical form, using Lear's emails to fellow academic Paul Kiernan to effect a recognizably modern medium through which to narrate the military take-over of the expedition into Bolivia.³¹ Attacks by swarms of bats alongside statues found deep in the jungle that look human 'but not quite: the bent animal posture, the clawlike hands and the long teeth crowding the mouth, the intense muscularity of the torso' foreshadow the Viral devastation of a recognizably modern America.³² The description of animalized creatures, with 'clawlike hands', too many teeth, and 'intense muscularity' suggest bestial dangers that a military tunnel vision glosses over.

After the Virals' escape from the secure military facility in Colorado, there follows a campaign of deliberate misinformation – the '*Unprecedented Terroristic Threat*' mentioned above is part of a campaign of propagandizing semantics that identifies actions rather than actors to distance the culpability of those involved.³³ The knowledge that this devastation is home-grown is buried beneath what, at the start of 2017 (and post-publication), has become euphemistically known as 'alternative facts', with Cronin's President Hughes creating 'post-truth' news that cites 'anti-American extremists, operating within [U.S.] borders but supported by [their] enemies abroad', as a straightforward nationalistic attempt to manipulate

³¹ Cronin (2010), p. 3

³² Cronin (2010), p. 22

³³ Cronin's fictional newspaper headline reads, 'CHAOS IN COLORADO / Rocky Mountain State Overrun by Killer Virus; Borders Sealed / *Outbreaks Reported in Nebraska, Utah, Wyoming / President Places Military on High Alert, Asks the Nation to Remain Calm in the Face of "Unprecedented Terroristic Threat"*': Cronin (2010), p. 223; See also Mark Fenton-O'Creevy's outline of the psychology of deception in which he proposes, 'If a person, or organisation, starts to play on your fears it may be that person or organisation that you should fear': Mark Fenton-O'Creevy, 'The Psychology of Deception', <<http://www.open.edu/openlearn/society/the-law/criminology/the-psychology-deception?blog=5>> [accessed 30 June 2017]

the remaining population into compliance with a futile mass ‘evacuation’.³⁴ Cronin’s President Hughes presages the early presidency of Donald J. Trump. Although not quite as far-reaching as denying knowledge of the origins of a Viral catastrophe, from his inauguration onwards Trump has been associated with ‘alternative facts’, for example, in discussing disputed inauguration crowd sizes, President Trump’s then advisor, Kellyanne Conway, uses the phrase ‘alternative facts’, which has become understood as ‘code for “lie”’.³⁵

Read as a metaphor for such disingenuous contexts, Cronin’s Virals become part of a continuing discussion of America’s ‘war on terror’ that Zbigniew Brzezinski purports in the *Washington Post*, ‘obscures reason, intensifies emotions and makes it easier for demagogic politicians to mobilize the public on behalf of the policies they want to pursue.’³⁶ Cronin’s Virals are products of obscured reason and an intensified emotional response masquerading as a politically covert endorsement of the creation of unpredictable superhumans as precursors to potentially immortal American military forces. Despite an address to America’s citizens that is riddled with double-speak, Cronin’s President Hughes does ‘not specify [...] the targets of federal scrutiny’ (the rampaging Virals) or even give ‘any evidence [...] to indicate the epidemic is the work of terrorists’, instead falsely promising ‘Justice will be swift’.³⁷ Hughes’ dissimulation, ‘theorizing’ at a terroristic source for this ‘epidemic’ despite having full knowledge of its origins, illustrates Brzezinski’s cynical understanding of a contemporary obfuscatory political exploitation of anxieties concerning terroristic activities, which continues into book three, *The City of Mirrors*, where:

³⁴ Brian Taylor, ‘Alternative facts and qualified truths’, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-38764003>> [accessed 30 June 2017]; Justin Cronin (2010), p. 223; in November 2016, ‘Oxford Dictionaries announce[d] post-truth as its 2016 international Word of the Year’, defining it as ‘Relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief’: ‘Post-Truth’, <<https://www.oxforddictionaries.com/press/news/2016/11/15/WOTY-16>> [accessed 30 June 2017]; See also “‘Post-truth’ declared word of the year by Oxford Dictionaries”, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-37995600>> [accessed 30 June 2017]

³⁵ Brian Taylor, ‘Alternative facts and qualified truths’, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-38764003>> [accessed 30 June 2017]

³⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, ‘Terrorized by “War on Terror”’, *Washington Post* (2007) <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/23/AR2007032301613.html>> [accessed 25 February 2017]

³⁷ Cronin (2010), p. 223

Interpol Secretary-General Javier Cabrera, the former U.S. States Secretary of Homeland Security and a member of the U.S. government in exile in London, [tells] reporters, 'At this time, no group or individual has claimed responsibility'.³⁸

Cabrera, as a global legal leader and loyal 'former' U.S. security chief, further obscures American politico-martial culpability: 'Should any credible evidence arise that the epidemic is man-made, rest assured that we will bring the perpetrator to justice.'³⁹ In *The Spirit of Terrorism*, Baudrillard provides a cultural commentary that denounces the complicity and concealment housed in such deliberate sleight-of-mouth 'them and us' rhetoric in favour of a more nuanced understanding of America as a subjective hegemonic entity struggling to adapt to abstracted terroristic opposition.⁴⁰ No longer culturally overshadowed by the binary of Cold War Communism versus Capitalism, where blame could be directed at a clearly defined oppositional force, terror, by its very nature emotive and occult, becomes a catch-all for aggressions that cannot be anticipated which, for Cronin, comes from unadmitted homeland sources. There is no divulgence of Project Noah as part of a criminally negligent misjudgement and so, as Hughes goes on to state, this becomes 'a crime not only against the people of the United States but against all humanity', admission of which would be detrimental to U.S. global status.⁴¹ As Mary Douglas argues in *Risk and Blame: Essays in Cultural Theory*, such blaming of outsiders builds the cultural necessities of loyalty and social cohesion.⁴²

The terroristically-based 'culture of fear' that first induces Cronin's military's efforts to conceive genetically-engineered soldiers and then his politicians to deliberately hide culpability is thus analogous to Brzezinski's discussion of the terror of terrorism, which he compares to 'a genie that has been let out of its bottle. It acquires a life of its own'.⁴³ Cronin's vampires are 'genies', products of

³⁸ Justin Cronin, *The City of Mirrors* (London: Orion Books, 2016), p. 32

³⁹ Cronin (2016), p. 32

⁴⁰ See Jean Baudrillard, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, trans. by Chris Turner (London, New York: Verso, [2002] 2003)

⁴¹ Cronin (2010), p. 223

⁴² Douglas ([1992] 2003), pp. 260-262

⁴³ Zbigniew Brzezinski, 'Terrorized by "War on Terror"', *Washington Post* (2007), <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/23/AR2007032301613.html>> [accessed 25 February 2017]

prevailing pervasive fearfulness, who escape a laboratory 'bottle' to create an un-life of their own that destroys a recognizable modern U.S. and disrupts humanity, to the point of near-extinction, the effects of which lasting for over a millennium of vampiric supremacy. Discussion will return to this American political-martial 'own goal', including a contrasting of Viral characters the Zero and Amy, but first, it turns to *The Passage* as a post-9/11 narrative of undead monstrosity that demonstrates a nuanced relationship with generic identifiers present within antecedent vampire fiction, once again including the ur-text of *Dracula*, interpreting known typologies through a modern lens to present an apocalyptic future.

'something about them that struck a deep chord of recognition': Past Vampires as Part of the Present⁴⁴

Cronin acknowledges his debt to generic undead ancestry in an online question and answer forum about *The Passage*: 'I was working with an established text – every vampire story ever written.'⁴⁵ While clearly hyperbolic, as with del Toro and Hogan's series examined in chapter one and all subsequent novels to be investigated here, Cronin's manifestation of modern American vampirism connects with the ur-text(s) of *Dracula*. American vampire fiction continues to reinvent Dracula, assimilating him into new forms of undead, with each reference to this prototypical model a palimpsestic perversion to suit narrative agendas. As Auerbach and Skal acknowledge, 'Dracula is an adaptable monster' and, as such, his influence is considerable, arguably affecting all that follow.⁴⁶ In *The City of Mirrors*, Cronin's increasingly Dracula-esque character, the Zero, epitomizes an ambivalence towards Stoker's Count and pivotal undead iterations: 'Dracula. Nosferatu. Vampyre. I can barely utter the names without a roll of the eyes. Yet here I was [...] a legend come to [un]life.'⁴⁷ The Zero's 'eye roll' alongside an

⁴⁴ Cronin (2010), p. 86

⁴⁵ 'The Passage: Q & A with Justin Cronin', <<http://enterthepassage.com/the-passage-q-a-with-justin-cronin/>> [accessed on 3 January 2013]

⁴⁶ Auerbach and Skal 'Preface', in Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. ix

⁴⁷ Cronin (2016), p. 93

acknowledgement of being ‘a legend come to [un]life’ is indicative of the ambivalence towards Stoker’s creation that has prevailed from Lugosi’s interpretation onwards. Despite what seems to be a continuation of del Toro’s disdainful position, where he considers Lugosi’s Dracula to be his ‘least favourite vampire [...] an uncle in a cape’, a narrative concentration on the Zero in *The City of Mirrors* sees him become a lone figure of monstrosity, taking on Lugosi-like physical traits such as pale skin and a dark-haired widow’s peak, together with the now ubiquitous fangs.⁴⁸ But the Zero also has a humanizing story too, shown as he recounts his pre-Viral life as a successful academic: ‘I shook hands, kissed cheeks, made friends, took lovers’, which is more attuned to Fred Saberhagen’s *The Dracula Tape*, with its counter-narrative to Stoker’s vampire portraying him as wronged hero rather than monstrous interloper.⁴⁹

Although Cronin suggests fictions that form the vampire genre represent, to him, a singular ‘established text’, there is, as has already been proposed here, no universal, not even a singular Dracula: this is a palimpsestic genre. However, Lugosi’s Dracula, as a model that has shaped popular perceptions of vampires since the 1930s, and as the most frequently partially erased and overwritten undead character within U.S. vampire fiction, is incorporated into Cronin’s series as a symbolic concept. A viewing of Browning’s 1931 film interpretation of *Dracula* in a makeshift military camp evidences a juxtaposition between the naivety of fearing a lone aristocratic vampire and the apocalyptic plague of vampire Virals that reduce a U.S. population to isolated pockets of hyper-vigilant humanity:

It was a story [...] like the old books in the Sanctuary [...] The people on the screen looked like they were pretending because they were; their exaggerated motions and expressions called to mind the way Teacher would act out the voices of the characters in the books she read [...] At times the

⁴⁸ Ned Hinkle interviews Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan about the second novel in *The Strain* trilogy: Ned Hinkle, ‘Guillermo del Toro and Chuck Hogan – *The Fall*’, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IQ3i35X44DI&ebc=ANyPxKrQcyHRPJHhfRR45Ope2dniHVB_9MNBKqxYew92e_o34451TOexrn96_wNn44_1y1seYknzH_rei8g73XWjeAQ6yUpiu0w> [accessed 29 March 2016], 00.26.03; See chapter one above for a discussion of the ambivalence of modern vampiric monstrosity towards Lugosi’s Dracula where, although del Toro professes to a level of disdain, the Master’s monstrosity still models a Lugosi-like appearance: a ‘huge being wearing a long, dark cloak’: del Toro and Hogan (2009), p. 350

⁴⁹ Cronin (2016), pp. 92-93, 85; See also Fred Saberhagen, *The Dracula Tape* (New York: Ace Science Fiction Books, [1975] 1985)

movie seemed almost to be a kind of instruction manual. Peter [Jaxon] wondered if it wasn't a made-up tale at all but an account of something that had actually happened.⁵⁰

Through a free indirect narrating of Jaxon's first encounter with Browning's film, Cronin provides a metafictional questioning of Lugosi's effect on understanding of his *Virals*.⁵¹ There is a recognition that what is being screened is a work of fiction, but connections between undead forms are also made explicit: Jaxon recognizes Dracula as 'some kind of viral, though he didn't look like one'.⁵² Modern vampires may be presented in myriad ways with myriad motivations and behaviours, but can always be identified for being what they are. As with discussion in the introduction and chapter one, reference to Dracula as the prototypical model of modern American vampirism is twisted to suit narrative agendas. Cronin's description of Browning's film as supernaturally endowed – 'the images were more than pictures, more than light. They were alive and breathing with sound' – emphasizes a mesmeric post-outbreak disquiet redolent of Maxim Gorki's reaction to the early moving pictures of 'Lumière's Cinématographe in Moscow in 1896' (a year before Stoker's publication of *Dracula*).⁵³ David J. Skal writes of Gorki as 'deeply disturbed by [...] a technological vampire that promised a kind of living death'.⁵⁴ Jaxon's conflicted response to the film's contents – the film is both 'nothing to take seriously' as well as 'a kind of instruction manual' – echoes Gorki's aw(e)ful appreciation of early cinematography as a portrayal of 'living death' as well as an instrumental curiosity that continues to afflict the vampire genre.⁵⁵

This comparison of genetically modified vampire *Virals* with Dracula's continuing generic authority is reinforced by the character of Lieutenant Alicia 'Lish' Donadio (who unwittingly becomes the strong, swift and self-repairing soldier that Project

⁵⁰ Cronin (2010), pp. 656

⁵¹ Peter Jaxon (who becomes a lieutenant in the 'Expeditionary Army of the Republic of Texas) is a member of a band of humans led by the Viral Amy that follow Stoker's Crew of Light in spirit if not in composition and whose core also includes Alicia Donadio (also a lieutenant in the same army): Cronin (2012), p. 597

⁵² Cronin (2010), p. 657

⁵³ Cronin (2010), p. 656; See David J. Skal, *Hollywood Gothic*, who sites Lugosi's Dracula as 'a lightning rod for prevailing social anxieties': David J. Skal, *Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web of Dracula from Novel to Stage to Screen* (London and New York: Faber and Faber, [1990] 2004), p. 5

⁵⁴ Skal ([1990] 2004), p. 5

⁵⁵ Cronin (2010), p. 658

Noah was set up to create), whose perception also focuses on *Dracula* as enlightening as well as irrational:⁵⁶

The thing is like a viral owner's manual. Never mind the cape and castle and all that nonsense. It's the rest that fits. A human being whose life has been 'unnaturally prolonged.' Using the stake in the heart to kill him. The way he has to sleep in his native soil. The whole business with mirrors [...] It's as if their reflection [...] screws them up somehow.⁵⁷

Donadio continues the positioning of *Dracula* as educational, although the proprietary tone presages her later role as a 'New Thing', neither vampire nor human therefore between forms (a state that links her to the genetically-engineered Shori of Butler's *Fledgling*, discussed in chapter six).⁵⁸ As with del Toro and Hogan's metafictional response, *Dracula's* influence is therefore both acknowledged and distanced by Cronin: the characterization of Lugosi dwells on his cape and castle as 'nonsense', and Lugosi's accent / vocal intonation – '*I am...Drrrrrac-ulaah*' – is greeted with a derisive 'detonation of whoops, whistles, cheers' from a tent full of soldiers.⁵⁹ *Dracula's* solitary threat is repeatedly contrasted to the mass menace of Virals (on seeing *Dracula*, Renfield's character is described as displaying the horror of one who has 'stumbled on a whole pod of [Viral] smokes'), manifesting a mirroring of mass consumption in post-9/11 vampire Monsters that speaks of an upscaling of fear (what horror writer Stephen King describes as a 'grasping, stop-at-nothing hunger').⁶⁰ While none of Cronin's

⁵⁶ Donadio is bitten by a Viral, receives an injection of 'Amy', and becomes 'The New Thing', 'Neither one nor the other [Viral or human], but somehow both. She couldn't feel the virals, as Amy could; couldn't hear the question, the great sadness of the world. In every respect she seemed herself, the same Alicia she had always been, save one [...] she could do the most astounding things.' Light sensitivity and glowing ginger hair are joined by speed, strength, and agility well beyond human parameters (see chapters 68 and 71 of *The Passage*): Cronin (2010), p. 739

⁵⁷ Cronin (2012), pp. 234-235

⁵⁸ Cronin (2010), p. 739

⁵⁹ Cronin (2010), p. 657

⁶⁰ Stephen King, 'Suck on This', in Scott Snyder, Raphael Albuquerque and Stephen King, *American Vampire* (New York: DC Comics, 2010), n.p.; King also acknowledges the broad influence of Stoker's vampire Count: 'without *Dracula*, for instance, I think there is no '*Salem's Lot* [1975]'. In King's *The Stand* [1978] can be found another catastrophic storyline that assimilates the influence of *I Am Legend*, showing that fear of mass infection and epidemics has always been culturally central in modern America. While Stephen King can arguably be considered as influential, with the 'first half of [*The Stand*...] the story of a man-made virus which sweeps America and the world, wiping out ninety-nine per cent of the human race and utterly destroying our technology-based culture', leaving behind 'a chance for humanity's remaining shred to start over again in a God-centered

vampires may directly replicate Dracula's aristocratic mien, comparisons keep Lugosi's Count firmly part of this modern vampire narrative, serving to advance understanding of Virals within an unknowing environment. Despite these comparative connections, as Jaxon's and Donadio's amateur film criticisms show, rather than an obvious borrowing of form from *Dracula*, the anticipatory terror and incomplete comprehension of their supernatural enemy instead embraces the spirit, behaviour, and emotional responses to what might be recognized as undead traits attributable to the Count, such as extreme photosensitivity and a necessary ingestion of blood.

Furthering the transcendent connection between his Virals and Dracula, Cronin's vampires may not change form into bats, rats, or wolves, but they demonstrate a zoomorphic sympathy for generic ancestry in their origins, appearance, and behaviour patterns – some choosing to hang upside down when resting as 'an expression of kinship to bats'.⁶¹ Cronin describes them variously as 'swoop[ing] down from the trees. Like the [Bolivian] bats', and possessing predatory attributes such as 'the curling expansion of the hands and feet, with their grasping digits and razor-sharp claws' reminiscent of raptors, and a continuous shedding and replacing of teeth as 'long as the little swords you get in a fancy drink' in a manner akin to sharks.⁶² Further animalistic behaviours carried forward from Dracula include biting 'just over' the jugular – 'Zero's bite found the soft place on his neck where the blood moved' – and a telepathic link that once more expands upon Dracula's individualized control mechanism: here it is between each of the Twelve and their Many that, as with del Toro and Hogan's hive analogy, employs the insectival: 'the closest analogue would be bees [...] These Twelve original subjects [...] they're like the queens, each with a different variant of the virus.'⁶³ Cronin

world to which miracles, magic, and prophecy had returned': Stephen King, *On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2000), pp. 245, 239

⁶¹ Cronin (2012), p. 225

⁶² Cronin (2010), pp. 195, 335, 69

⁶³ Cronin (2010), p. 741; Stoker's character Dr Seward precisely locates the bites marks appearing on Lucy's neck: 'Just over the external jugular vein there were two punctures, not large, but not wholesome-looking': Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. 115; An example of del Toro and Hogan's insectival analogy can be seen in their description of the Master as 'the embodiment of a hive of undead souls': del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 37

hybridizes the spirituality of Stoker's Count with animal and insectival analogies to meet a secularized need for scientific pseudo-plausibility within modern vampire fiction.

In contrast with Cronin's metafictional assimilation of the peculiar vampiric monstrosity of *Dracula*, like del Toro and Hogan's series, the theme of almost wholesale Viral turnings and deaths in *The Passage* show a generic influence stemming from the mass infections and rapid cultural breakdown patterning in Matheson's *I Am Legend*. Cronin's vampire virus has a global 'Morbidity [rate...] very close to 100 percent' of the human population although his humans are not all turned, instead – beyond U.S. borders – most succumb to 'death within 36 hours' after contraction of a viral mutation that 'does not require close physical contact [...] and can travel great distances attached to dust motes or respiratory droplets'.⁶⁴ Despite Cronin's vampires being products of experimentation with a 'virus that could, with the proper refinements, restore the thymus gland to its full and proper function', his narrative maintains the widespread generic modelling of vampiric 'transformative effects of the North American strain' by blood contact infection, what Matheson's human protagonist Neville positions as a bacillus, or 'facultative saprophyte' (saprophytic feeding on dead and decaying matter to aid decomposition in soil prompts a link to vampires as a useful part of the ecosystem, ridding the world of damaged humans and allowing undead domination).⁶⁵

The wider global devastation of humanity by mutated viral infection reduces the global vampiric numbers of infected depicted in del Toro and Hogan's series examined in chapter one, where it is used as a vehicle for divine punishment but amplifies Matheson's focus on an undead wrecking of suburbia. While not quite exhibiting an inversion of the *Dracula* touchstone – one human to many vampires

⁶⁴ Cronin (2016), pp. 31, 32; Although beyond the remit of this project, Cronin's narrative portrayal of the transmission and reception of disease mimics mass infections such as plague, influenza, and Ebola. Also, it shares thematic adaptation of Matheson's story with the most recent cinematic transposition, Francis Lawrence's 2007 *I Am Legend*, where the viral disease is linked to a 'cure' for cancer

⁶⁵ Cronin (2010), p. 86; Cronin (2016), p. 32; Richard Matheson, *I Am Legend* (London: Gollancz, [1954] 2001), p. 135; For a brief outline of saprophytic decomposers, see 'Saprophytes', <<http://www.srl.caltech.edu/personnel/krubal/rainforest/Edit560s6/www/plants/saprophytes.html>> [accessed 5 January 2018]

in contrast with one vampire to many humans – Cronin has ‘One person in ten [...] taken up for every nine that died’ in a decimation of the U.S. population, leaving behind pockets of humans to survive against the Viral Many.⁶⁶ Just as a pandemic expansion of vampire masses in Matheson’s novel quickly overwhelms the suburban Los Angeles space inhabited by Neville, so too do Cronin’s undead – ‘It happened fast. Thirty-two minutes for one world to die, another to be born’ – with remaining humans in both texts hyper-vigilant targets for the undead.⁶⁷ Where Matheson leads with his vampire apocalypse equating to a Cold War-inspired fear of a Communistic overwhelming of America (see chapter one) Cronin follows, his fictional president, as already mentioned, blaming unidentifiable others as convenient post-9/11 bogeymen through deliberate misdirection: this ‘epidemic is the work of terrorists’.⁶⁸ As discussed in chapter one, Neville’s statement about vampires – ‘They are loathed because they are feared’ – not only mirrors a 1950s cultural acquiescence to the construction of ‘Commies’ as an ideological threat but is a precursor to subsequent apocalyptic fiction such as del Toro and Hogan’s and Cronin’s.⁶⁹ As del Toro and Hogan do, Cronin abides by Matheson’s portrayal of fear as a product of detestation, creating a narrative in which what is feared can be positioned as an object of revulsion in his wholesale spread of vampirism as a fantastic metaphor for the contagious sweep of a post-9/11 ‘loathing’ of anyone potentially perceivable as terroristic. Retention of Matheson’s interaction with contemporary ‘us against them’ ideology present in ‘the language of nuclear threat and Cold War containment’ shades into Cronin’s vampire *Monsters* narrative, transposed into a justifying of covert human vivisection in response to the potential of martial impotence in the face of terroristic threat(s).⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Cronin (2010), p. 305

⁶⁷ Cronin (2010), p. 192

⁶⁸ Cronin (2010), p. 223; For further fiction dealing with mass vampirism, see examples of early twenty-first century cinematic projects such as Francis Lawrence’s *I Am Legend* (2007), David Slade’s *30 Days of Night* (2007), and Michael and Peter Spierig’s *Daybreakers* (2009)

⁶⁹ As Neville states, ‘Vampires are prejudiced against [...] is the vampire so bad? All he does is drink blood [...] Normalcy was a majority concept, the standard of many and not the standard of just one man’: Matheson ([1954] 2001), pp. 26, 160

⁷⁰ Mayer (2007), p. 3

Having discussed the influence of generic antecedents evidenced in Cronin's trilogy and, in particular, its consideration of the Dracula model, investigation now turns to Cronin's vampire Monsters narrative for its vampires' function as culturally familiar oppositional tools for reflecting on post-9/11 contextual tensions. Specifically, it speaks of Auerbach's recognition that 'vampires are in any given generation [...] a part of what [...] times have become'.⁷¹ These vampires have a symbiotic relationship with the culture in which they are created offering, as already mentioned, palimpsestic vampiric modelling that assimilates contextual perceptions surrounding fear and power dynamics associated with terroristic behavioural patterning. Once infected, Cronin's vampire Many are borderline zombified drones controlled by the Twelve, parted from what makes them unique, and, through this, they identify with Romero's version of Matheson's vampires as mindless consumers.⁷² Although, as with del Toro and Hogan's trilogy, Cronin's vampire narrative takes on the iterations of generic ancestry not to emulate but as part of a redesigned monstrous inducing of fresh terrors. The catastrophic undermining of America as global hegemon creates an undead nation state in which modern humanity has no place. What is instigated as part of an endeavour to reinforce U.S. global (military) authority and intended to lead to the creation of a class of super-soldiers, is instead a self-defeating ignition point for the killing or turning of millions of Americans.

'And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years': Cronin's Vampiric Flooding of Modernity⁷³

As the sub-title above suggests, Cronin's Virals are an amalgam of science and biblically analogous apocalypse, destroying the modern world through an undead 'flood' that positions America as instigator of its own downfall. Cronin reduces America's global hegemony to religio-historical fabular accounts such as 'The Book of Auntie', and the 'myth' of 'Amy dreamer[s]' who have visions of Amy and where

⁷¹ Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 1

⁷² See *Night of the Living Dead*, dir. by George A. Romero (Image Ten et al, 1968)

⁷³ Cronin (2010), p. 44

she resides (within the story, she is increasingly treated as a messianic being).⁷⁴ The conference welcome address by Logan Miles, the ‘Chancellor’s Task Force on North American Research and Reclamation’ or ‘First Colony’ researcher, (in *The City of Mirrors*) interprets “‘The Book of Twelve” [...] as a manifestation of an almighty deity’s displeasure with mankind’ (an interpretation of vampirism that links to del Toro and Hogan’s Master as product of God’s ‘judgment’) but also evidences a scientifically-oriented understanding that ‘the man known as Zero and twelve criminals [...] acted as the original vectors of infection’.⁷⁵ The ‘deity’ is not identified, but Cronin’s biblical narrative stylistics – chapter and verse – in the prologues of books two and three suggest a Christian God’s ‘displeasure’ at a human scientific overreaching in the creation of ‘vectors of infection’ that undo a humanity supposedly ‘made in his image’. Thus, America’s one thousand years’ quarantine generates a long-standing shift in global dynamics, with the political void filled by a new antipodal republic as this uchronic U.S. is hoisted by its own genetically-modified petard, becoming the product of a self-inflicted Armageddon. Capitalism and Christianity are both overtaken by an adaptation to communality and the acceptance of Amy as a neo-Christ-like figure.

Justified as causal to the self-inflicted Armageddon of Cronin’s U.S., the terrorist acts perpetrated on 9/11 are, once again, fantastically exaggerated and taken to the *nth* degree. An annihilation of modern America and a concomitant global collapse of humanity (the planet-wide death of billions) continues the suggestion of this nation as global dominant, whether that is as a positive or negative. As Monty G. Marshall proposes in his analysis of global terrorism:

The subject [...] seized the world’s attention in late 2001 as a result of one fairly brief, yet highly dramatic and destructive, attack on [...] the United States of America. The targeting of the World Trade Center in New York City, the symbol of the United States’ enormous global economic power, and the Pentagon Building in Washington, DC, the symbol of the United States’

⁷⁴ ‘The Book of Auntie’ is the character Ida Jaxon’s diarized account of the early days after the Twelve escape: Cronin (2010), p. 250

⁷⁵ Cronin (2016), pp. 588, 557, 563

overarching military superiority [...] attained symbolic stature as an affront to the established global order.⁷⁶

Where, as chapter one's discussion makes evident, focus in *The Strain* is on an exploitation and destruction of 'the United States' enormous global economic power', as a cultural artefact, Cronin's trilogy is a material indicator of fears surrounding terroristic activity as a threat to America's 'overarching military superiority'.⁷⁷ Rather than a vampiric ingression that follows the *Dracula* paradigm, Cronin's vampiric catastrophe, like a necrotic infection, spreads from a point of paranoiac infection within the U.S. body. By endeavouring to create unassailable armed forces, Cronin's Project Noah shows a disproportionate (over)reaction to a potential undermining of his modern America's global standing. In examining constitutional contemporary responses to violence, Oren Gross's observation, '[p]olitical realists have often made the argument that when dealing with acute violent crises, democracies ought to forgo legal and constitutional niceties', offers a succinct appraisal of the politicized 'foregoing' of 'niceties', predicated on a desire for military supremacy, that underlies Cronin's apocalypse, exposing both to be unsound propositions.⁷⁸ Sharing the influence of a national reaction to 9/11 as a point of 'acute violent' crisis, Cronin's fashioning of a militarized 'remedy' for terroristic ideological animosity displays an imperative to impose American dogma through the might of invincible armed forces. Interplay between the biblical and secular once again creates a cataclysmic combination that destroys what is recognized as a modern cultural environment, reducing the few surviving humans to post-apocalyptic subsistence.

Returning to the quote at the start of this sub-section, 'And all the days of Noah were nine hundred and fifty years': this may be biblical in origin, but has a double meaning.⁷⁹ Cronin weaves Old Testament into a modern narrative, with the '*days of Noah*' approximating the era of Viral global devastation the origin of which, as

⁷⁶ Monty G. Marshall, 'Global Terrorism: An Overview and Analysis', *Center for Systemic Peace Occasional Paper*, 3 (2002), 2-47, p. 2

⁷⁷ Marshall (2002), p. 2

⁷⁸ Oren Gross, 'Chaos and Rules: Should Responses to Violent Crises Always Be Constitutional?', *The Yale Law Journal*, 112, 5 (2003), 1011-1134, p. 1024

⁷⁹ Cronin (2010), p. 44

already discussed, is the failed experimentation on cultural outliers.⁸⁰ Acknowledging his biblical source material, Cronin states that catastrophe 'seems [...] a fundamental human anxiety [and] The oldest story of apocalypse in Western culture is the story of Noah'.⁸¹ Project Noah is then, as touched upon above, the starting point for a Viral Armageddon, obeying the punishment and redemption evidenced in the Genesis tale of flooding and survival that gives the military project its name as it becomes a corrupted vessel from which pours Cronin's apocalyptic anxiety. The terror that is used to justify the manufacture of undead Monsters is transformed into a narrative warning that a martial 'might is right' approach can only lead to an expanding spiral of violence to the point of human oblivion.⁸²

As with del Toro and Hogan's Master, Cronin's Virals are central to a narrative puncturing of a uchronic modern U.S. culture but, as indicated above, where the Master's terror incorporates a more traditional invasive aggression as an embodiment of prevailing fears of terroristic disruptions, these vampires evidence eruption from within, a near all-consuming sepsis spreading quickly through the American corpus, poisoning from the inside out. Where del Toro and Hogan's human catalyst for destruction, Palmer, attempts to buy his *own* immortality, Cronin's human catalysts turn to vampirism as a prospective augmentation of global martial dominance and, through it, not so much a buying as a bullying bolster for potential immortality of America's global position as modern superpower.⁸³ Cronin's plot reveals an unconscious admission of nationalistic

⁸⁰ Cronin (2010), p. 44

⁸¹ 'The Passage: Q & A with Justin Cronin', <<http://enterthepassage.com/the-passage-q-a-with-justin-cronin/>> [accessed 3 January 2013]

⁸² Cronin's narrative shows the fallacy of the 'might is right' dynamic. The strength of 'masters' such as the global determinant that is the superpower of America, is maintained through domination of 'slave' beings / states that constitute the rest of the modern world, but the fear that comes with master position(s) is, ultimately, a catalyst for the loss of power as part of a fundamental cycling between the two positions. For a detailed discussion of master-slave dichotomy, see Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the Genealogy of Morals: First Essay "Good and Evil," "Good and Bad"', in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. by Walter Kaufmann (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), pp. 460-492

⁸³ As modern morality tales, del Toro and Hogan's *The Strain* and Cronin's *The Passage* are narrative demonstrations that attempts to either buy or bully control and dominance of and over the future on an individual or national level must be seen to fail. Neither the near-unchecked capitalism that guides del Toro and Hogan's super-rich character Eldritch

internal monstrosity, a cultural bias that puts ‘America First’ as its military are prepared to pour ‘hundreds of millions [of dollars] down the rathole’ of experimentation as part of an imperative to retain hegemonic control, revealing an all-or-nothing ethos.⁸⁴ Instead of super-soldiers, the Virals adhere to Marshall’s overview of modern global terrorism, which he describes as ‘the intentional targeting of civilian, non-combatant populations’ and being ‘an extraordinary act of violence [...] stand[ing] in contrast to our “normal” expectations of adversity’.⁸⁵ While Cronin’s trilogy may not disclose an ‘intentional’ act of terrorism, it discloses a stop-at-nothing martial imperative towards overcoming American antitheses as impetus for an unintentional apocalyptic act.

Cronin’s anti-militaristic narrative adopts elements of conspiracy, its vampires by-products of the pursuit of a martially motivated secret agenda. Instead of diplomacy and debate, the plot is prompted by an imperious assumption that ‘the muscle and the money’ of martial dominance will successfully counter un-American terror / radicalism / state sponsored violence. Fuelling the creation of uncooperative and uncontrollable vampire Virals once again mimics Gross’s observation of the argument of ‘[p]olitical realists’ for ‘dealing with acute violent

Palmer nor Cronin’s parading of the misguided fascistic actions of America’s political and military élite, who are determined to maintain global dominance through the deployment of ‘super-soldiers’, achieve the potential they desire from immortality. As discussed in chapter one, Palmer’s wealth may facilitate the ambitions of the vampire Master, but it does not gain him the overcoming of mortality he craves. Likewise, the unchecked radical authoritarianism that underpins the ambitions of Cronin’s military to reinforce their global government is shown to expedite a devastation of humanity. Neither series rewards humans ‘playing God’ as immortality is ultimately only open to the archangelic characters in *The Strain*, with Cronin’s Amy – whilst endowed with an extended lifespan that lasts for over a millennium and being the sole human who comes nearest to owning the future – isolated by her longevity.

⁸⁴ Charles Lindbergh’s anti-war isolationist nationalism – ‘we will fight anybody and everybody who attempts to interfere with our hemisphere, and that we will do so with all the resources of our nation [...] if we go to war to preserve democracy abroad, we are likely to end by losing it at home [...] We in America can make our nation an example for the rest of the world. We can spread our ideals in other countries. We can defend this hemisphere from invasion’ – finds modern parallel in President Trump’s at best protectionist business-focused rhetoric: Charles Lindbergh, ‘Election Promises Should Be Kept: We Lack Leadership That Puts America First’, *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 7, 16 (1941), 482-483, pp. 482, 483; For example, see Trump’s Davos Speech: ‘America First is not America Alone’, 28 January 2018, <www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-42835934> [accessed 30 January 2018]

⁸⁵ Marshall (2002), p. 12

crises' by 'forgo[ing] legal and constitutional niceties'.⁸⁶ Politically-sanctioned experimentation delegitimizes America's military, the tactical error of treating humans as commodities, as with discussion of Palmer's failure to obtain his goal seen in chapter one, leading to the reduction of U.S. citizens to mass victims. Over-reaching by academic scientists co-opted into the military, sees the Zero's virally infected blood used on dogs, pigs, and monkeys before they move on to what are casually dismissed by Richards as a series of 'homeless guys' whose fate is sealed in blood: 'the first human subjects had all died within hours, blazing with fever, bleeding out like busted hydrants' – a simile that again speaks of violent eruption.⁸⁷ A series of painful deaths are objectified through a clipped, alliterative plosive pulsing repetition of 'b' sounds, sputtering punches that propel towards a pragmatic response to a graphic image of profuse blood loss. Turning to 'death row inmates', as 'human recyclables' who have 'nothing to lose', and are therefore at a one-step remove from wider humanity, sets up the consequences of a misappropriation of research – once genetically altered, the Twelve inherit Zero's strength, speed, blood lust and, necessarily, alpha predator's free will.⁸⁸ Consequently, America, arguably born in *human* violence and usurpation, ends in *vampiric* violence and usurpation, with power and coercion not a site of U.S. strength but its undoing.

Central to this apocalypse, Cronin's vampires are symbolic responses to the deliberate flouting of a narrative moral fine line by Cronin's military, sanctioned by a mendacious president. A false justification of the 'most important piece of medical research in the history of mankind', sees it deemed a 'perfectly legal' research programme on the 'side of the angels' by Colonel Sykes.⁸⁹ Such

⁸⁶ Imperialistic assumptions influence the military take-over of a 'civilian scientific expedition', sanctioned by the same 'president of the United States' who, as discussed above, seeks to distance the Viral outbreak as an act of terror perpetrated by 'anti-American extremists': Cronin (2010), pp. 18, 20, 223; Gross (2003), p. 1024

⁸⁷ Cronin (2010), p. 87

⁸⁸ On their expedition to Bolivia, Special Forces 'backed by enough firepower to overthrow a small government' co-opt Dr Jonas Lear, turning 'the vampire guy' into an instant Colonel alongside giving Fanning the rank of captain: Cronin (2010), pp. 87, 88, 35

⁸⁹ Cronin (2010), p. 43; The phrase 'I am on the side of the angels' comes from an 1864 address by the British prime minister Benjamin Disraeli to an audience at the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford, where he sought to undermine Darwin's evolutionary theories, particularly the link between humans and primates, by postulating, 'Is man an ape or an angel?': see chapter 10 (pp. 177-202)

attempted rationalizing of occult experimentation is further undermined by the immorality of a manipulative ‘militariz[ation of] mourning’ as the question is postulated of the scientist Lear: ‘how much of Project Noah was really just one grieving man [...] trying to undo his wife’s death?’⁹⁰ The martial misappropriation of individualized mourning, with Lear’s grief usurped for the creation of undying hear-humans, not only leads to a globalized grief for billions of human deaths but also foreshadows the back-story of the Zero, which dominates the final book of Cronin’s trilogy, *The City of Mirrors*, in which he personifies the thrust of this narrative. The Zero acknowledges, ‘Behind every great hatred is a love story’, and that ‘fortune and treasure flowed [his] way’ as human Fanning but, as Viral exemplar, he is more: a ‘Great Destroyer of the World.’⁹¹ Consequently, it is Zero, as Cronin’s principal vampire monster – not just a destroyer, but a ‘great’ destroyer – who gains the power to preside over a near-post-human world through an initial militarized fear impulse.

Thus, the Zero, alongside Amy, necessitates consideration as Cronin’s pivotal undead characters. Together, the Zero (former human, Fanning, and first Viral) and Amy (the ‘Girl from Nowhere’, and last of the laboratory-created Virals who all carry a variant of the Zero’s viral strain) represent a warped parent-child dynamic.⁹² These two undead characters are, as outlined above, the undead alpha and omega of this ‘A.V.’ time-scape and, as such, demonstrate Cronin’s adaptation of monstrosity, with Fanning’s Zero a point of anthropological negation – the ‘father of destruction’ and source of a near global extinction for humanity – and Amy’s (‘whose name is Love’) liminal saviour-heroine, who turns away from being a Viral ‘*sister in blood*’ and towards beatific benevolence, as conduit for the exodus of the few surviving Americans and the powerful entity that eventually attracts humanity back to the national space.⁹³

in Peter J. Bowler, *Charles Darwin: The Man and His Influence* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 177

⁹⁰ Lucy Bond, ‘Compromised Critique: A Meta-critical Analysis of American Studies after 9/11’, *Journal of American Studies 10 Years After 9/11*, 45, 4 (2011), 733-756, p. 733; Cronin (2010), p. 87

⁹¹ Cronin (2016), p. 85

⁹² Cronin (2010), p. 407

⁹³ Cronin (2012), pp. xi, xii, 412

The Zero's devastating impetus is summarized in the prologue of *The Twelve*, where he is described as 'disguised as a virtuous man, concealing the evil within', a learned man who uses intellect for personal gain, paralleling the human monstrosity of del Toro and Hogan's Palmer.⁹⁴ Both men who abuse vampiric power for self-advantage, Fanning / the Zero and Palmer hide misanthropic deficiencies behind the outward respectability of academia and commerce, respectively. However, where del Toro and Hogan's Palmer fails in his desire for vampiric power, the Zero succeeds, albeit in an involuntary fashion. Cronin's use of 'a little girl [from] Iowa' as a Viral corrective to the Zero exhibits a modification to the widespread generic determinant to which del Toro and Hogan conform: the human-vampire opposition for overcoming undead Monsters that is as central to the narrative of *The Strain* as it is to the ur-plot of *Dracula* is, in Amy, remodelled, with disease and cure (the Zero and Amy) emanating from the same Viral source.⁹⁵ While this remodelling of generic expectations may not be quite as vampirically cloistered as the vampire-on-vampire action that dominates the Discords narratives discussed in section three below, in introducing a young, female vampire as a protagonist protective of humanity, Cronin plays on gendered assumptions of nurturing and benevolence, usually portrayed as anathema to vampirism, as a fundamental part of a cycling into and out of a devastation of humankind. Where del Toro and Hogan focus on a single aggressive undead interloper, Cronin's construction of a narrative around the yin and yang of these two dominant American citizen-vampire characters makes plain America as home to its own worst fear, the loss of its position as modern global hegemon, a situation that can only be comprehended through an attendant global annihilation of modern humanity and an eventual possibility of American regeneration.

Before his vampiric change, Fanning is a biochemistry professor seconded by USAMRIID, as already established. Where secularization is punished by a biblical routing in *The Strain* – 'the origin of these monsters on Earth' coming from God's punishment of archangel Ozryel's 'act of evil' attack on the archangel Michael –

⁹⁴ Cronin (2012), p. xi; See chapter one for discussion of Palmer's role in del Toro and Hogan's narrative of vampire apocalypse, *The Strain*

⁹⁵ Cronin (2010), p. 3

Cronin's Monsters are products of scientific arrogance and martial trepidation, with Fanning the first infected survivor of the 'CV-0' virus.⁹⁶ Self-punishment follows scientific usurpation of a creator-god's role, the Christian analogies serving as reminders that the power possessed by this nation has inevitably ended in misuse and corruption. Contracting the virus in Bolivia, Fanning becomes patient zero after being 'practically chewed to pieces' by bats – Cronin's use of bats as primary point of infection links into a widely used generic trope, most notably seen in narratives involving Dracula's transformative abilities.⁹⁷ What is a pseudo-scientific identifier – 'CV-0' – stems from an unpredictable and uncontrollable violent devastation of those on the Bolivian expedition that foreshadows the Viral apocalypse as Fanning goes from academic scientist to 'the Other, the one above and behind, the Zero.'⁹⁸ This description of the Zero as 'Other' points towards the uncanniness of Fanning's Viral metamorphosis, which is increased by an intimation of deification: Zero as 'above and behind' implies a god-like omniscience. Zero also marks a loss of (human) identity, his new name symbolizing the effects wrought by Viral apocalypse on modern America; a portent for the ferocious and far-reaching desolation of humanity. This character marks the beginning of a journey to the brink of human nothingness.

In contrast with the *intellectual* authority of Fanning prior to becoming the *Viral* authority Zero, Amy's description as a young girl 'approximately age six, dumped like a bad habit at a convent in Memphis by a mother who was probably too strung out to care' not only presents a wordplay on addiction but also positions her as vulnerable and without authority or autonomy.⁹⁹ Despite highlighting her vulnerability, Amy's characterization is tinged with a linguistic coupling with Fanning from the outset through her '*Zero footprint*', as an expression of both

⁹⁶ del Toro and Hogan (2010), p.276; The 'CV Familial Hemorrhagic Fever' is adapted to each of the Twelve and Amy, numbering 'CV1 – CV13': Cronin (2010), pp. 305; Cronin (2012), p. 565

⁹⁷ Cronin (2010), p. 23; Film portrayals of Dracula have diversified from Stoker's original text to encompass a range of bats that go from Tod Browning's rubber chiroptera to the man-sized Gary Oldman in a winged rubber suit: see *Dracula* (1931); *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, dir. by Francis Ford Coppola (Columbia Pictures Industries, 1992)

⁹⁸ Cronin (2012), p. 565; Cronin (2010), p. 568

⁹⁹ Cronin (2010), p. 89

incorporation and movement *beyond* the Zero.¹⁰⁰ Deliberately infected with the vampire virus, Amy sits as intermediary between human and vampire, as a blended character, part-saviour, part-Viral, and part-Viral slayer: 'The same and not the same. A shadow behind a shadow [...] a tear in the fabric of night'.¹⁰¹ Juxtaposed to Zero's induction of unfettered ferocity, Amy's hybridized child form, whose description as 'shadow behind a shadow' makes evident a double negativity (a mathematically or grammatically logical positive), is placed in the position of a redemptive neo-Christ-like figure. Following the girl-Christ analogy, the metaphoric violence of Amy as a 'tear in the fabric of the night' acts as a parallel of biblical violence such as Jesus' driving the traders from the temple.¹⁰² Like del Toro and Hogan's Master as God's puppet-monster, both the Zero and Amy defy a reading of vampirism as unequivocally monstrous, with Amy, in particular, the child-puppet of scientists playing god and vampirically anomalous in her overarching benevolence. Taking monstrosity beyond the straightforward vampire versus human binary, Cronin creates a homoeopathic framework – as mentioned above – where like cures (or destroys) like. Where the Zero embodies the beginning of the end for modern America and its global potency, Amy's benevolent vampirism serves to bring about a renewal or rebirth. Thus, Amy and Fanning are tied through absence or lack – both zeroes, both 'behind' – but also both *beyond* humanity, ciphers for an understanding of a self-destructive modern America.

As fantastic expressions of the historical inevitability of modern America's self-destruction, the Zero and Amy embody Butler's understanding of vampires as the possessors of 'the power to move between and undo borders otherwise holding identities in place'.¹⁰³ Zero's movement between humanity and vampirism, through his intellectual / scientific pursuits, to become the origin point of

¹⁰⁰ Cronin (2010), p. 89

¹⁰¹ Cronin (2010), p. 570

¹⁰² Cronin (2010), p. 570; Jesus' driving the traders from the Jerusalem temple is described in all four of the New Testament gospels: Matthew 21.12-13; Mark 11.15-17; Luke 19.45-46; John 2.14-17

¹⁰³ Erik Butler, *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film: Cultural Transformations in Europe, 1732 – 1933* (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2010), p. 1

apocalypse and father to all Virals, undoes the U.S. as modern hegemon (although, the quarantining of Cronin's America leans more towards closed rather than undone borders). Fanning's role as an academic, if not obviously 'heroic', is suggestive of good intentions – his original aim is to find a means of slowing ageing and regenerating damaged bodies: 'VSA, for Very Slow Aging [is a...] Very Silly Abbreviation [for...] an agent that could significantly lengthen human life span and increase physical robustness'.¹⁰⁴ There is no initial intent for this scientific venture to be deployed as a martial aid. As Seymour Martin Lipsett proposes in *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, during the twentieth century 'intellectuals have [become] the innovators, the agents of social change', and this flippant assessment of Fanning's original aim, reducing scientific endeavour to a 'Very Silly Abbreviation', undermines human altruism with Viral nihilistic aggression as a definitive agency for change.¹⁰⁵

What starts as an (almost) philanthropic research aim is married with 'risky stuff: vampire stuff, though no one at Special Weapons ever used the word'.¹⁰⁶ The threat of genetic manipulation may be acknowledged early in book one, but the 'risk' of vampirism is overlooked in a point of hesitation where monomaniacal adherence to the potential for it to advance global retention of U.S. martial dominion supersedes safety: as Howard Zinn states of an American history born from violence and rebellion, after the late eighteenth-century revolution, the Founding Fathers 'created the most effective system of national control devised in modern times, and showed future generations of leaders the advantages of combining paternalism with command'.¹⁰⁷ It is this same combination of 'paternalism' and 'command' – which translates as a few military men with too much power making decisions without consideration or consultation of those they profess to protect – that lies at the core of the underhand militaristic presumptions of right driving Project Noah and the experimental use of Zero and

¹⁰⁴ Cronin (2010), p. 86

¹⁰⁵ Seymour Martin Lipsett, *The First New Nation: The United States in Historical and Comparative Perspective* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 66

¹⁰⁶ Cronin (2010), p. 86

¹⁰⁷ Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States 1492 – Present, 3rd Edn* (London and New York: Routledge, [1980] 2013), p. 59

the virus he harbours for furthering the project's clandestine attempt to justify U.S. post-9/11 arms escalation. This is seen in the free indirect narrative adoption of Richards' cynicism – 'when wasn't there a war on, somewhere, to keep a man like Richards in good employ?'¹⁰⁸ Where del Toro and Hogan's vampire Master is a deity's instrument of punishment, the Zero is instrumental to as well as the instrument of human scientific and martial miscalculations.

This extension of the vampiric form sees the Zero's vampirism informed by his human behaviour patterns. In his human life as a renowned academic, the Zero / Fanning exhibits predatory behaviour that equates to most of the criminals who become his Twelve, sexually exploiting students, with 'the age gap widening with every one [he] took into [his] bed', even attempting rape and stabbing to death a young woman.¹⁰⁹ As an undead being, this latent narcissistic grandiosity sees a self-reference that returns to his deific delusionality: he self-describes as 'the knife of the world, clamped between God's teeth.'¹¹⁰ The Zero, as a self-professed 'Destroyer of the [human] World', conjures up the words of Robert Oppenheimer who, as part of the Manhattan Project's scientific team who created the atomic bomb, acknowledges the human capacity to 'become death, the destroyer of worlds'.¹¹¹ The Zero's metaphorical equating of self to a destructive god making a Viral world in his image also draws on a Jungian interpretation, with 'innumerable shadow selves' manifestations of his unconscious self-deification.¹¹² In Cronin's introduction of a first-person narrative for the Zero, he is endowed with self-awareness and the ability to recognize himself as an equivocal being: both 'a beast, a demon' and 'heaven's cruel utensil'.¹¹³ This ecclesiastically inspired binary

¹⁰⁸ Cronin (2010), pp. 83-84

¹⁰⁹ Cronin (2016), p. 159

¹¹⁰ Cronin (2016), pp. 173, 234

¹¹¹ These words, from the Hindu scripture the Bhagavad-Gita, spoken by Oppenheimer when he 'saw the fireball [of the first nuclear explosion] glowing over the New Mexico desert at the Trinity test site on 16 July 1945': James A. Hijiya, 'The "Gita" of J. Robert Oppenheimer', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 144, 2 (2000), 123-167, p.123

¹¹² Cronin (2016), p.233

¹¹³ Cronin (2016), pp. 85, 184; Sophia Andres interprets a Jungian 'shadow' as 'partak[ing] of the substantial and the ethereal, the real and the possible, the conscious and the unconscious'. Despite Andres' discussion centring round Wilkie Collins' nineteenth-century mystery novel *The Woman in White*, her understanding of it in terms of a Jungian response is equally relevant here: 'fus[ing] the shadow of the Other with the self, exploring psychological anxieties generated by cultural incongruities'. Jungian individuation as 'a spark [that] leaps from one [person] to another' is

once more links the monstrosity of Cronin's Zero and del Toro and Hogan's Master. However, while the Master is manifested from the blood of an archangel, and thus has a definitive connection to a punisher-God, the Zero is consequential to the viral infection of a vainglorious academic. The Zero's human self, Fanning, as part of an experimentation that disregards any God, embodies the folly of an American exceptionalistic mindset, that Deborah L. Madsen defines as:

America and Americans are special, exceptional, because they are charged with saving the world from itself and, at the same time [they...] must sustain a high level of spiritual, political and moral commitment to this exceptional destiny.¹¹⁴

Cronin's story brings to the fore the negative side of this exceptionalism in an assumption that the American way is the best way, with the fallacious arrogance that the U.S. military can somehow 'save the world' from un- or anti-American behaviour patterns and belief systems. In this self-destruction, *The Passage* unconsciously manifests an 'exceptional destiny' that echoes a long-standing American Puritanical 'self-condemnation, focused upon the consequences of failing to meet the demands of [...] God', with the 'signs of God's wrath [...] war, famine, disease' pointing to a deific destruction of 'the demons of man and [thereby] sav[ing] the world', again echoing del Toro and Hogan's conceit that America, as global dominant, would be central to a God's apocalyptic wrath.¹¹⁵ The Zero / Fanning therefore exemplifies a narrative conundrum – who is guiltier, the man who creates the monster or the monster he creates (or the man who becomes the monster). The amalgamation of man and vampire personified in the Zero of Cronin's final book in the trilogy, manifests this destruction of 'the demons of man', his Viral self an ambivalent 'creator' godhead claiming dominion over what he regards to be 'My descendents, my Many [...] my ignoble fellows', but also recognizing Amy's role as necessary destroyer of the Twelve and, through

translatable into the Zero's vampiric virus catastrophically 'leaping' through humanity: Sophia Andres, 'Jungian Insights into Victorian Cultural Ambiguities: Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White*', in *Post-Jungian Criticism: Theory and Practice*, ed. by James S. Baumlin, Tita French Baumlin, George H. Jensen (Albany: state University of New York Press, 2004), pp. 140, 155

¹¹⁴ Deborah L. Madsen, *American Exceptionalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), p. 2

¹¹⁵ Madsen (1998), p. 11; Cronin (2010), p. 22

them, their Many as a ‘supreme [...] positively God-kissed’ sacrifice of ‘his’ Virals.¹¹⁶

Having performed their function as a global purgative for what is described in book two’s biblical pastiche Prologue as a ‘world grown wicked’ and a mankind with ‘war in their hearts’, Amy’s role as part of a monstrous whole is to act as necessary end to Zero’s activation of a cycle that, like del Toro and Hogan’s *The Strain*, brings about an Old Testament-style apocalypse.¹¹⁷ Although the Zero and his Twelve ‘sons’ display what can be conceived as more overtly monstrous behaviour patterns in their extreme violence and monomaniacal devastation of Cronin’s uchronic U.S., as discussed in chapter one, Ingebretsen’s positioning of the ‘monstrum’ as a demonstrative entity – a ‘wonder-making person’ – pertains to Amy as Cronin’s principal site of ‘contested meaning’.¹¹⁸ Where Fanning loses his identity, becoming a Zero (simultaneously a non-entity and a point of reckoning), Amy’s original child’s identity allows for maturation and development, incorporating more traditional aspects of monstrosity such as a ‘hunger’ for blood alongside exercising ‘the will of gods’.¹¹⁹ Amy’s blended persona is atypical when compared to those characterized as either monster or deified saviour: literally sacred, she is an antonymous amalgam of both the blessed and cursed (the Latin root of sacred being the adjective *sacer*, incorporating the holy alongside the horrifying). Amy is thus a catalyst for and against Viral destruction. As an agent for both signifying and dispelling ‘civic crisis’, she displays bloodlust (after destroying the Twelve, she takes on their attributes) and fights against the other Virals on behalf of humanity.¹²⁰ As Punter suggests, in discussing Mary Shelley’s monster created by Victor Frankenstein, ‘the monster is not, cannot be, inherently evil [...] born innocent, a *tabula rasa*, a being who will have his psyche formed by his contacts with circumstance’.¹²¹ This innocence translates into Cronin’s characterization of Amy as a young child subject to genetic experimentation and

¹¹⁶ Madsen (1998), p. 11; Cronin (2016), pp. 175, 174

¹¹⁷ Cronin (2012), p. xi

¹¹⁸ Ingebretsen (1998), pp. 94, 109

¹¹⁹ Ingebretsen (1998), p. 94

¹²⁰ Ingebretsen (1998), p. 94

¹²¹ Punter (1996a), p. 108

shaped by a millennium of experiences, with Amy, like Frankenstein's monster, exiling herself – this time by sending off the last remaining Americans in an ark. Amy, as a vulnerable young child, evokes compassion, awe, and love in those she meets, such as the protective nun Sister Lacey Antoinette Kudoto and Special Agent Brad Wolgast (who aids Amy's escape from both the laboratory and other Virals and takes on a surrogate parental role towards her). Through her character, Cronin creates a narrative that damns the dehumanizing treatment of vulnerable U.S. citizens, and also reverses traditional power dynamics that, at the start of the trilogy, enable the military and scientists to covertly 'disappear' humans for vivisection. By endowing Amy, as the apparently weakest and most vulnerable of the test subjects, with fantastic abilities and an eventual god-like status, Cronin's vampire Monsters narrative turns what might have been an expectation of Amy as fearful to focusing on her character's fearsome bravery and abilities, not least of which is her willingness and strength to oppose the Zero and the Twelve, as her youthful subordinate status is transformed into an ascendancy.

Amy, then, is the product of a line of causation in which decisions are flawed, based on the combined force of human fears and an imperative to retain power. In the opening long decade of the twenty-first century, the fear-power climate is part of an American assumption of the dual roles of victim and righteous avenger. This is part of a popular narrative which has seen the targeting of nebulous entities for uncorroborated offences, attempting to demonstrate martial supremacy against organizations identified as terroristic, such as the interchangeable IS / ISIS / DAESH / ISIL in places including Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria.¹²² As a criminally co-opted part of a covert drive to create super-soldiers to send out to fight in unspecified 'un-American' areas, Amy appears to be the antithesis of the other test subjects in age, gender, and behaviour, but her 'Zero footprint', as with the Twelve, enables an easy disappearance. With no close relative to question her absence, Amy is the depersonalized choice of Lear: 'The younger it was [...] the

¹²² See the Department of Defense news article, 'Officials Report Details of Latest Defeat-ISIS Strikes in Syria, Iraq' dated March 16, 2018, <<https://www.defense.gov/News/Article/Article/1468178/officials-report-details-of-latest-defeat-isis-strikes-in-syria-iraq/>> [accessed 18 March 2018]

better it could fight off the virus, to bring it to a kind of stasis.’¹²³ As a professor of cellular biology drafted into military service expressly for the task of creating vampire-soldiers, Lear’s use of the impersonal pronoun ‘it’ in his discussion of a child test subject gives the reader a disquieting insight into a military-backed, indifferent scientific mind-set that focuses on Amy, like the death-row inmates, as an object; a means to an end. And it is this ideological lust for power which affects America’s contemporary cultural ethos that the Virals effectively destroy, leaving Amy as neo-saviour for a new world and a new America. Through her solo inhabiting of the American continent for several hundred years, Amy becomes a mythologized entity whose mythological presence entices people back to the American continent and allows for the rewriting of history. She is a new God in whom to trust.¹²⁴

As part of Cronin’s biblical borrowing, Amy’s neo-God/Christ role necessitates a need for temptation and this comes through Viral monstrosity. Consequential to her destruction of the Twelve, mentioned above, she takes on the characteristics of their vampirism in an overwhelming lust for blood. Consenting to being locked away on a disused ship, tended by the General-turned-Renfield Lucius Greer, Amy conjures up the Gospel story of Christ’s fasting in a wilderness for forty days and nights, once more creating a monstrously sacred ambivalence to her characterization.¹²⁵ Like the figure of Jesus, Amy’s deliberate self-isolation allows for a conquering of inner demons – her internalization of the contest between a perceived barbarism and beneficence an extended metaphoric fight between darkness and light affecting America in Viral form. The modern presidential refrain of ‘God bless America’, first introduced by Richard Nixon when fighting the

¹²³ Ingebretsen (1998), pp. 94, 109

¹²⁴ See also the American Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag: ‘one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all’: ‘Title 4—Flag and Seal, Seat of Government, and the States This title was enacted by act July 30, 1947, ch.389, §1, 61 Stat. 641’, <<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2011-title4/pdf/USCODE-2011-title4.pdf>> [accessed 18 March 2018] (p. 3); See also David Domke and Kevin Coe’s *The God Strategy: How Religion Became a Political Weapon in America*, where they suggest, ‘God has always been a part of American politics. Religion formally entered the U.S. presidency at its inception’ with George Washington’s ‘1789 Inaugural address’: David Domke and Kevin Coe, *The God Strategy: how Religion Became a Political Weapon in America* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, [2008] 2010), p. 6

¹²⁵ See Matthew 4.1-11

Watergate scandal in 1973, is inversely incorporated into a story where Cronin's modern America, once again failed by a president's ill-conceived actions, has not been blessed or saved by a Christian God but ruined by authority figures *playing* God.¹²⁶ Where del Toro and Hogan's Christian God puppeteers the vampire Master as a conduit for punishment of a humanity driven by capitalism, commerce, and consumption, Cronin's Viral Amy, as a neo-Christ-like figure, is shown as capable of violence but ultimately benevolent – nurturing and sympathetic towards an apostolic group of human survivors who look to her for guidance and leadership. Thus, Cronin's series ends with Amy nearer to a god than monster – a like-curing-like, as the destructive intent behind the origin of these vampires sees this uchronic modern America destroyed. As the product of distilling the Zero's vampiric virus through the Twelve, Amy is a being capable of vampiric monstrosity but choosing altruism, not a super-soldier available to follow orders, but much scarier to those seeking to cement power: she is an autonomous being. With no room for America as it is in a global future, Cronin's U.S., like the collapse of earlier Empires such as the Mesopotamian, Roman or British, faces a (rapid) decline, but a romanticized rebirth after a millennium of quarantine, has Amy as its second coming – literally a god born in the U.S.A. And so, the Zero and Amy represent a Janus-like godhead – the Zero, as primary source for Project Noah, is destroyer of the modern world, and Amy is the source of salvation: supernatural father and daughter. Thus, for modern America, vampire Monsters are demonstrations of feared downfalls and coexistent forfeitures of power.

As this section's discussion of twenty-first century vampire Monsters in del Toro and Hogan's *The Strain* series and Cronin's *The Passage* shows, the need for demonized beings within cultures can be understood as a catalyst for creations of vampiric monstrosity. Monsters cannot be seen to succeed, their purpose being to provide an antagonistic force against which a population, however big or small, can unite. Operating as signifiers of cultural concerns, vampire Monsters

¹²⁶ See the video of Richard Nixon, 'April 30, 1973: Address to the Nation About the Watergate Investigations', in which he signs off with 'God bless America': 'April 30, 1973: Address to the Nation About the Watergate Investigations', Miller Center, University of Virginia, <<https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/april-30-1973-address-nation-about-watergate-investigations>> [accessed 18 March 2018] (00.24.03)

demonstrate a supernatural malevolence that provides grist for cautionary and counselling tales showing the need to overcome what might be harmful to a civil body. If, as Susan Mizruchi argues, ‘a common response to catastrophe is to search for boundaries and differences, between ourselves, the victims, and the culprits’, then the undead Monsters central to this section’s investigation, despite their monstrosity, cannot be unequivocally sited as scapegoats, leaving questions remaining regarding human culpability.¹²⁷

The lack of absolute vampiric monstrosity in apocalyptic narratives such as those investigated in chapters one and two points to a culturally subconscious portrayal of U.S. self-castigation, where violence and destruction mark the beginning and end of nation. The fantastic interpretation of a national undertow of self-chastising is discussed by Faflak and Haslam in their introduction to *American Gothic Culture*, where they highlight a disparity ‘between the “national narrative” of the American Dream and the historical realities of violence, subjugation and attempted genocide that materially support the construction of that narrative.’¹²⁸ Del Toro and Hogan’s and Cronin’s vampire narratives play out the undertow of guilt within a modern American instinct for capitalist dreams maintained by covert nightmares. Vampire Monsters and their narratives show a leakage of fear that power dynamics built on ‘historical realities of violence, subjugation and attempted genocide’ exercised by the U.S. can be turned against this hegemon.¹²⁹ This is the same fear that lies behind the vampires and their narratives discussed in the next section but, instead of overt oppression and apocalypse, vampire Dreams serve to *conceal* violence and subjugation with (what appear to be) broad endorsements of U.S. culture. The American Dream, like vampires, changes to reflect each generation’s desires and needs, with Meyer’s *Twilight* and Harris’s ‘Sookie Stackhouse’ series as exemplars of an early twenty-first century antithetical response to national post-9/11 fears and power dynamics governing

¹²⁷ Susan Mizruchi, ‘Risk Theory and the contemporary American Novel’, *American Literary History*, 22, 1 (2009), 109–135, p. 128

¹²⁸ Joel Faflak and Jason Haslam, ‘Introduction’, in *American Gothic Culture: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. by Joel Faflak and Jason Haslam (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 10

¹²⁹ Faflak and Haslam (2016), p. 10

the monstrosities discussed in this section. Consequently, in section two, vampire Dreams, the undead in Meyer's and Harris's series will be examined as representative of assimilation rather than aggression.

Section Two:

Vampire Dreams

Chapter Three: 'twisted up in dreams': Stephenie Meyer's All-American Vampires¹

'a dream so far beyond any of your expectations'
(Bella Swan, Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*)²

'[Dreams] convey [...] thoughts, judgments, views, directives, tendencies, which [are] unconscious either because of repression or through mere lack of realization.' (C. G. Jung, *Dreams*)³

In this section, as the epigraphic quotation from Meyer's human heroine / narrator Isabella 'Bella' Swan indicates, vampire Dreams are 'beyond [...] expectations' of vampirism as the terroristic monstrosity examined in section one.⁴ Instead, they are directed by cultural assimilation, minimizing (although not negating) the violence which dominates within vampire Monsters narratives, despite characters like Cronin's Amy – see chapter two – exhibiting benevolence alongside blood-lust. Vampires as monstrous forces are overt foci for fears, whereas undead who attempt to adopt or are accepted into a human culture(s) and conditioned to adapt (potentially) show an imperative to fantastically reinforce domestic authority within a global framework. Vampiric efforts to be perceived as American citizens (covertly in Meyer's *Twilight* series as focus for this chapter, and overtly in Harris's 'Sookie Stackhouse' series discussed in chapter four) demonstrate an endorsement of American culture. However, this assimilation of vampires into American suburbia equally argues to highlight their narrative spaces as, while seemingly ordinary, crucibles of hidden darknesses.⁵ Dream spaces which appear as homely, safe refuges 'insulated from the dangers

¹ Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight* (London: Atom, [2005] 2008), p. 354

² Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 1

³ Carl Gustav Jung, *Dreams from The Collected Works of C G Jung Volumes 4, 8, 12, 16*, trans. by R. F. C. Hull (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 34

⁴ Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 1; In line with Meyer's narrative referencing to her characters, as well as critical consensus, Bella Swan and other principal characters (after their first mentions) will subsequently be referred to by first name only

⁵ See Bernice M. Murphy, *The Suburban Gothic in American Popular Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

of the outside world' become semiotic arenas that testify to the possibility of 'the most dangerous threats com[ing] from *within*'.⁶ As discussed at the end of chapter two above, Faflak and Haslam in their introduction to *American Gothic Culture*, highlight a disparity between a "'national narrative" of the American Dream' and 'historical realities of violence, subjugation and attempted genocide that materially support the construction of that narrative' – these vampires therefore signify the monstrosities that lie at the heart of U.S. culture, glossed over with Dreams.⁷ Where the examination of vampiric monstrosity personified in the vampire Virals of Cronin's *The Passage* (see chapter two above) as made-in-America destroyers clearly portrays threat as 'from within' national borders, vampire Dreams show threat as an insinuation, a masking of the potential for a resurgence of 'historical' dangers such as violence and subjugation.⁸

As established in the introduction above, vampire Dreams develop from the cultural governance of the 'American Dream'. In 1914, Walter Lippmann conceded that from 'those who cannot conceive of a nation not driven by fear', is produced a 'dreaming', or desire for the unobtainable.⁹ Lippmann's American Dream is, therefore, a hesitation between reality and fantasy to which Meyer's vampire family, the Cullen/Hales (hereafter referred to as the Cullens, in line with critical consensus), can be read as adherents. Their fantastic perfection – they are

⁶ Murphy (2009), p. 3

⁷ Joel Faflak and Jason Haslam, Introduction', in *American Gothic Culture: An Edinburgh Companion*, ed. by Joel Faflak and Jason Haslam (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 10

⁸ Despite continuing vampiric adaptation to reflect upon each culture's fears and power dynamics, there remains a misunderstanding of the undead as almost exclusively demonic and monstrous creatures. As examples of the critical positioning of vampires as monsters, Rosemary Guiley's 'Introduction' to her 2005 *Encyclopedia of Vampires, Werewolves, and Other Monsters* and Jeanne Keyes Youngson's 'Forward' attest to a narrow understanding of them as 'metaphors for death, fear, evil, and alienation'. Guiley goes on to cite the undead as 'entit[ies], force[s], or presence[s] that [bring] illness, misfortune, death, and destruction', but also admitting that she does not believe that readers 'will ever tire' of vampires as 'expert shape-shifter[s...] constantly chang[ing] form to embody whatever contemporary society dreads the most'. The positioning of vampires as monsters in critical responses such as Guiley's, while useful, falls short of the nuanced understanding necessary for reading vampires and their narratives in general, and particularly twenty-first century American vampires and narratives which, although still containing elements of monstrosity, do not all contain what might be seen as monsters: *The Encyclopedia of Vampires, Werewolves, and Other Monsters*, ed. by Rosemary Ellen Guiley (New York: Facts on File, 2005), pp. ix, xiii

⁹ Walter Lippmann, *Drift and Mastery: An Attempt to Diagnose the Current Unrest* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, [1961] 2015), p. 138

extremely wealthy, physically perfect, and eternally youthful – is an inoculation against what Lippmann describes as ‘the haunting horror of constructed evils’ which, in the early years of the twenty-first century, as already mooted, are dominated by U.S. anxieties surrounding terroristic undermining of political-cultural global dominance.¹⁰ Jim Cullen, in *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea*, expands on Lippmann’s reflection, proposing that ‘[a]mbiguity is the very source of [the American Dream’s] power [...] there is no *one* American Dream’.¹¹ Just as ‘there is no *one* American Dream’, there is no *one* vampire, both generationally adapting but retaining a degree of familiarity.¹² Consequently, in ‘a fearful world, [where] Americans have no choice but to live *with* fear if not *in* it’, unifying vampiric attributes with the American Dream challenges the apparent threat present in vampire Monsters’ narratives and distracts from prevailing fears and powerplays.¹³ But, even as they affect narratives of unachievable reassurance for early millennials, vampire Dreams reinforce the fantastic unattainability of American Dreams.

¹⁰ Lippmann ([1961] 2015), p. 139; As head of Meyer’s Cullen family, father figure, Carlisle, is the third richest fictional character, after J.R.R. Tolkien’s dragon, Smaug, at number one and Disney’s ‘world’s richest duck’, Flintheart Glomgold at number two, with Forbes putting his net worth from investments and compound interest at \$36.3 billion: ‘Fictional 15’ <<http://www.forbes.com/pictures/mlg45jffl/3-carlisle-cullen/>> [accessed 15 December 2013]; In contrast with the extreme and unattainable wealth, U.S. poverty levels in the opening years of the twenty-first century are approximately 1 in 7. The online source material of ‘povertyusa.org’ state that ‘In 2014, 47 million people lived in Poverty USA. That means the poverty rate for 2014 was 15%.’ And ‘The 2014 poverty rate was 2.3 percentage points higher than in 2007, the year before the 2008 recession’: ‘Poverty Facts The Population of Poverty USA’ <<http://www.povertyusa.org/the-state-of-poverty/poverty-facts/>> [accessed 28 June 2016]; See also Elizabeth Gudrais’ consideration of the U.S. wealth disparity: ‘the gap between the rich and the poor is far wider than in most other developed democracies [...] living in a society with wide disparities – in health, in wealth, in education – is worse for all the society’s members, even the well off.’ Marxist ‘relative deprivation’ – signs of inequality – lead to increasing cultural instabilities: Elizabeth Gudrais, ‘Unequal America Causes and consequences of the wide—and growing—gap between rich and poor’, *Harvard Magazine* (2008) <<http://harvardmagazine.com/2008/07/unequal-america.html>> [accessed 12 August 2017]

¹¹ Jim Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, [2003] 2004), p. 7

¹² Cullen ([2003] 2004), p. 7

¹³ Samuel P. Huntington, *Who are we? The Challenges to America’s National Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), p. 337

Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series is the focus of this chapter as an exemplar of the assimilation and domestication of fantastic unattainability.¹⁴ While Meyer's *Twilight* has been the subject of critical appraisals that predominantly focus on the romanticized relationship between central protagonists, vampire Edward Cullen and human Bella, here attention is directed towards an examination of the attraction of apparent vampiric domestication and the attitudes exhibited by Meyer's undead family, the Cullens, as tacit endorsements and reinforcements of modern American culture. Contrary to the vampires interrogated in section one, Meyer's vampire family are portrayed as aspiring to surmount monstrous characteristics, even to the point of resisting a clan known as the Volturi, who conform to atavistic monstrous typology, and are portrayed as vampire 'royalty' and undemocratic regulators of a global vampire network, the bearers of a less enlightened perception that continues the more monstrous trope of humans as a food source.¹⁵ However, Meyer's narrative focus may be on this seemingly more progressive and benign family but the existence of vampire antagonists such as the Volturi, as well as nomadic rogues such as the characters James, Victoria, and Laurent within their fictional domain prompts recognition of the *Twilight* series as porous to the darkneses contained in both genre and context.

In this chapter, attention is concentrated on Meyer's *Twilight* tetralogy – *Twilight*, *Eclipse*, *New Moon*, and *Breaking Dawn*, spanning the years 2005-2008 – and, more specifically, on her central vampires, the Cullens, as a microcosmic echo of a post-9/11 cultural impetus to create an outward display of material comfort and unity through a deliberate engagement of the American Dream as an antithesis to the darkneses held in the fears and power dynamics of an age destabilized by terroristic turmoil. In discussing the effects of the terroristic events of 9/11 on the collective American psyche, Walter A. Davis proposes that:

¹⁴ If as Gert Buelens et al. suggest, 'the strangeness of trauma cannot be easily domesticated', then the domestication of vampires is unstable, their sympathetic appearance contradicting their potential for violence and threat: *The Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*, ed. by Gert Buelens, Sam Durrant and Robert Eaglestone (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 3

¹⁵ For the sake of brevity, this 'adopted' family will, from this point, be referred to as the Cullens, in line with other critical discussion

a language of images has much in common with the logic of the dream, a logic of hidden and unexpected connections, of abrupt shifts and apparent discontinuities [...] in the agon of a psyche seeking a concrete way to embody and mediate its pain.¹⁶

Applied to America's undead, Davis's 'logic' of 'hidden and unexpected connections' places vampires, often perceived as hostile to humans, as negotiators of American ideology in the form of American Dreams. Meyer may not offer a 'concrete' expiation of the 'pain' of terroristic potential but her vampire protagonists' assimilation of American Dreams serves as a counternarrative to the traumatic effects of 9/11 housed in the monstrous storylines discussed in section one. Instead of dwelling on apocalypse and terroristic activities, Meyer's narrative focuses on the therapeutic fantasy of a perfect immortal family of self-identifying Americans. Thus, this chapter examines the Cullens as a twisted aspirational ideal, fantastically warping identifiers of the American Dream. The physical perfection of Meyer's family plays on the same cultural insecurities that feed the commodification of such areas as cosmetic enhancement, fitness, and self-help – the fulfilment of human American Dreams is shown as only possible through the fantasy of flawlessness. The Cullen's supernatural abilities, such as Alice Cullen's precognition through which they can exploit stock markets, conveniently provide them with the means for a hyper-consumerist and hedonistic existence hidden behind a manufactured 'family' dynamic. This vamp-made family presents an effective ideological microcosm in their non-inherited familial bonds: as Bella's father, Police Chief Charlie Swan states, 'they stick together the way a family should'; they are united.¹⁷ These vampires, created by an author whose Mormon belief system places family as its 'lynchpin', demonstrate a unity that echoes a socio-political dynamic to which the Pledge of Allegiance demands its citizens adhere: one family, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all (within the family or deemed worthy, with all others impediments to be frustrated).¹⁸ The rubric by

¹⁶ Walter A. Davis, 'Death's Dream Kingdom: The American Psyche After 9-11', *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society*, 8, 1 (2003), 127-132, p. 128

¹⁷ Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 31

¹⁸ 'LDS leaders have long taught that the [...] America's Founders were divinely inspired while writing the Constitution': David E. Campbell, John C. Green, J. Quin Monson, *Seeking the Promised Land: Mormons and American Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.109, 14; 'I

which this family chose to live, as with Jim Cullen's discussion of the American Dream, is 're-created as a [...] conscious choice'.¹⁹ The result: a synthesized family of human-friendly vampires, comprised of a father figure, Carlisle, who, in his role as 'the most humane, the most compassionate' of vampires, exercises an individualized patriarchal imperative in turning a dying woman, Esme, to be his wife, a dying teenage boy, Edward, to be his son, and a dying young woman, Rosalie, to be a daughter, taking away their humanity and mortal autonomy. Two further 'sons' and another 'daughter' – Emmett, Jasper, and Alice – are adopted into the family, all portrayed as willing advocates of this undead Dream.²⁰

As introduced above, much has been written about the central romance between the teenage human Bella and the teenage-looking vampire Edward (turned by his adoptive father, Carlisle, when aged seventeen and on the verge of death during the 1918 influenza epidemic), including discussion surrounding a range of inferred anxieties and vulnerabilities of Bella as a 'victim' of manipulative grooming by a (much) older man.²¹ This extends from Fleur Diamond's 'interpretation of Meyer's novels as a sexual *Bildungsroman*', in which 'Meyer's heroine [Bella] is seeking a frank ownership of desire and sexual agency that is conventionally reserved for men' and thus not what might be considered a 'victim', to Sarah K. Day's proposition, which suggests that Bella's object of affection is the epitome of 'dangerous' sexual energy – that 'Meyer's presentation of Edward [is] as a personification of sex: he is perpetually hard, inherently alluring, and incredibly dangerous'.²² Bound to the phallic in his hardness and masculine attraction, Edward, despite being 'romantic hero' of Meyer's series, conforms, at least in part,

Pledge Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, *indivisible, with liberty and justice for all*, my emphasis: 'I Pledge Allegiance.com', <<http://ipledgeallegiance.com/>> [accessed 01 May 2014]

¹⁹ Cullen ([2003] 2004), p. 6

²⁰ Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 252

²¹ As Edward explains to Bella, 'Carlisle found me in a hospital in the summer of 1918. I was seventeen, and dying of the Spanish influenza [...] when Carlisle saved me': Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 251

²² Fleur Diamond, 'Beauty and the Beautiful Beast: Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* Saga and the Quest for a Transgressive Female Desire', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 26, 67 (2011), 41-55, pp. 41-42; Sarah K. Day, 'Pure Passion: the *Twilight* Saga, "Abstinence Porn", and Adolescent Women's Fan Fiction', *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, 39, 1 (2014), 28-48, p. 33

to the profiling of narcissism, wanting a relationship with Bella purely on his terms and ‘gaslighting’ her – most of book two, *New Moon*, sees him deliberately absent himself from her.²³ Bella excuses him, admitting, although ‘He thought he was hazardous to my health’, it is ‘an opinion I [reject] vehemently’: as Jason B. Whiting et al. propose in their appraisal of ‘intimate partner violence’, victims often choose ‘to self-blame’ rather than admit the object of their affections is flawed and therefore not worthy of affection.²⁴ And so, although these critiques demonstrate the relationship between Meyer’s hero and heroine to be of broad critical interest, as already alluded to, it is the role of Edward’s ersatz family, as both a pivotal part of this early twenty-first century phenomenon and reflectors of American culture through its Dreams, that needs articulating. While some essays – such as Carrie Anne Platt’s ‘Cullen Family Values: Gender and Sexual Politics in the *Twilight* Series’ – appear to address this area of investigation, their titles prove misleading. Platt’s critique, in line with a critical majority, focuses on Meyer’s hero and heroine, Edward and Bella as ‘reflect[i]ons of] recurring cultural contradictions surrounding sex in American culture’, with little mention of the family.²⁵ An exception among these readings is Kathryn Kane’s ‘A Very Queer Refusal: The Chilling Effect of the Cullens’ Heteronormative Embrace’. Despite Kane’s focus on the Cullen family as vampires who ‘do not disrupt the dominant social order’ but ‘bolster it’, as her title suggests, this is a predominantly queer theory reading,

²³ Gaslighting is defined by Ian James Kidd et al. as ‘a psychological abuse form’ which ‘originates from a 1938 Patrick Hamilton play and subsequent film called *Gaslight* [...] involv[ing] expressing doubts that the harm or injustice that the speaker is testifying to really happened as the speaker claims’: Rachel McKinnon, ‘Allies Behaving Badly: Gaslighting as Epistemic Injustice’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, ed. by Ian James Kidd, José Medina, Gaile Póihau, Jr. (London, New York: Routledge, 2017), pp. 167-174, p. 168

²⁴ Stephenie Meyer, *New Moon* (London: Atom, [2006] 2009) p. 14; As Whiting et al go on to propose, ‘just because a victim might rationalize violence, the perpetrator is responsible for his (or her) abuse, and the victim’s distortion may occur in part to cope with the trauma of violence, or because the victim has been persuaded by the aggressor’s rationalization’: Jason B. Whiting et al, ‘Appraisal Distortions and Intimate Partner Violence: Gender, Power, and Interaction’, *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 8, 1 (2012), 133–149, p. 135; See also Freud’s discussion of narcissism whereby he suggests, ‘sexual overvaluation is the origin of the peculiar state of being in love, a state suggestive of a neurotic compulsion’: Sigmund Freud, ‘On Narcissism: An Introduction’, in *The Freud Reader*, ed. by Peter Gay (London: Vintage, [1989] 1995), p. 554

²⁵ Carrie Anne Platt, ‘Cullen Family Values: Gender and Sexual Politics in the *Twilight* Series’, in *Bitten by Twilight: Youth Culture, Media, & the Vampire Franchise*, ed. by Melissa A. Click, Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 84

rather than one affected by historical understanding.²⁶ This chapter's critique thus seeks to avoid the repetition of concentrating on areas of criticism that dominate analyses, including romance – specifically the relationship between Edward and Bella – and religion – in particular the Mormon faith of Meyer, which colours the morality of this series.²⁷ And so, Bella and Edward's be-fanged love match may take centre stage in Meyer's story and in critical responses, but the function of the Cullens should not be underestimated in its pivotal narrative authority and attraction.

The Cullens thus provide a 'monologic' idealization of an (American) Dream domestic unit.²⁸ Meyer's vampire family's model of unity and perfection, a situation that presents a paradigm of domestic harmony, acts as a microcosmic reflection of broader conformity and loyalty to America's socio-politically conservative culture. If, as discussed above, Ingebretsen's argument that 'the monster signifie[s] civic crisis [and...] read[s] as a sign from the gods betokening communal failure', then Meyer's vampires' impetus towards conservative cultural assimilation, despite undeniably monstrous roots, tacitly acknowledges the existence of a 'civic crisis' and 'communal failure' in attempting to portray undead familial unity.²⁹ Susan Faludi asserts that 'civic crisis', discussed above as dominant in vampire Monsters narratives, is countered by 'the post-9/11 age [as] an era of neofifties nuclear family "togetherness," redomesticated femininity, and reconstituted Cold Warrior manhood', which chimes with the public face of

²⁶ Kathryn Kane, 'A Very Queer Refusal: The Chilling Effect of the Cullens' Heteronormative Embrace', ed. by Melissa A. Click, Jennifer Stevens Aubrey, and Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 103-118, p. 104

²⁷ Although beyond the scope of this discussion, as Day notes, Meyer's series exhibits a paradox: 'even as Meyer establishes an abstinence-only message, her novels evoke a degree of sexual excitement and desire on the part of readers that troubles the saga's models of romance and sex': Sarah K. Day (2014) 28-48, p. 29

²⁸ In a discussion of 'identity in adolescent fiction' (Meyer's series is generically aligned to 'Young Adult – or YA – fiction'), Robin McCallum argues that 'a substantial proportion of children's fiction attempts to construct and impose a unified (monologic) worldview upon readers': Robin McCallum, *Ideologies of Identity in Adolescent Fiction: The Dialogic Construction of Subjectivity* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1999), p. 17

²⁹ Edward J. Ingebretsen, 'Staking the Monster: A Politics of Remonstrance', *Religion and American Culture*, 8, 1 (1998), 91-116, p. 94

Meyer's vampire family.³⁰ This undead nuclear familial model is reliant on conservative gender roles: as already indicated, Meyer's vampire family are headed by a patriarch, Carlisle, and a domestic 'goddess' Esme, with their 'children' appearing to adhere to gendered characteristics: Rosalie and Alice both 'inhumanly beautiful' and elegant, and Edward, Emmett, and Jasper displaying masculine gendered traits such as strength and gallantry.³¹ Thus, the gendered performances of the Cullens retain heteronormative behaviour patterns that conform to male-public/female-private spheres, acting out conditioned social responses, built on memory and observation, which enable social integration.³²

And so, Meyer's vampire family operate as a fantastic site in which to negotiate an enhancement of national identity in the early twenty-first century, embodying both a grounding in the present as well as an a-historicism that draws pre-twenty-first century assumptions and behaviours into a paralleling of contemporary culture. To those humans within their semiotic space, the Cullens appear to conform to the materialist bias of modern American culture, with beauty, youth, intellect, and (possibly most importantly) inexhaustible fiscal assets that allow them access to the best of everything. To the fictional Forks (Washington) community, they project an ambiguity, provoking equivocal responses of admiration and animosity. This is particularly evident for those members of the family who perform as high school students, where their idealized forms are shown to elicit overt envy – 'sour grapes' – and a willingness to find excuses for 'condemnation' among those humans positioned as peers.³³ To this end, the

³⁰ Susan Faludi, *The Terror Dream: Myth and Misogyny in an Insecure America* (New York: Picador, 2007), p. 4

³¹ Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 17; Although coming to prominence during the 1950s rise in nuclear technology – particularly arms development – this phrase refers to family units built around nuclei of mother, father, and children, rather than extended families

³² Although beyond the remit of this discussion, for recent investigations of vampiric gender and performativity see critical works such as Julia M. Wright's *Men with Stakes: Masculinity and the Gothic in US Television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), Pramod K. Nayar, 'How to Domesticate a Vampire: Gender, Blood Relations and Sexuality in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*', *Nebula*, 7, 3 (2010), 60-76, and *Draculas, Vampires, and Other Undead Forms: Essays on Gender, Race, and Culture*, ed. by John Edgar Browning, Caroline Joan (Kay) Picart (Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, New York, Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press, 2009)

³³ Meyer ([2005] 2008), pp. 19, 18

Cullens mirror Jim Cullen's suggestion that American citizens are encouraged to believe that:

today [...] in the United States *anything is possible* if you want it badly enough [...] The omnipresence of 'the American Dream' stems from a widespread [...] belief that the concept describes something very contemporary. At the same time, however, much of its vitality rests on a premise [...] that it is part of a long tradition.³⁴

Cullen could be describing Meyer's vampire family in his consideration of the 'American Dream': their undead status incorporating 'a long tradition' – through personal historical interactions that come as part of their longevity – blended with signifying a modern America that displays both self-belief and an underlying fear of vulnerability to attack. Their chosen benevolent existence may allow for a relatively peaceful co-existence with humans, but it also invites intra-vampiric animosity, dominated in this series in the form of Old-World vampires the Volturi, to whom discussion will return.

Transposed into the vampiric, un-regulated Dreams allow for wish-fulfilment style Americans to represent their nation not as a reality but as a fantasy. In her examination of American Dreams and dreamers, Merle Curti proposes that 'unlike waking thoughts, dreams are not subjected to regulation by surrounding objects which remind the dreamer of [their] situation, character, duties, and relations to time and place'.³⁵ Alongside Curti's summary of dreams, it must be remembered that, as Eric Savoy rightly notes in his discussion of modern American Gothic, nightmares and dreams are not oppositional states but 'interfuse and interact with each other'.³⁶ The fantastic narratives of vampire Dreams show themselves as 'not subjected' to contemporary concerns, but in rising above modern U.S. cultural restrictions they continue to obliquely interact with contemporary post-

³⁴ My emphasis: Cullen ([2003] 2004), p. 5

³⁵ Merle Curti, 'The American Exploration of Dreams and Dreamers', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 27, 3 (1966), 391-416, p. 401

³⁶ As Savoy asserts, 'the Gothic [...] embodies and gives voice to the dark nightmare that is the underside of "the American dream." This formulation is true up to a point, for it reveals the limitations of American faith in social and material progress. Yet a simple opposition between the convenient figures of dream and nightmare is overly reductive. These clichés, and the impulses in American life that they represent, are not in mere opposition; they actually interfuse and interact with each other': Eric Savoy, 'The rise of American Gothic', in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. by Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 167

9/11 fears and threats to the nation's global dominion; their perfection and its obvious connection to national self-identifiers serving to portray the U.S. as an idealized 'dream' hegemon. As Jung proposes of human Dreams, they 'convey [...] thoughts, judgments, views, directives, [and] tendencies' that can be extrapolated here to present the undead as (nearer to) benevolent beings that, despite not being directly subject to its regulations, espouse and outwardly conform to modern U.S. culture.³⁷

Dream vampires possess what Robert Platzner describes as a 'dialectic of dejection and joy'; a fundamental of Gothic Romance, whereby 'dejection', or an injection of any other form of negative action or emotion, is needed for 'joy' or advocacy to be stimulated.³⁸ Defined by Fred Botting, romance, as recognizable in Meyer's story, 'seems to clean up its darker counterpart [monstrosity], sanitising its deprivations [...] repulsion ced[ing] to attraction as horror gives way to romance.'³⁹ Expanding Botting's position, Robert Hume offers a more nuanced interpretation of Platzner's understanding, suggesting that it is actually the combination of the contradictory forces of Gothic and Romance that act on vampiric 'attractiveness' undercutting potential darkness or deviances from cultural norms with a 'potentiality for good.'⁴⁰ Taking Meyer's vampire Dreams to be personifications of a state of tension between fear and desire, her vampires become reassuring metaphors for, and embodiments of, a twenty-first century America that generates an *appearance* of democracy and benevolence, but whose post-9/11 liberties have been subsumed by security: what Booth and Dunne call a 'paradigm of prevention'.⁴¹ What better fantasy of security can be offered than

³⁷ Carl Gustav Jung, *Dreams from The Collected Works of C G Jung Volumes 4, 8, 12, 16*, trans. by R. F. C. Hull (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 34

³⁸ Robert L. Platzner and Robert D. Hume, 'Gothic versus Romantic: A Rejoinder', *PMLA*, 86, 2 (1971), 266-274, p. 268

³⁹ Fred Botting *Gothic Romanced: Consumption, Gender and Technology in Contemporary Fictions* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 1, 2

⁴⁰ Platzner and Hume (1971), p. 269

⁴¹ Ken Booth and Tim Dunne, *Terror in Our Time* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 127

the assimilation and domestication of immortal and fantastic demons such as vampires?⁴²

The conforming to American culture of Meyer's vampire family suggests a resilience through reinforcement of U.S. superpower status. In post-9/11 American culture, according to Samuel P. Huntington, '[v]ulnerability gives new salience to national identity', and vampire Dreams engage in romanticized fantasies that embrace the strengths of vampirism, while attempting to diminish threat.⁴³ In their active (chosen) domestication, vampire Dreams ameliorate vulnerabilities, the Cullens' positive conformation of Auerbach's statement, 'Vampires go where power is' (first considered in the introduction, above), frustrates the catastrophic monstrosity of the vampire Monsters narratives examined in section one.⁴⁴ However, monstrosity and the potential for terror still lie within. Meyer's vampires do not hesitate to use their immortal abilities for defence, ripping apart enemies such as the vampire James, who – in *Twilight* – hunts Bella as a nightmarish point-of-jeopardy undercurrent within Meyer's Dream, lending an ambiguity to the characters and their behaviour.⁴⁵

⁴² The fantasy of security offered by the Cullens assimilates idealized familial bonds with the positive attributes of vampirism – their abstention from human blood removes any concern that Meyer's undead family might be equated to homegrown terror. Their espousing of the consumer-driven lifestyle that epitomizes the American Dream – luxurious property, top-of-the-range cars, clothes and gadgets in abundance – buoys up the post-9/11 imperative to present the nation and its citizens as archetypes of what Christine Seifert identifies as the 'Moral Majority', an aspirational image peddled as an illusory antidote to nebulous enemies, dogmatically labelled as 'Muslim': Christine Seifert, 'Bite Me! (Or Don't)', <<http://bitchmagazine.org/article/bite-me-or-dont?page=1>> [accessed on 12 May 2014]; for further discussion of post-9/11 American fantasy of security, see also John Kampfner, *Freedom for Sale* (London: Simon and Schuster, [2009] 2010); Ken Booth and Tim Dunne, *Terror in Our Time* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012); Susan Faludi's *The Terror Dream: Myth and Misogyny in an Insecure America* (2007)

⁴³ Huntington (2004), p. 337

⁴⁴ Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 6

⁴⁵ As part of a broader Gothic tradition, Meyer's series follows on from the romanticized somnolent visions that inspired Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein*) and Bram Stoker (*Dracula*), who both professed to their monsters first appearing in dreams. Marilyn Butler recounts Mary Shelley having a 'waking nightmare which generated her famous novel [*Frankenstein*]' and Maud Ellmann states that the 'idea of *Dracula*, like that of *Frankenstein* [...] came to its author in a waking nightmare': Marilyn Butler, 'Introduction', in Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, [1993] 1998), p. xxi; Stoker, ed. by Ellmann (1998). In discussing her inspiration behind the series, Meyer explains, 'I woke up (on that June 2nd [2003]) from a very vivid dream [...] In my dream, two people were having an intense conversation in a meadow in the woods. One of these people was just your average girl. The other person was fantastically beautiful,

This equivocality demarcates their existence as governed by instability, particularly in terms of the widely used primary vampiric feature: existence on blood. Portrayed by Meyer as ‘vegetarian’ – existing on a diet of animal blood – does not fully subsume haematophagic cravings for human blood: as Edward tells Bella, ‘I’d compare it to living on tofu and soy milk [...] It doesn’t completely satiate the hunger – or rather thirst. But it keeps us strong enough to resist.’⁴⁶ Variation in success of swapping the blood of bodily fluid for the blood of adopted kinship spans from the ‘founding father’ figure, Carlisle, who has not deliberately tasted human blood in over three centuries, to his adopted son, Jasper, for whom it remains ‘a struggle [...] to abstain’, despite having ‘developed a conscience [...] with no outside guidance’.⁴⁷ Even Edward, as Meyer’s romantic hero, frequently alluding to his sanguinary irresolution, admits to Bella, ‘I’m essentially a selfish creature. I crave your company too much to do what I should [but...] It’s not only your company I crave! Never forget *that*.’⁴⁸ So, despite being identifiable as vampires – immortal blood drinkers, with super-human strength and speed – and existing in association with a constant undercurrent of violence, Meyer’s vampire family show that, given the impetus, anyone (or *anything?*) can be assimilated into the American Dream (a theme that arises again in the next chapter, where Harris’s vampires take assimilation into the public domain, becoming legally recognized American citizens).

sparkly, and a vampire’: Stephenie Meyer, ‘The Story Behind *Twilight*’, <<http://stepheniemeyer.com/twilight.html>> [accessed 1 December 2013]

⁴⁶ Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 164; For further discussion of Meyer’s vampiric vegetarianism, see Jean Kazez, ‘Dying to Eat: The Vegetarian Ethics of *Twilight*’. In partially excusing their predation of rare animal species, Edward tells Bella, ‘we have to be careful not to impact the environment with injudicious hunting. We try to focus on areas with an overpopulation of predators — ranging as far away as we need. There’s always plenty of deer and elk here, and they’ll do, but where’s the fun in that?’ They may choose not to prey on humans but, in opting for the ‘fun’ of hunting rare animals such as bears and mountain lions, the Cullens are further endangering vulnerable species in comparison to the far higher numbers of local humans. As Edward does in his ‘rebellious’ phase as a vampire (‘Because I knew the thoughts of my prey, I could pass over the innocent and pursue only the evil. If I followed a murderer down a dark alley where he stalked a young girl — if I saved her, then surely I wasn’t so terrible’), they can prey on those who are ‘evil’, acting as unauthorized judicial shadows: Jean Kazez, ‘Dying to Eat: the Vegetarian Ethics of *Twilight*’, in *Twilight and Philosophy Vampires, Vegetarians, and the Pursuit of Immortality*, ed. by Rebecca Housel and Jeremy Wisniewski (Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley, 2009), pp. 25-37; Meyer ([2005] 2008), pp. 188, 299

⁴⁷ Meyer ([2005] 2008), pp. 235, 253

⁴⁸ Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 233

Before taking discussion into the generic assimilation of Meyer's vampires, for those unfamiliar with Meyer's *Twilight* series, a brief précis yields a socially awkward late-teenage female principal narrator, Bella, who meets a handsome and aloof forever-seventeen-year-old-vampire, Edward. Meyer's story arcs through tests of their 'love', including a glut of emotional manipulation, as touched on above as critically troubling, and Old-World vampire pressure on all members of the Cullen family to conform to traditional vampiric practices.⁴⁹ Along the way, Edward and his vampire family are shown to triumph against undomesticated vampire itinerants, James and Victoria, both of whom are intent on killing Bella; the heroine is a love interest for humans, such as her schoolmates 'Chess Club Eric' and Mike Newton, and a 'werewolf' shapeshifter (Jacob Black) alongside the vampire Edward; the hero and heroine marry, and have a quick-growing half-vampire/half-human daughter; a barely adult Bella is turned at the point of death, after giving birth to the 'half-human' Renesmee; the family gather like-minded 'vegetarian' vampires to overcome the despotism of the Italy-based Volturi vampire clan; and finally Bella and Edward settle in to live together forever, giving readers a heteronormatively domesticated happy-ever-after moment.⁵⁰

Told (mostly) from the perspective of Bella, the narrative is coloured by this character's perspective as an only child of divorced parents, whose mother's

⁴⁹ Bella's obsession, Edward, is a vampire turned at the point of death, as a means of alleviating loneliness as much as rescue, by his adopted vampire father Carlisle, who 'found [him] in a hospital in the summer of 1918 [aged...] seventeen, and dying of the Spanish influenza': Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 251

⁵⁰ Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 25; Bella exhibits somewhat arrogant narrative disdain for Mike Newton's attraction to her, despite being characterized as shy: 'Mike, who was taking on the qualities of a golden retriever, walked faithfully by my side to class [...] I [...] went to my seat. Mike followed, [...] lingered by my desk till the bell rang. Then he smiled at me wistfully and went to sit by a girl with braces and a bad perm. It looked like I was going to have to do something about Mike [...] I had no practice dealing with overly friendly boys': Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 26; Stephenie Meyer, *Breaking Dawn* (London: Atom, [2008] 2009), p. 360; A brief aside – Bella and Edward's daughter, Renesmee's portmanteau name – Renee and Esme – signifies her portmanteau form: as a hybrid vampire-human, dhampir, she is a negation of 'them and us' binarizing of humans and vampires. This links to both vampire Monsters and Discords through the character of Amy Harper Bellafonte in Cronin's *The Passage* and Shori Matthews in Butler's *Fledgling*. That these hybridized vampire characters are all female suggests scope for further investigation into whether the de-centred position of females within a patriarchal culture affects their position as hybridized vampires: for further information about dhampirs as the products of sexual congress between vampire and human, see J. Gordon Melton, *The Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia of the Undead* (Detroit, London: Visible Ink Press, 1999), p.196

second marriage prompts her decision to move to small-town America (Forks) to live with her father, the local police chief, in a drive for security. Before being turned, she is a conveniently clumsy seventeen-year-old; Bella's human frailty is a convenient plot device for enabling Edward to assume a gallant role from the outset: he is cast as male protector (when understood from the narrative perspective of Bella), rescuing her from a range of scenarios, including the close call of nearly being run over by a classmate; being chased down and almost killed by a rogue vampire; the risk of sexual assault by a group of strangers; and even sweeping her off in his arms following the comedic incongruity of fainting in a biology class during prick tests being carried out to determine blood groups. This self-professed clumsy teenager's drive towards a heteronormative relationship with undead 'teenager' Edward appears to dominate her actions (as outlined above, it is this interaction that has garnered the most critical attention).⁵¹ Described by her mother as 'born thirty-five years old and [...] get[ting] more middle-aged every year', Bella presents as ideal companion material for a vampire mate with an age already beyond the typical human lifespan.⁵² Parodies such as the Harvard Lampoon's *Nightlight* exaggerates Bella's gender conformity through her mocking doppelgänger Belle Goose's self-obsession, assumption of irresistibility, and regressively oppressive heteronormativity, showing conformity with a critical disparagement for a heroine who, as they suggest, is obsessed with romance: Goose's ironic musings include 'was an education worth it without a marital prospect?' and 'I'm a role model to 1.3 million girls – I have to prove to them that there's more to life than clothes. There are novels out there. Romance novels, for every type of monster fetish.'⁵³ This lampooning necessarily homes in

⁵¹ Despite being beyond the remit of this project, Bella vocalizing of uncomfortable bias against non-normativity in seemingly throwaway phrases such as 'being so clumsy that I'm almost disabled' is something that needs further examination, particularly when analysed as relative to the teenage female target audience for these novels: Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 184

⁵² Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 91

⁵³ The Harvard Lampoon, *Nightlight a Parody* (London: Constable, 2009), pp. 49, 59; Although it is beyond the remit of this investigation, Meyer's romanticizing of vampire-human dynamics, alongside that of recent fusion fiction such as Amanda Grange's *Mr Darcy, Vampyre* (Naperville, Ill: Sourcebooks Landmark, 2009), suggest a move towards an exaggerated interpretation of nineteenth-century romance novels. Vampires portrayed as 'bad boys' heroes correlates to the Paranormal Romance genre where plotlines tend towards the formulaic – girl meets vampire, problems ensue, girl gets vampire – in novels including Katie MacAlister's *Sex, Lies and Vampires*

on the truth of this characterization – Bella, as the dominant voice of Meyer’s series, is a warped neo-fifties ‘role model’ with what is reduced to a ‘monster fetish[ism]’.

As part of this romanticizing of an obsessive human-vampire relationship, there is an anachronistic avoidance of prevailing insecurities within post-9/11 contemporary culture, such as those directly addressed in vampire Monsters narratives, in favour of showing a ‘perfect’ romance and ‘perfect’ family – the structuring of Meyer’s story centres on a female perspective that, as Booker suggests, ‘mak[es] for [...] the healing of division and life’ with the ‘heroine the ultimate touchstone’.⁵⁴ Meyer’s narrative space – the vampires choose to settle in small-town Forks, located in ‘the Olympic Peninsula of northwest Washington State [and...] exist[ing] under a near-constant cover of clouds’ – moves away from any need to confront human terroristic activities, in favour of contained, often vamp-on-vamp, aggression.⁵⁵ For Meyer’s vampires’ assimilation into small-town culture, this is an ideal location, with the ‘near-constant cover of clouds’ acting to disguise their sparkling skin and as a metaphor for obfuscation of and isolation from modern urban cultural misfortunes and violence.⁵⁶ Forks may appear to offer, in microcosm, a pre-9/11 American assumption of a homeland insulated from large-scale terroristic violent incursion but, just as the nation became a direct target for terrorist activities so too does the hometown of these vampires, with

([2005] 2008), which bears the strapline, ‘In love, the stakes are high’, and Tate Hallaway’s *Tall, Dark and Dead* ([2005] 2006)

⁵⁴ Christopher Booker, *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories* (London and New York: Continuum [2004] 2005), p. 257

⁵⁵ Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 3

⁵⁶ The humanizing emotional depth of these ‘fantastic sparkling creature[s]’ is disputable: like diamonds, they may look beautiful, but their origins are base. Sparkling creates an obvious physical difference to the humans around them, not to mention raising problems with integration. Their pallor alone sets this family apart from the humans they try to live amongst, but their sparkling skin would mark a difference too extreme to be overlooked. In the space of one short paragraph, Bella summarizes Edward’s appearance in sunshine, employing superlative adjectives and verbs to describe him, such as ‘shocking’, ‘sculpted’, ‘incandescent’, ‘scintillating’, and ‘glistening’, to embellish the similes: he ‘sparkled, like thousands of tiny diamonds were embedded in the surface [...] A perfect statue, carved in some unknown stone, smooth like marble, glittering like crystal.’ Bella’s narrative appraisal leaves readers in no doubt that, whatever steps they take to conform, these vampires are beyond understanding as natural beings. They may try to integrate themselves into American culture but, as Bella’s description makes clear, their external perfection cannot be separated from their otherness to the humans amongst whom they live: Meyer ([2005] 2008), pp. 255, 228

the Old World Volturi's incursion an attempt to undermine the credibility of the Cullen's New World vampirism, to which this discussion will return. However, before examining Meyer's vampire family's interaction with contemporary cultural fears and power dynamics, discussion now turns to the *Twilight* series' nuanced relationship with the generic influences of *Dracula* and Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, examining Meyer's interpretation of these governing typologies, particularly their themes of human attraction, vampiric threat, and wealth / consumption.

'they are no different than any other vampires': Part of the Generic Darkness⁵⁷

As the quotation above makes evident, Meyer's vampires are 'no different than any other vampires' in that they conform to the three principal features of modern vampire fiction identified in the introduction: they are acknowledged as vampires; they are (covert) agents for our fears; and they are material indicators of power dynamics.⁵⁸ Meyer's vampires are part of an elastic vampire genre and, as such, demonstrate the breadth that is peculiar to these fictional narratives. And discussion now turns to an assessing of the relationship between Meyer's *Twilight* tetralogy and generic dominants of American vampire fiction identified in the introduction, with the romanticized perfection and conspicuous consumption of Meyer's family of vampires following on from the principal vampire narrative of *Dracula* and Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*.⁵⁹

As with the vampire Monsters narratives discussed above, Meyer's *Twilight* manifests a connection with the palimpsestic text(s) of *Dracula* – with the vampire having invaded fictions beyond Stoker's source novel, there can be no uniform identification of *Dracula* as a character. Returning to Auerbach, in *Our Vampires*,

⁵⁷ Stephenie Meyer, *Eclipse* (London: Atom, [2007] 2009), p. 181

⁵⁸ Meyer ([2007] 2009), p. 181

⁵⁹ In a knowing nod to the universally understood generic influence of Browning's film, where *Dracula* introduces himself to Renfield (substituted for Stoker's Harker) in his decaying and cobwebbed Transylvanian castle, Edward introduces Bella and, through her, readers to a calculated inversion of the Gothic of Browning's film: 'No coffins, no piled skulls in the corners; I don't even think we have cobwebs... what a disappointment this must be for you': Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 287

Ourselves, she acknowledges that there has been a gradual blurring of boundaries between monstrosity and romantic idealization in depictions of Dracula. Auerbach cites Browning's 1931 and Coppola's 1992 cinematic interpretations of Stoker's *Dracula* as 'advertis[ing] themselves as love stories: Browning's was billed as "the strangest love story ever told," while Coppola's strapline reassured viewers that "love never dies."⁶⁰ But, as she goes on to qualify, in both films:

the vampire performs on a plane so remote from the other characters that one can scarcely imagine vampire and mortal touching or even conversing, much less biting or loving.⁶¹

Despite Auerbach's somewhat rudimentary summary, she raises an important point in recognizing the figure(s) of Dracula(s) as containing ambiguities that allow for multiple readings – ranging from monster to lover, from hate-figure to romantic lead. Closer to lovers than monsters, the vampires that form the focus of this and the following chapter are overt in their attempts to integrate themselves within the human world around them on a domestic plane, their humanization making it easier to understand them as aspirational Dream figures. Even though vampires are widely accepted as Gothic Monsters, as Browning's and Coppola's film adaptations indicate, the ambivalence of Dracula's character prefigures the capacity for Dreams as much as nightmares. As touched on above, they conform to Fred Botting's assertion in *Gothic Romanced*: 'Monsters [...] find themselves increasingly humanized [...] repulsion cedes to attraction as horror gives way to romance.'⁶² Consequently, where twenty-first century America has had to adapt from the broad-scale communist antagonisms of the mid- to late-twentieth century Cold War to dealing with smaller-scale factional groups that are less easily identified as enemies, there have been concurrent vampiric adaptations. There may still be those characters, like del Toro and Hogan's Master or Cronin's Zero discussed above, whose monstrous enmity towards humans is

⁶⁰ Auerbach (1995), p. 202

⁶¹ Auerbach (1995), p. 202; Returning to the ambiguity of *Dracula*, although Auerbach may verge on exaggeration in her suggestion that in Browning's and Coppola's interpretations it is nearing impossible to perceive of 'vampire and mortal' as loving, the lack of a definitive, singular version of Stoker's Count leaves interpretation open-ended and, therefore, Dracula as lover becomes as plausible an option as Dracula as warrior or master Machiavellian.

⁶² Botting (2008), p. 2

overt, but there has been a rise in popularity for vampires who have adopted more humanized existences, such as the Cullens and Charlaine Harris's vampire 'hero' Bill Compton, discussed in the next chapter.

Romanticized Dream vampires manifest in novels such as Suzy McKee Charnas's *The Vampire Tapestry* (1980), where the vampire Weyland is an attractive predator: a 'dark angel', who retains vampiric mesmeric powers, and is 'irresistible'.⁶³ Although they still display monstrous, controlling 'irresistible' abilities, Dream vampires are positioned, as far as possible, to integrate themselves into human society, embracing Thomas Jefferson's pursuit of liberty and happiness, even if their undead status means they fall short of life.⁶⁴ If, as Auerbach proposes, vampires gravitate towards power, then those who adhere to vampire Dreams in particular fulfil a need for security gained from assimilation into the culture of America as superpower. As discussed in the introduction above, vampires make the move from Old World Europe to New World America in the early twentieth century, travelling, initially, in the guise of Stoker's Transylvanian nobleman Count Dracula. And it is this character who, under the direction of Browning and portrayal of Lugosi, instigates the formation of a romanticizing of American vampires.

Vampire Dreams like Meyer's are part of a continuation, in concentrated form, of Lugosi's romanticized modelling of Dracula. As an undead alpha-male, Lugosi's Dracula possesses a masculine allure that has steadily been enhanced by subsequent iterations over the twentieth century. For example, in Fred Saberhagen's *The Dracula Tape* (1975), this vampire is given his own voice and tells of his 'true enduring love' for Mina Harker, originally rendered by Stoker as the conduit for Dracula's destruction.⁶⁵ Being attractive at a base level – as identified above, they incorporate manipulation, seduction, strength, confidence, intensity, and independent wealth – Draculas uphold the phallogocentric illusion

⁶³ Suzy McKee Charnas, *The Vampire Tapestry* (New York: Orb Books, [1980] 1992), pp. 161, 233

⁶⁴ Auerbach (1995), p. 6

⁶⁵ Fred Saberhagen, *The Dracula Tape* (New York: Ace Science Fiction Books, [1975] 1985), p. 190

that money and status equate to unequivocal sexual attraction.⁶⁶ This masculine attraction is evident in Browning's film, where Lucy Weston (notably minus Stoker's suffix 'ra', which could be argued makes her representative of what might be considered a clichéd western female, patterning the need for male 'patronage' obtained through the Count) is immediately entranced by his paradoxically 'unapproachable and intimate' charms, her instant attraction appearing to have its foundations based in the appeal of his wealth, title, and exotic otherness, a model for Meyer's Bella.⁶⁷ As a nobleman, Lugosi's Dracula has an immediately fascinating effect upon Lucy, who is mocked by Mina: "'It reminds me of the battlements of my own castle [pause] in Transylvania.'" Oh, Lucy, you're so romantic!⁶⁸ In a rather love-struck and dreamy manner, Lucy retorts, 'Laugh all you like. I think he's fascinating'.⁶⁹ At a time when socio-political instabilities were dominated by the strains of an American economic slump, the attraction of Lugosi's overtly wealthy and charismatically corrupting masculinity contrasts with the sexual ambiguity of Stoker's vampire, with Browning's film focusing on him as a site of heteronormative, but dangerous, erotic attraction; an antithesis to the fiscal fears prevalent within contemporary culture translates into Meyer's immortal 'happy family' as antithetical to predominant instabilities, such as terror, in the early twenty-first century.⁷⁰

Edward's character, as central to Meyer's storyline and her undead family, amalgamates these two models of Dracula. Like Stoker's vampire, he is denied a narrative voice, instead his words and actions are filtered through Bella's first-person sympathetic subjectivity and censorship. Not only does Bella react

⁶⁶ As Auerbach suggests of Lugosi's portrayal of Dracula, 'Lugosi's Count is a sexually coded figure [...] Dracula is not essentially lovable, nor, in Stoker's novel, is he especially erotic [...] but Lugosi's artful re-creation allows the twentieth century to steep him in desire': Auerbach (1995), p. 115

⁶⁷ Julia Kristeva, 'Approaching Abjection', in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Ian Gregson, *Postmodern Literature* (London and New York: Arnold, 2004), p. 169

⁶⁸ *Dracula* (1931), 00.25.34

⁶⁹ *Dracula* (1931), 00.25.45

⁷⁰ Stoker's Dracula, furious with his three vampire wives for their attempted seduction of Jonathan Harker, declares, 'How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me!' He goes on to state to the small band of men who are attempting to thwart him that 'Your girls that you all love are mine'. Thus, Stoker's Dracula shows a sexualized jealousy for both men and women in contrast with Browning's film version of Dracula, which has Lugosi's portrayal of this vampire as hetero-predative of Lucy and Mina: Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), pp.43, 267

positively, with little surprise – and no apparent horror or fear – when she discovers that Edward is a vampire, but her admission that she has ‘always been very good at repressing unpleasant things’ presages her explicit involvement with Meyer’s vampires, as she willingly keeps Edward’s secret, ‘concentrating instead on making things safer for him.’⁷¹ Much as Lucy idolizes Dracula, Bella repeatedly refers to her vampire love interest in admiring terms as ‘angelic’, ‘a carving of Adonis [a...] statue coming to life’, but also inadvertently acknowledges Edward’s monstrous roots as ‘a destroying angel’; a description that parallels both McKee Charnas’s ‘dark angel’ Weyland and del Toro and Hogan’s monstrous vampire the Master, who is born of the blood of the Archangel Ozryel, the angel of death.⁷² Like Saberhagen’s reinvented Dracula, who presages Meyer’s vampire family in his hopes ‘to think of [him]self as [...] accepted by society’, Edward uses his supernatural abilities to get what he wants: for Saberhagen’s Dracula this is his ‘true enduring love!’ Mina, the mother of his child, and for Edward, it is Bella.⁷³ Where Saberhagen’s Dracula downplays an innate monstrosity, rationalizing the use of violence – ‘I dislike cruelty, and am not cruel unless it is quite justifiable’ – Edward exhibits a more complicated interaction, stalking Bella, briefly deserting her, and making evident his speed and strength, all seemingly done to keep her safe as well as warn her: ‘It’s wrong. It’s not safe. I’m dangerous’ becoming something of a paradoxical mantra for him.⁷⁴

In this vein, Rice’s undead protagonist Louis also draws attention to a generic prevalence of the undead as possessors of ‘divided nature[s]’, self-analysis dominating his interrogation of vampirism: ‘Am I from the devil? Is my nature that of a devil?...Why then do I revolt against it...What have I become in becoming a vampire?’⁷⁵ Thus, within such narrative challenges of monstrosity, these ‘dangerous’ vampire Dreams cannot escape an historic connection with brutality.

⁷¹ Meyer ([2005] 2008), pp. 146, 217

⁷² Meyer ([2005] 2008), pp. 261, 56; See chapter one, above, for further discussion of the Master’s origins in the archangelic

⁷³ Saberhagen ([1975] 1985), pp. 27, 190

⁷⁴ Saberhagen ([1975] 1985), p. 36; Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 166

⁷⁵ Anne Rice, *Interview with the Vampire* (New York, London: Time Warner, [1976] 2006), pp. 88, 81

All of Meyer's undead exploit their supernatural abilities to advance their desires, despite their endeavours to repress their dark sides by resisting human blood. Akin to addicted humans, Edward and his vampire family understand that responsibility for their actions lies within, and not on the focus of their urges: human blood. As Edward subjectively explains in answer to Bella's question, 'Tell me why you hunt animals instead of people': 'I don't *want* to be a monster.'⁷⁶ The submissions of cultural critics such as Micki McGee, who acknowledges that the 'ideal of self-invention has long infused American culture with a sense of endless possibility [...] maintaining one's appearance as youthful and vigorous, and searching for one's "true calling"', help explain the allure of the attraction of redeemed and / or self-aware 'bad boy' vampires such as Saberhagen's Dracula and Meyer's Edward.⁷⁷ Although Edward submits to Carlisle's 'vegetarian' credo, it is underscored by an awareness of the potential for regressive monstrous behaviour that underpins vampirism: he is welcomed back into the family as a prodigal returnee after spending a few years of his early vampiric existence stalking and preying on humans he adjudges to be criminal.⁷⁸

It is this romanticizing of vampiric individualized internal conflict that Auerbach recognizes in Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*. Auerbach's evaluation of the key figures of Louis and Lestat as 'loving vampire [...] well[s] of tenderness' suggests their vampirism acts as an antidote to what she defines as sexually violent 1970s

⁷⁶ Meyer ([2005] 2008), pp. 163-164

⁷⁷ Micki McGee, *Self-Help, Inc.: Makeover Culture in American Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 11

⁷⁸ Edward's language is that of justification as he explains to Bella, 'I had a typical bout of rebellious adolescence — about ten years after I was... born... created, whatever you want to call it. I wasn't sold on his life of abstinence, and I resented [Carlisle] for curbing my appetite. So I went off on my own for a time [...] I thought I would be exempt from the... depression... that accompanies a conscience. Because I knew the thoughts of my prey, I could pass over the innocent and pursue only the evil. If I followed a murderer down a dark alley where he stalked a young girl — if I saved her, then surely I wasn't so terrible': Meyer ([2005] 2008), pp. 298-299; The idea of disporting oneself — and one's nation — as virile and vigorous in the face of concerns about degeneration is not a new one. Over a century before Meyer's series, it is a concern that colours the judgement of Stoker's character, Mina Harker, as she discusses Dracula, relating him to contemporary concerns about criminality and physical and mental degeneration. As Auerbach and Skal explain in their footnoted comment, 'Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1891) argued that the human race, especially the Anglo-Saxons, was deteriorating and was thus fated to endure cultural decay. Nordau's prophecy of doom had a great influence on *fin-de-siècle* Victorian assumptions': Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. 296

‘sanctioned male authorities’, which echoes in the characterization of Meyer’s Cullens as ‘asset[s] to the community’.⁷⁹ If not quite benevolent, these are vampires with whom reader sympathy lies, but their ‘tenderness’ is arguably indistinct from the predatory skills necessary to lure prey to feast upon. Meyer illustrates this lack of distinction through Edward’s half-warning, half-enticement of Bella: ‘I’m the world’s best predator [...] Everything about me invites you in — my voice, my face, even my *smell*. As if I need any of that! [...] As if you could outrun me [...] As if you could fight me off.’⁸⁰ Rice’s vampires, identifiable as precursors to vampire Dreams, display as undead dissemblers. Any romance is, as with the Draculas discussed above and Meyer’s voicing of vampiric monstrosity via Edward, underpinned by a fundamental monstrosity: undead appeal is bolstered by a propensity towards an appreciation of them as ‘killers’ and ‘Predators’.⁸¹ Ultimately, in accord with Rice’s portrayal of vampirism, Meyer’s Cullens show that the American Dreams they personify are not a binary to monstrosity, but a validation that ‘Evil is always possible. And goodness is eternally difficult’.⁸² Undead monstrosity thus permeates even the most sympathetically appealing of portrayals.

This monstrosity within is at its most recognizable in the vampiric compulsion for blood consumption. Like Meyer’s wider vampire community, most of Rice’s vampires may still succumb to the lure of human blood, but they show the influence of Stoker’s zoophagous Renfield in paving the way for the Cullens’ ‘vegetarian’ existence, with Lestat’s affirmation of Louis’ question, ‘we can live from animals?’⁸³ Vampiric subsistence on non-human blood assigns monstrosity to generic subset status (in Harris’s series – discussed in chapter four – the creation of synthetic blood allows for vampires to make themselves known and culturally integrate themselves). What has long been considered a dominant within the vampire genre necessarily gives way as the undead become aspirational as much as alarming beings. While Rice’s vampires continue the generic ambivalence of

⁷⁹ Auerbach (1995), p. 136; Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 31

⁸⁰ Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 231

⁸¹ Rice ([1976] 2006), p. 92

⁸² Rice ([1976] 2006), p. 16

⁸³ Rice ([1976] 2006), p. 38

romanticized vampirism in the U.S. begun with Lugosi's *Dracula*, they also bring to the foreground a sybaritic primacy that Meyer's Cullens show at its zenith. Rice's paralleling of conspicuous consumption within human life with the 'luxury' of possessions such as 'crystal chandeliers and Oriental carpets, silk screens with birds of paradise, canaries singing in [...] golden cages [...] marble Grecian gods and beautifully painted Chinese vases' reads as a harbinger of the extreme wealth of Meyer's Cullen family fortune estimated by Forbes in their 'Fictional 15' rich-list as \$36.3 billion.⁸⁴ Rice's vampires lead an '[un]life [...] both luxurious and *primitive*', as a summary of what is, in hindsight, perceptibly less sophisticated than the early twenty-first century cultural environment, sans the technology that enhances the Cullens [un]lifestyle (enriched by the latest technology, such as mobile phones, computers, and prototype cars).⁸⁵ And so, Rice's vampires fall short of the conspicuous perfection of vampire Dreams. They may have the beauty and youthfulness that is attractive in Meyer's family, but they often lack a vital 'dream' component: they are shown as frequently *seeking* the affluent existence that Meyer gives her vampires in abundance. This imperfection denies them the level of assimilation obtained by the Cullen clan as Rice describes Lestat's need for money in language that employs and extends understanding of undead consumption: Lestat is characterized as possessing a 'vampire keenness to suck gold and dollars and deeds of property'.⁸⁶ This disconnect with the affluence that is part of Meyer's interpretation of American Dreams that leads to a preoccupation with fiscal compulsion – 'Lestat and I [Louis] had to make money' – arguably coordinates to a greater extent with Harris's vampires (discussed in chapter four).⁸⁷ But, alongside influences garnered from undead pioneers, Meyer's vampires represent the epitome of twenty-first century Dreams. It is to Meyer's Cullen family as false purveyors of contemporary American Dreams (not 'the' American Dream because, as discussed, like vampires themselves, the Dreams change with each generation) my discussion now turns. Their fantastic

⁸⁴ Rice ([1976] 2006), pp. 109-110; 'Fictional 15', <<http://www.forbes.com/pictures/mlg45jffl/3-carlisle-cullen/>> [accessed 15 December 2013]

⁸⁵ My emphasis: Rice ([1976] 2006), p. 8

⁸⁶ Rice ([1976] 2006), p. 44

⁸⁷ Rice ([1976] 2006), p. 46

(false) perfection and romanticized unity make the Cullen family intrinsic to Meyer's plotline, attracting Bella – and, through her narrative partiality, readers – almost as much as Edward.

'a very convincing dream [...] confused with reality': The Perfect American Family(?)⁸⁸

Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* series presents the Cullens as poster boys and girls for twenty-first century America. Displaying no overt links to undead folkloric origins – such as the coffins, earth, or need for darkness that persist in the vampire Monsters examined in section one and the Discords investigated in section three – Meyer's vampire family fantastically epitomizes an idealized American identity and, although not written as such, Meyer's series makes an effective piece of socio-political propaganda. Meyer's romanticized immortal citizens conform to Linda Hutcheon's proposition in her examination of postmodernism, that 'social concerns and aesthetic needs [...] come together in an interrogation of the ideology of the stable family unit'⁸⁹ This examination advances the ambiguities within the Cullens' 'stable family unit' in terms of how and why they maintain self-control in order to participate in the Dreams that guide modern American culture. As Virginia Anderson suggests in her discussion, "'The Perfect Enemy": Clinton, the Contradictions of Capitalism, and Slaying the Sin Within':

capitalism [within U.S. culture...] succeeds if its practitioners abide by an asceticism of self-control, frugality, and attention to rules. Yet the central tenet of capitalism is the necessity of an apparently anticonservative freedom, as embodied in the 'free' market and 'free' enterprise.⁹⁰

The Cullen family, as epitomes of successful capitalists, are 'practitioners' of the contradictory balance between the 'self-control' of avoiding parasitic instincts alongside embodying 'anticonservative [...] "free" enterprise' in their wealth

⁸⁸ Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 74

⁸⁹ Hutcheon ([1989] 1995), p. 8

⁹⁰ Virginia Anderson, "'The Perfect Enemy": Clinton, the Contradictions of Capitalism, and Slaying the Sin within', *Rhetoric Review*, 21, 4 (2002), 384-400, p. 395

accumulation and the attention garnering materialism afforded by extreme affluence and consumerism.⁹¹

As fantastic role models, they are loyal to each other and, in turn, to nation, using their strengths and skills to preserve their freedom to live as a wealthy, physically magnificent, and formidable family unit. Blurring the terrible into the virtuous, Meyer's vampire family offer a rose-tinted display of civilized solidarity for a nation made aware of its homeland vulnerability by the 9/11 terrorist incursions considered as central to the narratives discussed in the vampire Monsters section above. The Cullens' dissimulation as ersatz humans is at the core of a plot arc where 'anything is possible', where individual lives (like the teenager Bella's) can change, and personal histories can be overcome or, at least, excused. As with a 'national identity [...] itself marked by a sense of uncertainty that may well be greater than ever before' and, at least in part, containing monstrosity – built as it has been on appropriation, bloodshed, and slavery – the latent horror within these vampires is shown in tandem with living as closely as possible to the American citizens around them, permitting their interactions as students, a medical doctor, and a housewife.⁹²

As Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari contend in their Freudian-based analysis of the correlation between group and individual (in this instance, within the Cullen family unit):

the individual fantasy is itself plugged into the existing social field, but apprehends it in the form of imaginary qualities that confer on it a kind of

⁹¹ Just as America declared its independence from European control, so too have the Cullens, in their creation of new rules for their New World lives.

⁹² Cullen ([2003] 2004), p. 6; For a contemporary comprehension of the darkness inherent within an early modern U.S. culture built on the inequities of slavery and bloodshed, see the American novelist Charles Brockden Brown's statement in an 1803 address to the U.S. Government, 'Devoted to the worst miseries is that nation which harbours in its bosom a foreign race, brought [...] from their native lands who are bereaved of humanity'. Brown's perception of the 'miseries' wrought by the mistreatment of fellow humans is echoed in the sentiment of the paternal vampire, Carlisle Cullen, whose decision not to prey on humans stems from a desire to not adhere to the exploitative vampire paradigm alongside upholding his medical oath to not intentionally harm a 'fellow human': Charles Brockden Brown, *An Address to the Government of the United States on the Cession of Louisiana to the French and on the Late Breach of Treaty by the Spaniards* (Philadelphia: John Conrad & Co., 1803), p. 73

transcendence or immortality under the shelter of which the individual, the ego, plays out its pseudo destiny.⁹³

The non-threatening undead Dreams represented by the Cullens can only ever be party to contemporary cultural constraints, with any fantasy of ‘transcendence’ or ‘immortality’ necessarily subdued for their ‘pseudo destiny’ of citizenship to be attainable. Just as vampire Monsters necessitate a narrative of overcoming, vampire Dreams necessitate a narrative that assimilates individuality into a collective. These undead allow Bella, as narrator, to play out a pseudo destiny that mimics a post-9/11 national fantasy of peace through power as she goes from being a clumsy and vulnerable human to a strong and protective vampire. In becoming a vampire, Bella overrides egalitarianism with something far more despotic, joining the ‘family’ ranks of immortal parasitism, the mask of benevolence being just that – a mask: as Bella reports of Jacob’s synopsis of the Cullens, despite being capable of causing harm, they ‘weren’t *supposed* to be dangerous.’⁹⁴ This is, as already mentioned, a family with extreme wealth, supernatural skills, and intra-vampiric influence, all of which – if attributed to humans – would be considered as possessing mafia-like traits.⁹⁵ If, as Booth and Dunne propose, ‘great power interests always trump democracy’, Bella’s transformation from nondescript humanity to joining the ranks of the Cullens’ immortal distinction carries with it a latent tyranny attributable to the vampire Monsters discussed above.⁹⁶

Even though Meyer’s narrative is positively biased towards the Cullens from the start, seeing them as ‘beautiful [...] outsiders’ who are all ‘noticeably graceful’, there is also an acknowledgement that they are ‘unsettling to watch’.⁹⁷ The Cullens are vampires and, no matter how attractive and benign they may appear, Meyer’s Dreams, like America’s, evolve from nightmares; both born out of

⁹³ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, [1972] 2008), p. 62

⁹⁴ Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 162

⁹⁵ For example, see how the Cullens gather an army of ‘seventeen [vampire] witnesses’ and an ‘alliance with the werewolves’ to make the Volturi hesitate in their aims to destroy them: Meyer (2008), pp. 627, 628

⁹⁶ Booth and Dunne (2012), p. 148

⁹⁷ Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 19

bloodshed, and both attempting to deny their histories. For Meyer's vampires, this 'nightmare' is a superstitious belief in vampirism spanning thousands of years and steeped in the notion that undead once-humans are doomed to prey on the living. For the nation in which they choose to reside, the undercurrent of domination and violence begins in the late fifteenth century with the discovery of North America by John Cabot and includes slavery – introduced in the early seventeenth century and finally outlawed in the mid-1860s – and the instabilities of civil warring – with those in political-martial control pitting human against human – which reaches a zenith, if not a culmination, with the end of America's Civil War in 1865.

Despite dubious foundations, allegiance is what (the critic) Cullen renders as paramount to the American Dream as a dynamic part of modern U.S. culture, dreams adaptable to the aspirations of each generation. Cullen continues:

In the twenty-first century, the American Dream remains a major part of our national identity, and [...] the United States [...] is a nation that has been re-created as a deliberate act of conscious choice every time a person has landed on these shores. Explicit allegiance, not involuntary inheritance, is the theoretical basis of American identity.⁹⁸

Like the nation they make home, Meyer's undead family are created as 'a deliberate act of conscious choice'.⁹⁹ But, as already suggested, Meyer's family are shown as reliant on unity that is both 'explicit' and involuntarily inherited. The creation of their identity, as alluded to above, is reliant on choices made by the patriarchal figure of Carlisle, whereas for others such as Edward and Rosalie, the choice is 'involuntary', their mortal deaths superseded by a vampirism imposed upon them by their 'father'.

Through Meyer's re-invention of the Cullens as semi-benign undead, she creates a fantasy scenario that contends with a prevailing fear of losing jurisdiction. After the attacks of 9/11, national patriarchal jurisdiction was exploited through the presidency of George W. Bush, his administration's attempt to assimilate and control both the horror of the attacks and the terror of possibly facing more

⁹⁸ Cullen ([2003] 2004), p. 6

⁹⁹ Cullen ([2003] 2004), p. 6

manifested in the Patriot Act.¹⁰⁰ The offensive agency of Bush's 'war on terror', sending troops to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan in order to appear to be taking an initiative distracted from the inhibitory effects of the Patriot Act on domestic freedoms of American citizens.¹⁰¹ In a fantastic tapping of this prevailing narrative of smoke and mirrors, the Cullens are triumphant against all enemies, a cohesive unit that employs its own terrors to conquer the terrors that threaten it. As Faludi notes, in the months and years after the autumn of 2001:

What mattered was restoring the illusion of a mythic America where women needed men's protection and men succeeded in providing it. What mattered was vanquishing the myth's dark twin, the humiliating 'terror-dream' that 9/11 had forced to the surface of national consciousness.¹⁰²

Meyer's family both uphold and undermine Faludi's synopsis of a national imperative towards 'the illusion of a mythic America where women needed men's protection and men succeeded in providing it'.¹⁰³ While Edward keeps reminding Bella that she is a danger to herself, labelling her 'a magnet for *trouble*', and therefore in need of his (manly) protection, she is also positioned as potentially problematic for the rest of the Cullens: as Rosalie states, in an echo of Edward's warning, Bella is 'a danger [...] inflict[ed] on all of us'; a potential 'dark twin'.¹⁰⁴ In this instance, it is Bella's intrusive knowledge of the Cullen's vampirism that poses a danger to their efforts to assimilate into an American culture that, as Faludi suggests, is itself intent upon reclaiming and retaining cultural illusion. And so, the Cullens are the unhomey within the homely, and personify both homeland

¹⁰⁰ *Uniting and Strengthening of America by Providing Appropriate Tools required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT ACT) of 2001 Public Law 107-56 107th Congress 'Title IV – Protecting the Border Subtitle B – Enhanced Immigration Provisions Sec.411 Definitions Relating to Terrorism'*(Oct. 26, 2001, 115 STAT. 347 Congressional Record, 147 (2001)), <<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-107publ56/pdf/PLAW-107publ56.pdf>> [accessed 10 April 2012]

¹⁰¹ The on-going instabilities in the Middle East at the time of writing, with the inhabitants of countries such as Syria, Libya, Israel and Gaza, Egypt, and Iraq, to name but a few, still suffering in the face of bombing, civil war, or politicized isolation are beyond the remit of this discussion. But, at base level, like Meyer's benevolent vampires, the very real atrocities played out in news reports across the globe owe their existence to long-standing socio-political antagonisms. Those in charge fight to retain power, those who are subjugated fight for their freedom. The only differences between these fights are specific causes, how the fighting is executed, and the outcomes

¹⁰² Faludi (2007), p. 151

¹⁰³ Faludi (2007), p. 151

¹⁰⁴ Meyer ([2005] 2008), pp. 151, 350

vulnerability – where freedoms always come with a price – and a fantastic capacity for protection.

Seemingly disempowered by this adaptation to the (incongruously insecure) contemporary cultural status quo, Meyer's undead family twist what many perceive to be necessary identifiers of vampirism. These creatures, while not gods are, as with Cronin's *Viral Monsters* discussed in chapter two, *beyond* the humans they once were but continue to imitate, and the fantasy America they inhabit allows for an amalgamation of pleasure and terror: Meyer's vampire family are humanized as well as transcendent. Friedrich Nietzsche's 'The Birth of Tragedy' summarizes the pitfalls of the specious perfection they project: 'Apollo, the god of all plastic energies [...] is the "shining one" [...] ruler over the beautiful illusion [...] of fantasy.'¹⁰⁵ When applied to these vampires, Nietzsche's words imply that Bella's narrative awe and enthusiasm should be tempered, as what appears to be a vision of beatitude might be just that; the illusory appearance of predators living in the midst of prey. In this way, where vampire Monsters present a conspicuous surge of evil that requires routing to restore equilibrium, vampire Dreams are more problematic: the seductive appeal of fantastic romance offered by these vampires is never entirely divorced from monstrosity. Like the vampire Monsters of the last section, Meyer's undead possess supernatural strength and speed, and ingest blood, although where del Toro and Hogan's and Cronin's Monsters revel in their antagonistic patterning, Meyer's central vampires foreground a choice not to prey on humans, hiding their difference to humans in plain sight as oxymoronic 'vegetarian' haematophages.

In shying away from the Monstrous patterning of what is often perceived as more traditional vampirism, the Cullen's squeaky-clean image of familial loyalty and harmony can be traced to Cold War public relations propaganda that shows the average American family as a demonstration of solidarity and, through it, an augmentation of national identity: as Bella declares, 'Edward and I would stand with our family.'¹⁰⁶ This familial paradigm continues to dominate American

¹⁰⁵ Nietzsche, trans. by Kaufmann ([1967] 2000), p. 35

¹⁰⁶ Meyer (2008), p. 674

popular culture, exported and promoted on a global level through media such as film, television, literature, and advertising.¹⁰⁷ Bella's narrative, couched as it is in the unreliability of individualized insecurities and anxieties, reflects a newly vulnerable national psyche made aware of its weaknesses by repeated returns, across all media, to events surrounding 9/11 and its after-effects. A narrative display of grandiose strength and unity, such as that exhibited by Meyer's undead family, can therefore be understood as a reaction to perceived national vulnerability. Media attention surrounding the events of 9/11, for example in the form of documentaries and news articles, serves to magnify its socio-political importance and maintain its cultural prominence. Meyer's setting of Forks, as an isolated small-town environment in which the American Dream can be realised, offers a talismanic space where vampires can play 'happy families' and their unusual behaviour can pass unchallenged, if not unremarked upon. But, even as 'vegetarian' vampires, this family are also guilty of acts of terror, as America itself has been guilty of terror on a far larger scale, arguably one of the greatest examples being in its sledgehammer atomic devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, killing whole communities and leaving a legacy of living death through radiation poisoning. Where the events of 9/11 gave America a legitimizing level of victimhood and raised awareness of a vulnerability that could potentially affect any or all of its citizens, it may also have resonated with a sub-conscious understanding that Davis describes with melodramatic flair: they 'condemned the survivors [of Nagasaki and Hiroshima], the walking dead, to a condition of nameless dread, to wandering directionless in a landscape become nightmare'.¹⁰⁸ As Davis rightly suggests in 'Death's Dream Kingdom: The American Psyche After 9-11', 9/11 was America's own small-scale version of its almost arbitrary massacre of Japanese civilians in 1945; a reminder that global dominion does not equal either virtuousness or invincibility. Consequently, not only do the Cullens and other romanticized vampires offer vampire fiction an undead alternative for

¹⁰⁷ Although not vampiric, families such as those in *The Brady Bunch*, *The Waltons*, and even *The Simpsons* all share the archetypal modelling of wage-earning father, stay-at-home mother, and (admittedly not always perfect) children with Meyer's undead family

¹⁰⁸ Davis (2003), p. 127

Monsters in terms of popularity, but they also carry within a seemingly benevolent exterior the same vampiric armoury that their monstrous kin openly portray; monstrosity is only outwardly rejected, as these *unheimlich* beings draw on hidden powers that locate the unhomely within a recognizable space.

As this examination has shown so far, this family is defined by the *unheimlich* tension of superficial domesticity imprisoning a monstrous core. Thus, the Cullens, as uncanny supernatural and immortal beings, mirror the ambivalence between the *heimlich* and *unheimlich*, with the latter being ‘in some way a species of’ the former.¹⁰⁹ Through these romanticized vampire characters, the mythological focus shifts away from the diminishing uncanniness of overt Monsters such as del Toro and Hogan’s Master and towards an *unheimlich* upholding of Barthes’s assertion that myth is less about the object portrayed – in this instance, vampires – and more to do with ‘the way in which it utters [the] message’.¹¹⁰ The message uttered, in this instance, being one in which fantastic beings chose domestication and, through it, act as endorsements of the American Dream as cultural dominant.

For the narrator, human Dreams equate to repression of her inner child’s frustrated need for support as well as grief that her parents are divorced, finding in Edward and his family a mutual means of expanding protection as well as protectiveness that links to the symbiotic manufactured vampire-human family units of Butler’s *Fledgling* (see chapter six). As a vampire, her peculiar skill is the ability to produce a protective field around those she loves: a skill that remains elusive on a national scale, with homeland security agencies, lacking recourse to a fantastic ‘shield [...] of sheer energy’, unable to protect Uncle Sam’s millions of nephews and nieces.¹¹¹ In turn, Bella’s individually-scaled need for security can be mapped onto America’s wider culture, where fears surrounding homeland vulnerability are identified by Faludi as manifested in attempts to repress any undermining of the American Dream. Faludi, in *The Terror Dream*, discusses how efforts to repress ‘post-9/11 commentaries [...] riddled with apprehensions that

¹⁰⁹ Sigmund Freud, *The Uncanny*, trans. by David McLintock (London and New York: Penguin, 2003), p. 134

¹¹⁰ Barthes ([1957] 2000), p. 109

¹¹¹ Meyer ([2008] 2009), p. 690

America was lacking in male fortitude' resulted in the Bush administration's bid to combat a perceived cultural harm caused by 'sissy sex symbols' and 'girlie boys' with 'cartoonish' masculine rhetoric, presenting the then president as some sort of macho hero in the 2003 docudrama, *DC 9/11: Time of Crisis*, that fictionalizes the president's 'post-9/11 valor'.¹¹² Like America itself, founded by European explorers and pioneers willing to exploit, steal from, or even murder the indigenous population to create a New World, this seemingly benevolent and domesticated family of vampires owe their existence to behaviours often deemed masculine – exploitation, intimidation, and bloodshed – ambiguously cast alongside the 'momism' of Bella's protective shielding.¹¹³ Thus, the Cullens exhibit incongruities in doing whatever is necessary to preserve an image that exists 'in the spectral realm of myth [...] the illusion of security', as fantastic 'virile and vigilant guardians of [America's] frontier' embodied in undead superhuman form who gain protection from the newest female family member.¹¹⁴

Unlike Cronin's made-in-America vampire Monsters 'family' who are marginal from the outset, the Cullens present a covert unity with modern, seemingly democratic, American culture and, as such, must be seen to achieve happiness through liberation from Old World vampirism. Together, they live out the American Dream; they are united identifiers for the nation as a whole. This may

¹¹² As Faludi goes on to state, America, 'the last remaining superpower, a nation attacked precisely because of its imperial preeminence, responded by fixating on its weakness and ineffectuality': Faludi (2007), pp. 10, 11, 60, 61, 63, 12; Bush's fear of metrosexuality as a threat to an American patriarchal authority echoes those concerning the New Woman prevailing in *fin de siècle* Britain. In their introduction to the Norton Critical Edition of Stoker's *Dracula*, Auerbach and Skal deliberate attitudes towards the New Woman and how they were expressed in Stoker's novel: 'In 1897, a new dispensation seemed to many women an exhilarating possibility. Their vision of new lives was incarnated in a personification called the New Woman, about whom Stoker's Mina makes ambivalent jokes. Celebrated and mocked in fiction and journalism, the New Woman is an eccentric with no relation to the collective movement feminism was rapidly becoming. Still, for most men, she was threatening enough on her own, for she refused to be satisfied with the old Victorian definitions: economically and sexually, she was either independent of male control or aspiring to be so. Thus she was by conventional standards perverse, no longer recognizable as female. The appellation "New Woman" itself suggests an evolutionary mutation. The strange changes Dracula catalyzes in Lucy and Mina – seemingly, of all London's "teeming millions," the only mortals on whom he preys – are symptomatic of the changes men feared in all their women. In the guise of fantasy, Bram Stoker wrote a novel true to the dislocating experience of his bewildered contemporaries': Auerbach and Skal 'Preface', in Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. xi

¹¹³ Faludi (2007), p. 11

¹¹⁴ Faludi (2007), pp. 186-7

be a tale of wish-fulfilment dominated by fantastic creatures, but its message is clear: given unconditional support by its guardians, here taking the fantastic form of vampires, the citizens of America can overcome acts of terror (or in Bella's case, divorced parents, relocation, and a new school!), restoring a national self-righteous self-belief befitting this superpower's intent to maintain internally manufactured Dreams and retain global hegemony.

As Jennifer Hochschild in *Facing up to the American Dream* proposes, (vampire) Dreams are built on both virtue and vice, with success central to self-image: 'Americans are not gracious about failure'; it 'reminds them that the dream may be just that'.¹¹⁵ Thus, in Meyer's fantasy, these vampires cannot be seen to fail in their lives, loves, and especially their fight to maintain freedom, to remain a part of American society and its Dreams. This denial of fallibility is seen at its height in the Cullens' fight against the Volturi, which they attempt to carry out without losses on either side (in line with their cloying munificence). It is their own war on the terror of what is portrayed as the Volturi's outmoded regime, aimed at destroying the Cullen family (as proxies for nation) as they are portrayed as striving for independence by engineering international peace through diplomatic means. Vampire Alice's explanation of the Volturi's suspicions that the Cullens represent the potential for a New World challenging of their long-standing global authority contains a veiled nationalism that reinforces a (fallacious) self-image of America as peaceful, egalitarian, 'civilized', and 'the biggest in existence' (a supersized family for a U.S. to whom size matters):

We Cullens are unique in more ways than you know. It's... abnormal for so many of us to live together in peace [...] and Carlisle speculates that abstaining makes it easier for us to be civilized, to form bonds based on love rather than survival or convenience [...] Carlisle's family is the biggest in existence, as far as I know, with the one exception. The Volturi [...] There's a reason [they are] called [...] royalty... the ruling class. Over the millennia, they have assumed the position of enforcing our rules – which actually translates to punishing transgressors. They fulfill [sic] that duty decisively.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ Hochschild (1995), p. 29

¹¹⁶ Meyer ([2006] 2009), pp. 428, 429-30

Meyer's use of positive adjectives such as 'unique' and 'civilized', alongside nouns like 'love' and verbs such as 'abstaining' to describe the lifestyle and behaviour of the Cullens reinforces their morality and self-sacrifice, and is countered by the pragmatism of 'survival' and 'convenience', and violent negativity of 'enforcing' and 'punishing' mapped onto the attitudes and conduct ascribed to the Volturi. However, despite their antagonism, Meyer's vampire family and the Volturis are beyond the oppositional simplicity of good and evil. The Volturi are not counter to the Cullens, rather the Cullens might be considered Volturi-lite. Both sides aspire to 'world peace' among a global vampire community, but the Volturi are open in coveting a retention of control.¹¹⁷ After millennia spent in governance, the Volturi have 'assumed' an authoritarianism that, although antithetical to an *idealized* representation of American democracy, parallels the rationale of its Patriot Act, which advocates the curtailing of personal freedoms to maintain U.S. global authority: as the vampire 'witness' Garrett states of the Volturi, 'Are the[y...] here to protect the safety of our secrecy, or to protect their own power?'¹¹⁸ Volturi, like the Patriot Act, represent a curtailing of freedom masquerading as security for all. Alice is used to briefly outline the role played by the Volturi as an arbitrary 'ruling class' (superpower), feared for their army of followers used to retain control or, when needed, 'cleaning house' and destroying any vampires who do not conform to their rules.¹¹⁹ Her euphemistic phrase – 'They fulfill [sic] that duty decisively' – hints at an open-ended fervour for violent dominion. An archaic authority and

¹¹⁷ For an expanded discussion of the necessity to understand and move beyond the moral dogmatism of 'good and evil' and towards a nuanced comprehension of individuality as a blended form of both, see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (London, New York: Penguin, [1973] 1990)

¹¹⁸ In the outline of the Patriot Act – instigated as a means 'To deter and punish terrorist acts in the United States and around the world, to enhance law enforcement investigatory tools, and for other purposes' – there exists an ambiguity analogous to the grey areas between the Cullens and the Volturi. All seek to either deter and/or punish transgression, with the abstruseness of the phrase 'and for other purposes' allowing for near infinite modifications to suit any and every need: USA PATRIOT ACT (2001), <<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-107hr3162enr/pdf/BILLS-107hr3162enr.pdf>> [accessed 10 April 2012]; Meyer ([2008] 2009), p. 718

¹¹⁹ Meyer ([2007] 2009), p. 291; For America, retention of control / 'cleaning house' can be seen in the continuing presence of the Guantanamo Bay detention centre, where those deemed 'terrorists' are confined without trial and, their human rights violated by America as global 'democratic' hegemon: for further reading, see Jean Baudrillard's philosophical consideration of post-9/11 American culture, *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, trans. by Chris Turner ([2002] 2003); Ken Booth and Tim Dunne's *Terror in Our Time* (2012); and Susan Faludi's *The Terror Dream: Myth and Misogyny in an Insecure America* (2007)

desire to retain it are a volatile combination which leads to the Volturi's increasingly desperate attempts to achieve goals. In this instance, with Renesmee (the daughter of Edward and Bella) validated as a half-human, they continue 'looking for an accusation that would stick' until they are no longer left with a viable excuse for attack.¹²⁰ Consequently, while still demonstrating a discourse of dominance in line with the powerplay present in vampire Monsters narratives, what is different here is that those characters identifiable as metaphors for American hegemony do *not* meet invasive violence with violence. The Cullens, despite their supporters and strengths suggestive of winning credentials, uphold a pacifistic ethos that emphasizes the role of 'civilization' over martial capacity, but *only* with the might behind them that threatens violence should diplomacy or reasoning be ineffective.

The Volturi are thus simultaneous 'enemies' and Nietzschean dark shadows of modern U.S. fears that span from the early days of Cold War paranoia of McCarthyism to Acts such as the 'Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996'.¹²¹ As with the Volturi desire for adherence to their undead dogma, American politicians appear to often be driven to seek the eradication of un-American ideology and practice: the continuing presence of the Guantanamo Bay detention centre and undisclosed 'black sites' around the globe being examples of the conflict between liberty and 'security' within this dominant democracy.¹²² Restriction of self-determination is presented as paramount for global political accord for both vampires and humans. The curtailing of socio-political freedoms through the Patriot Act is fantastically amplified by the Volturi's 'seek[ing] the death of [...] free will' again in a manner that draws upon the narrative arc of

¹²⁰ Meyer ([2008] 2009), p. 719

¹²¹ *Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996*, Public Law 104-132 – Apr.24, 1996, <<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-104publ132/pdf/PLAW-104publ132.pdf>> [accessed 23 May 2014]

¹²² 'While the Defense Department has produced volumes of public reports and testimony about its detention practices and rules after the abuse scandals at Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison and at Guantanamo Bay, the CIA has not even acknowledged the existence of its black sites': Dana Priest, 'CIA Holds Terror Suspects in Secret Prisons', *Washington Post*, 2 November 2005, <www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/11/01/AR2005110101644.html> [accessed 23 May 2014]

overcoming the monster.¹²³ Still with an infant history measured in hundreds of years compared to a European history traced through millennia, a fear of the loss of global hegemony is projected onto the authoritarianism of the Volturis as a comparison to the ‘benevolence’ attributed to the Cullens. While the Volturi may be arguably depicted as domineering imperialists who must be thwarted in a simplistic battle (see *Breaking Dawn*, chapters thirty-six to thirty-eight), alongside the Cullens and their allies, they are two sides of the same coin. Both sets of vampires enter this conflict with an assumption of right on their side, and both signify a willingness to use any means necessary to retain status.

As discussed above, this family is ‘re-created as a deliberate act of conscious choice’, built, as Alice states, from ‘bonds based on love rather than survival or convenience’.¹²⁴ Although Edward acknowledges that the ‘Volturi aren't supposed to be the villains’, their threat to Meyer’s American vampires is made clear.¹²⁵ Using aggression and ‘overwhelming offensive advantage’ they are narratorially positioned as wrongdoers, intent on destroying those they have deemed guilty, but not for a vampiric infraction: ‘[their] goal is not punishment but acquisition’, a reinforcing of empire, with the Cullens ‘crime’ a desire to retain autonomy.¹²⁶ The Volturi’s covert intention is to destroy the Cullens, and allow clemency to Alice, whose precognitive abilities are coveted as a useful tool for aiding retention of power – this vampire becoming a commodified resource in much the same way as del Toro and Hogan’s human Palmer views the vampire Master in *The Strain* or Cronin’s military scientists see their homeless, death row, or child experimental subjects as ‘human recyclables’ in *The Passage*.¹²⁷ This antagonism is not only an attempt to stimulate sympathy for Meyer’s family, but also adds to a ‘them and us’ antagonism that, in line with the necessary routing of del Toro and Hogan’s vampire Master discussed in chapter one, must end in American triumph over a menace seemingly emanating from Old World Europe. Freedom over restriction; tolerance over prejudice; love over authority: these typify a Dream (and therefore

¹²³ Meyer ([2008] 2009), p. 719; See Booker ([2004] 2005), pp. 21-30

¹²⁴ Cullen ([2003] 2004), p.6; Meyer ([2006] 2009), p. 428

¹²⁵ Meyer ([2008] 2009), p. 580

¹²⁶ Meyer ([2008] 2009), p. 603

¹²⁷ Cronin (2010), p. 88

unreal) domestic identity, with a U.S. Constitution that declares all 'are created equal [...] endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights'.¹²⁸ Life, in strictly human terms, may be closed to them, but the Cullen's adherence to a nationally declared right to liberty and happiness undermines Volturi global supremacy: as Alice's critique summarizes, 'maybe it's just their love of power that binds them together'.¹²⁹ For these American vampires and their allies, the Volturi represent an *ancient* imperialism; a new Orient for a U.S. Occident. Just as Stoker's Dracula fails in his attempted hostile takeover of the heart of the British Empire, so too does the threat from Meyer's Volturi fail, despite an up-scaled quantity of vampire foes from a place that, from an American distance, appears close enough to be a neighbouring part of Europe to Stoker's Transylvania.

Bella, despite getting everything that might make her the envy of her predominantly YA readership, chooses to take on the role of an eternally tepid and boring housewife, who wants 'some peace, some normality [...] the walls of [her] own little home', with a husband she assumes feels 'exactly the same way'.¹³⁰ Bella thus enters into an eternal family life in line with Meyer's Mormon beliefs, but also in line with the earlier Gothic of Radcliffean heroines who, after suffering adversity, gain happiness in marriage and domesticity. And, more importantly, in line with a culture that necessitates a need to appear perfect, this is a next generation fictional family espousing of cultural fantasy.¹³¹ In reflecting

¹²⁸*The Declaration of Independence: A Transcription*, <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/declaration_transcript.html> [accessed 23 May 2014]

¹²⁹ Meyer ([2006] 2009), p. 429

¹³⁰ Meyer ([2008] 2009), p. 748; And so, Meyer's *Twilight* series synthesizes vampire and nation in the Cullens adherence to American Dreams. Bella and Edward, in espousing an eternal familial union, act as demonstrations of a continuation of the Dreams outlined above, synthesizing Meyer's Church of the Latter Day Saints dogma (which cannot be elaborated on here) with the vampiric, becoming a new model family - mother, father, and daughter - that can 'endure beyond the grave': As Campbell, Green, and Monson proffer, 'Latter-Day Saints believe that family relationships can endure beyond the grave, not just as a vague sympathy-card notion, but as part of a holistic set of beliefs about the nature of God and salvation. The Mormon heaven consists of familial relationships that extend into eternity': David E. Campbell, John C. Green, J. Quin Monson (2014), p. 14

¹³¹ As Fred Botting maintains, 'Attempts to define and expunge vice in cautionary tales advocating virtue and family values were regularly repeated in the many novels which followed the model of Radcliffe's sentimentally-inflected Gothic romances. In stories of orphaned heroines with all the virtues of middle-class domestic values discovering their aristocratic birthright after a series of terrors, persecutions and imprisonments, readers were offered familiar plots, settings and

unrealistic desires, Meyer's *Twilight* series reinforces what is already known if not widely voiced: Dreams are always beyond reality, and therefore always beyond attainment.

Returning to the Jungian quotation at the start of this chapter, through the Cullen family, Meyer narrates Dreams that 'convey [...] thoughts, judgments, views, directives, tendencies, which [are] unconscious either because of repression or through mere lack of realization.'¹³² Through fantasy figures such as Meyer's, readers are presented with a 'normality' that is anything but 'normal'. As this discussion shows, Meyer's (externally) all-American consumerist elite coven beg the Jungian-esque enquiry: What is the purpose of this dream? What effect is it meant to have? Even a rudimentary reading of Meyer's series appears to advocate a wholesale return to male/public and female/domestic post-World War II gendered familial (and through it, cultural) profiling. With Bella's desire to be eternally loved by Edward and, through him, assimilated into the Cullen family as a fantastic reflection of an idealized cultural identity, Meyer's series seems to meet a suggested need for widespread reassurance that America's population can look to those in authority – whether at a familial or national level – to provide necessary self-belief, security, and defence. If transposed to a national level, the Cullens offer it all: medical aid, nurturing, foresight, insight, emotional control, strength, and protection. An antidote to the unknowns present in the fear and power dynamics that underpin American post-9/11 culture, they are a fantastic idealization of twenty-first century dreams.

In the next chapter, Harris's vampires continue to be directed by cultural assimilation. But, the ambiguity that houses monstrosity within both vampires and prevailing American culture persists, with the potential of undead threats and

protagonists.' Bella, while not conventionally orphaned, does leave her mother and voluntarily exile herself in Forks, a small isolated town in Washington State (see chapter one of *Twilight*). From here, she suffers accidents, kidnapping, attempted murder, and abandonment, and finally becomes Mrs Cullen, has a child and, we are lead to believe, goes on to live happily-ever-after as part of a close-knit, wealthy, and physically perfect family; all characteristics of the narrative arc of an ideal Gothic heroine transposed into modern America: Fred Botting, *Gothic* (Abingdon, Oxon. and New York: Routledge, [1996] 2005), p. 71

¹³² Jung, trans. by Hull (2012), p. 34

powerplays minimized through Harris's vampires' legal integration. The first-person narrative of 'human' Sookie Stackhouse, unlike that of Meyer's Bella, tells of supernatural aggression and manipulation alongside attraction. Harris's vampires are not purveyors of the capitalist Dreams of Meyer's Cullen family, although both Meyer's and Harris's vampires use their supernatural abilities for financial gain, through such means as precognition or hypnotism. Unlike Meyer's attempt to portray covert vampire Dreams as insulators 'from the dangers of the outside world' for an extremely select demographic of American citizens, Harris's undead 'actually [...] exist' in a semiotic space that testifies to the possibility of 'the most dangerous threats com[ing] from *within*'.¹³³ In coming 'out of the coffin', Harris's undead bring fantasy and reality together.¹³⁴ And so, the conceit of a national socio-political integration of the undead, as epitomes of Gothic disturbance and irrationality, into American Dream[s] draws them from the shadows, not as Monsters but as legal citizens, with everything such status entails impinging upon understanding of vampires, their narratives, and prevailing cultural dynamics.

¹³³ Charlaine Harris, *Living Dead in Dallas* (London: Gollancz, [2002] 2009), p29; Bernice M. Murphy (2009), p. 3

¹³⁴ Charlaine Harris, *Dead Until Dark* (London: Gollancz, [2001] 2009), p. 1

Chapter Four:
‘Where all your bloody dreams come true’:
Charlaine Harris’s ‘Sookie Stackhouse’ Series¹

‘vampires, so long thought of as thrilling fiction, actually [...] exist’ (Charlaine Harris, *Living Dead in Dallas*)²

‘a distorted, not a disengaged, version of reality’ (Teresa A. Goddu, *American Gothic: Narrative, History, and Nation*)³

As the focus of this chapter, Harris’s vampires might be best understood the ‘middle children’ of this thesis: feigning assimilation with humanity to which they all once belonged, they are part-Monster, and part-Discord housed within vampire Dreams.⁴ Harris’s series is predicated on the after-effects of a globally televised vampiric ‘Great Revelation’ and, through it, an undead gaining of human acknowledgement, although not always acceptance, within a limited number of liberalized human countries, with most of the action geographically localized in the small town of Bon Temps, north Louisiana.⁵ Although Harris’s story revolves around the legal recognition of the undead as the ‘newest’ minority, her vampires offer a less overt display of the American Dreams discussed above in relation to

¹ Charlaine Harris, *Dead as a Doornail* (London: Gollancz, [2005] 2009), p. 211

² Charlaine Harris, *Living Dead in Dallas* (London: Gollancz, [2002] 2009), p. 29

³ Teresa A. Goddu, *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 2-3

⁴ Cundiff’s discussion of birth order, when transposed onto the vampiric order of Monsters, Dreams, and Discords, evidences ‘middleborns [Dreams] and lastborns [Discords]’ as ‘significantly more likely’ to engage ‘in problem behaviors’. If considered as part of a generic whole, Monsters conform to the ‘firstborn’ typology, with vampires most often considered in terms of monstrosity, and Dreams and Discords, the younger siblings capable of disruption and divergence from expectations of the genre. As Patrick Cundiff proposes, ‘middleborns [Dreams] would be theorized to have the highest likelihood of having social problems with peers and figures of authority’: Patrick R. Cundiff, ‘Ordered Delinquency: The “Effects” of Birth Order on Delinquency’, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 39, 8 (2013), 1017–1029, pp. 1024, 1018

⁵ Charlaine Harris, *Dead Until Dark* (London: Gollancz, [2001] 2009), p. 1; Most of this series is set in the semi-fictional space, Bon Temps – translating from French as ‘good times’. Bon Temps is a fictional town, within Louisiana, a real state, which plays with recognizable ‘Southern’ clichés such as racial antagonism and a distrust of non-locals, and contrasts to Meyer’s vampire narrative discussed in chapter three, which is centred around the small-town arena of Forks, Washington – ‘under a near-constant cover of clouds’, it provides an ideal environment for vampires who sparkle in sunshine: Stephenie Meyer, *Twilight* (London: Atom, [2005] 2008), p. 3

Meyer's fantasy of outward familial perfection.⁶ Instead, they draw into the Dreams the nightmarishness of American Gothic, the 'hallmark' of which is, according to Ananya Mukherjea:

the placement of the (*moral*) monsters among human characters [...] allowing for the direct line between the real terror of bleak economic circumstances and sexual predation that might exist in actual towns and the [...] fantastic horror depicted on the page.⁷

In demonstrating a moral ambiguity through the bleeding of economic and sexual predation into American Dreams, Harris's vampires may avoid the overt monstrosity of apocalypse present in del Toro and Hogan's *The Strain* or Cronin's *The Passage* but, with its promise of 'bloody dreams com[ing] true', this series borrows tropes from its sibling narratives.⁸ These legally welcomed '(moral) monsters', like Meyer's vampire family investigated in chapter three, temper undead miscreance with romance: 'We're all mean [...] very strong and very violent' is balanced with an amorous pragmatism (as opposed to the besotted attitude of Meyer's heroine Bella), where the human female Sookie Stackhouse 'decide[s] if the love [of vampire Bill Compton] is worth the misery'.⁹ Through Sookie's ambivalence towards them and the presence of wider cultural negatives such as fear and prejudice within the assimilation of immortality into American Dreams, Harris's narrative establishes a questioning of both vampiric and human motivations.¹⁰ These vampires mask the excesses of their sub-cultural activities to

⁶ Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 1

⁷ My emphasis: Ananya Mukherjea, 'Mad, Bad and Delectable to Know: *True Blood's* Paranormal Men and Gothic Romance', in *True Blood Investigating Vampires and Southern Gothic*, ed. by Brigid Cherry (London and New York: I. B. Taurus, 2012), 109-121

⁸ Charlaine Harris, *Dead to the World* (London: Gollancz, [2004] 2009), p. 57

⁹ Harris ([2001] 2009), pp. 193, 119, 187; As with the character referencing in chapter three, Harris's narrative referral to her characters, Sookie Stackhouse and other principal characters (after their first mentions) will be subsequently referred to by first name only

¹⁰ For examples of further examination of the translation of Harris's series into Alan Ball's television series *True Blood*, which seems to have caught critical imagination, see essays that range from Jennifer Culver's discussion of vampiric assimilation to Ron Hirschbein's Freudian interpretation of vampires as representations of human imperatives towards immortality in George A. Dunn and Rebecca Housel's *True Blood and Philosophy*. Ananya Mukherjea's discussion of these 'delectable' male vampires as part of a narrative that combines American Gothic with Gothic Romance to Darren Elliott-Smith's discussion of vampirism and homosexuality and Mikel Koven's investigation of it as a fairy tale narrative in *True Blood Investigating Vampires and Southern Gothic: True Blood Investigating Vampires and Southern Gothic*, ed. by Brigid Cherry (London and New York: I. B. Taurus, 2012); *True Blood and Philosophy: We Wanna Think Bad Things with You*, ed. by George A. Dunn and Rebecca Housel (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010)

affect a group image that, while not wholly benevolent, imparts (problematic) reassurance: 'Since they were still struggling to maintain a foothold in the stream of the living, the vampires remained very secretive about their organization and government'.¹¹ Harris's vampires are a darkness legally acknowledged as America's newest citizens, 'struggling' to hide monstrosity in plain sight of humans and, like Meyer's undead, conforming to perceptions of the American Dream in their individualized physical, if not capitalist, perfection.¹²

Discussion in this chapter is concentrated on Harris's 'Sookie Stackhouse' tridecalogy – the thirteen novels consisting of *Dead Until Dark* (2001); *Living Dead in Dallas* (2002); *Club Dead* (2003); *Dead to the World* (2004); *Dead as a Doornail* (2005); *Definitely Dead* (2006); *All Together Dead* (2007); *From Dead to Worse* (2008); *Dead and Gone* (2009); *Dead in the Family* (2010); *Dead Reckoning* (2011); *Deadlocked* (2012); *Dead Ever After* (2013) – and, more specifically, on the interactions of her two male vampire protagonists, Bill Compton (a one-time Confederate soldier) and Eric Northman (an ex-Viking) with the eponymous female human narrator-heroine Sookie (a part-fairy – a trait not discovered by her until book six, *Definitely Dead* – telepathic waitress) as key figures in what appears to be part of an instinctive post-9/11 cultural impetus to create an outward display of national liberality, here through an acceptance of vampires as a newly recognized legal minority. Like the novels investigated above, Harris's series can be read as part of a fictional response to a destabilization of global power dynamics that threaten the U.S. position as hegemon through terroristic activities.

¹¹ Charlaine Harris, *Club Dead* (London: Gollancz, [2003] 2009), p. 6

¹² In comparison to the unquestioning adoration of her vampire family displayed by Meyer's human female narrator, and paranormal romances such as Katie MacAlister's *A Girl's Guide to Vampires* (2005) and Tate Hallaway's *Tall, Dark and Dead* (2006), where human female is attracted to vampire male and their story ends in a 'happily ever after', Harris's titular Sookie Stackhouse may be sexually and romantically involved with vampires but introduces sceptical and subversive visions of the undead-human dynamic. Sookie displays a range of responses, from love – Sookie refers to Bill as 'the creature I loved' – to disillusionment – 'I don't want any more [...] relationships that could kill me. I don't want any secret agendas or misunderstandings'. Also, where Meyer's Cullens are symbolic of capitalist 'perfection' in their extreme affluence, Harris's central vampires are shown as needing to find ways to earn money.

For example, Bill creates a 'really valuable computer database' that details all known vampires, and Eric runs Fangtasia, a bar in which humans can be titillated by close contact with vampires: Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 181; Charlaine Harris, *Dead Ever After* (London: Gollancz, 2013), p. 282; Harris ([2004] 2009), p. 55

As discussed in chapter three, Davis' examination of America's collective post-9/11 psyche incorporates narratives that have:

much in common with the logic of the dream, a logic of hidden and unexpected connections, of abrupt shifts and apparent discontinuities [...] seeking a concrete way to embody and mediate [U.S. culturally collective] pain.¹³

In line with Meyer's *Twilight* series, the 'logic of the dream' here raises an image of America as liberal, with 'unexpected connections' between vampires and American Dreams. Harris's vampires are embodiments of what is feared as unknown becoming known and thus, seemingly, a neutralized threat. Harris's undead may often be subject to (human) prejudicial reactions, but their coming 'out of the coffin' mediates collective fear through amelioration – acceptance of potential monstrosity enables an assumption of human control.¹⁴ The violent monstrosity examined in section one mandates violent response, but bringing vampires into a legally recognized domain and subjecting them to (a degree of) visibility and accountability to the same regulations as humans, reduces them to the position of more manageable citizens. Incorporating the undead into American Dreams (making them 'friends' or, at least, 'frenemies') counters the fear of vampires as powerful nightmares or enemies.¹⁵

Although this series includes a multitude of supernatural beings, such as were-creatures, shape-shifters, fairies, maenads, and demons, its alternative title – the 'Southern Vampire Mysteries' – evidences the undead as pivotal to Harris's

¹³ Walter A. Davis, 'Death's Dream Kingdom: The American Psyche After 9-11', *Journal for the Psychoanalysis of Culture and Society*, 8, 1 (2003), 127-132, p. 128

¹⁴ Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 1; Although a queer reading of 'Sookie Stackhouse' is beyond the remit of this discussion, Harris's positioning of vampires as having 'come out of the coffin' is pre-dated by Trevor Holmes's examination of the intersection of queerness and the Gothic in late twentieth-century vampire fiction. Holmes concludes that, within a culture governed by 'heteronormative identity politics', 'Vampires function as more than just metaphors or archetypes on contemporary culture [they...] are sources of self-invention and [...] staging the problematics of gender identification and sexuality': Trevor Holmes, 'Coming Out of the Coffin: Gay Males and Queer Goths in Contemporary Vampire Fiction', ed. by Gordon and Hollinger (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997) 169-188, p. 188

¹⁵ Whether covert or overt, twenty-first century narratives, such as Meyer's *Twilight* and Harris's 'Sookie Stackhouse', that focus on vampires actively choosing to be American citizens assimilate the supernatural as a positive. The regulation of these vampires draws them into cultural understanding of the American Dream as an enhancement of its unachievable nature.

storyline as an examination of the relationship between these undead and anxieties and power dynamics specific to contemporary America. As citizens of this global superpower, Harris's vampires are, to return to Tennyson, truly 'Dragons of the prime', their known-ness an undermining of more traditional comprehensions of vampires as unknown intrusive interruptions of cultural status quos.¹⁶ Unique among the vampires discussed above and below, Harris's undead do not just target or reside in America. Legal recognition within Harris's uchronic U.S. is, as the Goddu epigraphic quotation at the start of this chapter suggests, 'a distorted, not a disengaged, version of reality'.¹⁷ Once engaged with and acknowledged as part of a wider collective, to many of the humans within this series they take on attributes (and face many of the prejudices) of a minority group, creating socio-political tensions reflective of historical context. Moral ambiguity is fostered through Sookie's association with these supernatural creatures, as she is witness (and sometimes party to) behaviour less than redolent of a 'national ideology [which] insists that America is a force for good in the world', with both humans and vampires indulging in bloodshed, murder, corruption, and discrimination.¹⁸ And so, Harris's undead continue the tradition of positioning vampirism as marginalized; human ambivalence towards them highlights areas of social disquiet and, alongside an understanding of this vampire narrative's metafictional consideration and acknowledgement of its place within the wider American vampire genre, this chapter investigates them as agents for the deconstruction of contemporary ideological biases, prejudices, and behaviour patterns that exist within America.

As with the examination of Meyer's series in the previous chapter and those vampire narratives investigated in section one, before moving on to scrutinize Harris's 'Sookie Stackhouse' series of novels in terms of how they embrace antecedent texts, a brief outline of the series has it revolving around the premise already alluded to: 'vampires, so long thought of as thrilling fiction, actually [...]

¹⁶ My emphasis: Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 'In Memoriam A.H.H.', *Alfred, Lord Tennyson Selected Poems*, ed. by Aidan Day (London: Penguin, [1991] 2003), LVI.22, p. 166

¹⁶ Auerbach, *Our Vampires*, LVI.22, p. 166

¹⁷ Goddu (1997), pp. 2-3

¹⁸ Ken Booth and Tim Dunne, *Terror in Our Time* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 98

exist'.¹⁹ Harris's 'Sookie Stackhouse' series starts with an opening chapter in which the (apparently) human Sookie is working as a waitress in shape-shifter Sam Merlotte's bar, where she meets 'vampire Bill': at this point, vampires have been legally recognized American citizens for four years and, as she states, she has 'been waiting for the vampire for years when he walked into the bar'.²⁰ Sookie is soon placed in a situation in which she saves Bill's (un)life as he is having his blood harvested by human 'drainers' Mack and Denise Rattray (in a twist of the usual blood-sucker/suckee scenario, the newest drug on the human black market is vampire blood, known as 'V', and 'supposed to temporarily relieve symptoms of illness and increase sexual potency, kind of like prednisone and Viagra rolled into one').²¹ Social integration of vampires brings an understanding that absolutes are not possible, and that the social and moral framework of modern America is subject to fragmentation and relativism. In Harris's fantastic 'what if' version of contemporary America, interactions between vampires and human are seldom clear-cut. With the living portrayed as villains as much as victims, negatives are directed at mortals and immortals alike, with examples such as the mortal addicts of undead blood, described as 'bloodhead[s]', balanced with the attitude of vampires such as Eric, whose description of her as 'meat on the hoof' shows disdain towards Sookie's friend Tara Thornton, reductively animalizing her to categorization as livestock just as del Toro and Hogan's vampire masses do in their 'Blood farms' discussed in chapter one.²²

The 'dream' goal of attaining all that comes with American citizenship is, as discussed in chapter three, centred on what Jim Cullen proposes: '[a]mbiguity is the very source of [the American Dream's] power [...] there is no *one* American

¹⁹ Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 29

²⁰ Harris ([2001] 2009), pp. 15, 1

²¹ Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 6; The inversion of the hero/heroine role-play, with pretty young blonde woman saving tall, dark, and handsome vampire conforms, at least in part, to the dynamics of Joss Whedon's television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, where the petite female human performs the act(s) of heroism, although it has to be noted that Buffy was predominantly concerned with destroying vampires rather than saving them: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, series 1-6, dir. by Joss Whedon (Mutant Enemy Productions et al, 1997-2002)

²² Harris ([2005] 2009), pp. 15, 41; del Toro and Hogan (2010), p. 286

Dream'.²³ Just as 'there is no *one* American Dream', there is no *one* vampire Dreams narrative: like Meyer's vampires, Harris's subdue their monstrosity to gain acceptance, but they also show that the capitalist aspect of American Dreams does not withstand a Marxist critique of its fundamental reliance on exploitation for gain: these are vampires who might feign a reliance on synthetic blood but who 'live more' through sucking from the living.²⁴ Consequently, in 'a fearful world, [where] Americans have no choice but to live *with* fear if not *in* it', Harris's openly assimilated vampires undermine the extreme threat within vampire Monsters' narratives.²⁵ Also, in contrast with Meyer's idealized ersatz human undead family's unachievable vampire Dreams as reinforcements of the fantastic unattainability of American Dreams, Harris's undead express more clearly Lippmann's original perception of the 'American Dream': 'those who cannot conceive of a nation not driven by fear' prompt products that speak of desire for the unobtainable.²⁶ Harris's central undead characters, Bill and Eric, are fantastic embodiments of what Lippmann terms 'the haunting horror of constructed evils', those inequalities and cruelties that persist within Dreams.²⁷

This, then, is a vampire narrative affected by degrees of social liminality, and even the widespread availability of 'Japanese-developed' synthetic blood does little to surmount tensions raised through the uchronic assimilation of these eternally Gothic beings.²⁸ Harris's vampires skirt the social edges, where their position as

²³ Jim Cullen, *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, [2003] 2004), p. 7

²⁴ As Harris's series shows in the financial and power disparities among her undead, American Dreams predicated on a capitalist system of exploitation of the many for the gains of the few conform to the Marxist critique in which capitalism is portrayed as 'vampire-like, liv[ing] only by sucking living labour': Karl Marx, *Capital: An Abridged Edition*, ed. by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 149

²⁵ Samuel P. Huntington, *Who are we? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), p. 337

²⁶ Walter Lippmann, *Drift and Mastery: An Attempt to Diagnose the Current Unrest* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, [1961] 2015), p. 138

²⁷ Lippmann ([1961] 2015), p. 139; See also Elizabeth Gudrais' consideration of 'Unequal America', where she suggests that 'living in a society with wide disparities – in health, in wealth, in education – is worse for *all* the society's members': my emphasis, Elizabeth Gudrais, 'Unequal America Causes and consequences of the wide—and growing—gap between rich and poor', *Harvard Magazine* (2008), <<http://harvardmagazine.com/2008/07/unequal-america.html>> [accessed 12 August 2017]

²⁸ Harris ([2003] 2009), p. 6

objects of desire for ‘fang-bangers’ is balanced by the detestation of members of the newly-formed Fellowship of the Sun, a sect founded on a more generically typical antagonistic view of vampires as ‘damned’.²⁹ As Goddu states, ‘Instead of fleeing reality, the gothic [and the vampiric, in particular] registers its culture’s contradictions’.³⁰ Harris not only presents readers with an America where the legalization of vampires deliberately integrates these eternally hollow unheimlich vessels into American culture to create immortal citizenry, and through it cement the U.S. global position as superpower, but also draws attention to contemporary ‘cultural contradictions’ – there’s always a price to pay and rules to be obeyed for residency in the ‘land of the free’.³¹ Being sucked as much as suckers, and victims almost as often as predators, Harris’s vampires operate as catalysts for a scepticism within the narrative of vampire Dreams, where there is no agreed cultural norm and liberality and inclusiveness dovetail with prejudice and intolerance.

A bending towards Freudian uncanniness can be seen in Harris’s series as a reminder that anxiety can emanate from the known as well as the unknown. Sookie represents an acceptance of vampiric unfamiliarity – here, as already outlined, they are one of many ‘minorities’ in contrast with the unknown and unacknowledged vampirism in Meyer’s *Twilight*, where secrecy is imperative to the Cullen family’s devotion to capitalist Dreams. Without the civil rights afforded to Harris’s undead, Meyer’s ‘benevolent’ vampires potentially face the same

²⁹ ‘fang-bangers’ is the derogatory term used to describe humans who are sexually obsessed with vampires. Sookie is dismissive of them as ‘groupies [...] dressed in their best finery [...] ranged from the traditional capes and tuxes for the men to many Morticia Adams ripoffs among the females [...] from reproductions of those worn by Brad Pitt and Tom Cruise in *Interview with the Vampire* to some modern outfits [...] influenced by *The Hunger*. Some [...] wearing false fangs, some had painted trickles of blood from the corners of their mouths or puncture marks on their necks. They were extraordinary, and extraordinarily pathetic’: Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 181; Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 115

³⁰ Goddu (1997), pp. 2-3

³¹ Returning to Marx and Engels, their mid-nineteenth century critique of capitalism suggests the ‘bourgeois order’ that dominates the Western world, and consequently modern American culture, ‘has become a vampire that sucks the blood from [proletarian] hearts and brains and casts them into the [...] caldron of capital’ – a sentiment that translates into Harris’s vampires, as the latest additions to the U.S. populace: Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* ([1852] 2010), <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/18th-Brumaire.pdf>> [accessed 01 April 2018] (p. 64)

'torches and pitchforks' response as their monstrous kin. Sookie's overt initial interest mirrors that of Meyer's human protagonist Bella's undiminishing enthusiasm:

Ever since vampires came out of the coffin (as they laughingly put it) four years ago, I'd hoped one would come to Bon Temps. We had all the other minorities in our little town—why not the newest, the legally recognized undead?³²

But, where Bella's allegiance to her manufactured 'all-American' family remains undimmed, Sookie's flexible understanding of 'the legally recognized undead' raises a mirror to repressed prejudices and fears prevalent in twenty-first century U.S. culture.³³ Harris's portrayal of undead, as 'the newest' minority among many, undermines uncanniness with pedestrian prejudices that follow those aimed at human deviations from assumed WASP normativity. Legally welcoming the undead into American society goes beyond the attempted military deployment of vampires as bio-weaponry – the ultimate self-repairing, strong, fast, and deadly soldiers – that so spectacularly backfires in Cronin's *Passage* series, leaving only isolated pockets of fearful humans within a quarantined country. Harris's vampires self-directed exposure to a legal light masks venal corruption. As Sookie's appraisal of Eric, the vampire Sheriff of Area Five in Louisiana, summarizes: 'The fact that he had to live within human laws was a constant irritant [...] though he greatly enjoyed the benefits.'³⁴ Eric's understanding of what it means for the undead to be legally recognized mirrors frustrations of human minorities, there is an irritation in obeying laws that show little adherence to true inclusivity and lack the adaptability to take in considerations of complete integration: for example, Harris's America might appear to accept vampiric integration but imposes boundaries reminiscent of pre-Civil Rights segregation in the criminalizing of turning humans and human-vampire marriage. Despite Harris's vampires marketing themselves as 'not a threat', they remain secretive, selfish, manipulative, and dangerous entities: for example, they maintain a covert

³² Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 1

³³ Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 1

³⁴ Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 175

vampiric political system.³⁵ Harris's undead are the epitome of the darkneses that reside within American capitalist-driven culture – much like del Toro and Hogan's human billionaire character of Eldritch Palmer discussed in chapter one above, beneath seeming conformity lies subversion, with these vampires 'coming out' predominantly to exploit their legal status for personal gain.

Before discussing Harris's series as generically relative to 'Southern Gothic' and the dominant vampire texts of *Dracula* and Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, for those unfamiliar with Harris's series, or all-too-familiar with Alan Ball's television adaptation for HBO, *Sookie*, as the narrative compass guiding reader perception, requires a brief outlining. Meyer's vampires, like those examined in section one, central to the previous chapter, and most of the previous two centuries' worth of Western fictional vampires, are denied narrative autonomy, with all that they do and say disseminated through the human thoughts and interactions of Sookie. Fundamental, then, to understanding the interactions of Harris's undead and modern America is, as with Meyer's series, Harris's employment of a sympathetic human female narrator-heroine. Unlike Meyer's narrator Bella – an insecure (and almost monomaniacally obsessed) teenager – Sookie is a twenty-something who is both self-assured in her physical attractiveness from the outset and, despite her small-town existence, strong-minded. '[Bill had] better remember I was my own woman' ratifies a strength of personality that acts as a precursor to what is the fundamental difference between Meyer's and Harris's heroine-narrators – where Meyer's conforms to the standard romantic trope, marriage and a (very literal) 'happy ever after', Harris's weighs up the implications of an eternity bound to a vampire maker and chooses to live as a mortal: 'I would not be a vampire for [Eric]. I loved being human.'³⁶ Thus, where Bella is characterized as desperate to relinquish freedoms, alongside familial and friendship bonds that are fundamental to her humanity (with a minimal protestation about marriage), Sookie demonstrates a true acceptance of this minority, developing strong attractions to

³⁵ Harris's politicized vampire sub-culture includes undead 'royalty' such as the queen of Louisiana, Sophie-Anne Leclercq, and king of Nevada, Felipe de Castro, alongside Area heads, investigators and sheriffs: Harris ([2002[2009), p. 24

³⁶ Harris ([2002[2009), p. 24; Harris (2013), p. 130

and emotional bonds with these vampires but able to resist the base lure of gaining vampiric traits, such as immortality and 'glamor' – or hypnotism, recognizing them as naïve temptations.³⁷

Awareness of what goes on in Harris's America, including these vampires' thoughts, feelings, and actions, as filtered through Sookie, once again imposes human subjectivity onto all that comes into the arc of this story. Sookie is drawn to vampires, as they offer her a peace through possessing no thought patterns to intrude into her (telepathic) mind: as Sookie explains to Bill, 'I can't hear you at all [...] You have no idea how peaceful that is. After a lifetime of blah, blah, blah'.³⁸ It can be argued that vampires paradoxically afford Sookie a chance to experience life as a typical human, only knowing their thoughts if voiced: 'instead of positive surges of thought, the kind I'd get to indicate people, I got [...] holes in the air [...] Each hole represented a vampire.'³⁹ Harris's vampires are manifestations of unacknowledged 'holes' or hollow darkneses that exist within America as a superpower intent on maintaining its global dominion (see section one) as much as ignoring internal cultural instabilities (see section three). Where Meyer's vampire family reinforce the (unobtainable) dreams of a post-9/11 American

³⁷ The vampire character Bill explains 'glamor' to Sookie as being 'Like hypnotism [...] All vampires use it, to some extent or another. Because to feed, until the new synthetic blood was developed, we had to persuade people we were harmless ... or assure them they hadn't seen us at all ... or delude them into thinking they'd seen something else': Charlaine Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 57; Sookie may adhere to the Gothic trope of orphaned (and, therefore, potentially vulnerable) female but just as (a century and a half earlier) Charlotte Brontë's orphaned eponymous Jane Eyre rejects subjection to a patriarchal St. John Rivers in favour of making her own choice of partner (admittedly, thanks to a convenient fortune from a dubiously slave-related source), she ultimately resists conforming to generic expectations and opts for mortal reciprocity instead of immortal subservience

³⁸ Sookie's interest in vampires is piqued upon realizing that she cannot hear Bill's thoughts: 'I listened [telepathically] to [Bill], opening my mind completely. And I heard ... nothing. "Oh," I said, hearing the shock in my own voice, hardly knowing what I was saying. "I can't hear you." "Thank you!" the vampire said, moving his lips exaggeratedly. "No, no ... I can hear you speak, but..." and in my excitement, I did something I ordinarily would never do, because it was pushy, and personal, and revealed I was disabled. I turned fully to him and put my hands on both sides of his white face, and I looked at him intently. I focused with all my energy. Nothing. It was like having to listen to the radio all the time, to stations you didn't get to select, and then suddenly tuning in to a wavelength you couldn't receive. It was heaven. His eyes were getting wider and darker, though he was holding absolutely still. "Oh, excuse me," I said with a gasp of embarrassment. I snatched my hands away and resumed staring at the parking lot [...] how marvelous it would be to have a companion I could not hear unless he chose to speak out loud. How beautiful his silence was': Harris ([2001] 2009), pp. 36, 13

³⁹ Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 78

culture in which, according to Huntington, '[v]ulnerability [to terroristic activities] gives new salience to national identity', Harris's vampire *Dreams* engage readers in romanticized fantasies that may embrace the undead as citizens but, through Sookie's balanced understanding, also raise a questioning of their outward immortal allure.⁴⁰ Through her interactions with vampires, Sookie develops a moral code that is independent of the often binary opinions of surrounding humans. In part, this is tempered by her quick formation of a sexual/romantic bond with Bill and going through dangers that include facing death and committing acts of violence and murder as party to her involvement with the undead. After the eventual uncovering of Bill's fraudulence – originally sent to seduce Sookie by the vampire queen of Louisiana, Sophie-Anne, who is interested in the potential for exploiting her telepathic abilities – Sookie goes on to form a blood bond with the Viking vampire Eric, teaches him to love (during his conveniently amnesiac phase), but ultimately chooses to eschew the vampiric in favour of a happy-ever-after with her loyal (shape-shifter) dog, Sam Merlotte.

'the whole Anne Rice thing': Generic Involvement and Darker Dreams⁴¹

Although both Meyer's and Harris's settings are small-town, and both amalgamate dread and romance, the narrative environment of Meyer's series is arguably much nearer the expectations of Old World Gothic in its cloud-covered gloominess, whereas Harris's series conforms to the humidly claustrophobic environmental backdrops that prevail within the Southern Gothic sub-genre.⁴² Unusually, this positions Harris's vampires as integrating narratives dominated by Southern, feudally-inspired, mannered gentility. Events in the 'Sookie Stackhouse' series take place in a narrative space that, by day, has 'an excess of light [that] can be uncomfortable, oppressive and suffocating' to humans but deadly to these nocturnal creatures, and by night, offers respite for humans and opportunity for the undead, inverting what are the more traditional cold and damp Gothic

⁴⁰ Huntington (2004), p. 337

⁴¹ Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 1

⁴² As mentioned above, Meyer's description of Forks, Washington, puts it 'under a near-constant cover of clouds': Meyer ([2005] 2008), p. 3

environments.⁴³ Unlike the ‘sparkly’ Dream vampires central to Meyer’s *Twilight*, Harris’s are the newest minority within a narrative domain that draws on southern Gothic in housing human grotesqueries, such as criminality, prejudice, and deviancy, as a counterpoint to an undead population who merely *pretend* they do not kill.

In *The Gothic*, David Punter and Glennis Byron propose that, alongside being geographically tied to those states that made up the antebellum Confederacy, a defining feature of Southern Gothic is a constant impinging of the past on the present, for which vampires stand as signifying entities.⁴⁴ While it might be argued there are as many differing perceptions of past and present as there are people, there exists in the American South a collective history that contains much that is distinguishable as Gothic: the ‘macabre’, and ‘violent’, are entangled with imagery of decay and despair.⁴⁵ Expanding upon this association between the literary sub-genre of Southern Gothic and Harris’s ‘Sookie Stackhouse’ series, ‘vampire Bill’ is a walking-talking – if not living-breathing – invasion of America’s Southern past into the present. Despite not being dead and, subsequently, not a ‘descendant’, but having lived as a Confederate soldier during the American Civil War, Bill is invited by Adele Stackhouse (Sookie’s grandmother) to speak to a special interest group calling themselves the ‘Descendants of the Glorious Dead’.⁴⁶ Sookie, as the narrator, advances a recognition of the fallacious assumptions and beliefs of her grandmother’s club in its circumvention of the horrors of this war in favour of a nostalgic reimagining: ‘you wouldn’t have to tell them about the maggots and the infections and the starvation’.⁴⁷ Her advice to Bill that ‘since you’re in Bon Temps and seem to want to live around here, it would be a good public relations move for you’ speaks of an understanding of the value of appearances on the acceptance of minority groups within wider culture, particularly if this culture

⁴³ Caroline Ruddell and Brigid Cherry, ‘More than Cold and Heartless: The Southern Gothic Milieu of *True Blood*’, in *True Blood: Investigating Vampires and Southern Gothic*, ed. by Cherry, Brigid (London and New York: I. B. Taurus, 2012), p. 44

⁴⁴ David Punter and Glennis Byron, *The Gothic* (Malden, MA, Oxford, and Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 116-117

⁴⁵ Punter and Byron (2004), pp. 116-117

⁴⁶ Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 17

⁴⁷ Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 38

exhibits a deep-seated bias towards the unrealistic veneration of Confederate soldiers.⁴⁸ The 'Descendants of the Glorious Dead' can accept that Bill took part in a Civil War that ended in 1865, but not that their romanticized notions of American history might be undermined by knowledge of the squalid conditions endured by Confederate soldiers.

The American South is integral to two of Harris's three central characters, Sookie (born and raised in Bon Temps) and Bill (a Confederate soldier before being made a vampire by Lorena Ball, and from a long-standing Bon Temps family) and, consequently, their mannerisms and concerns are coloured by relativity to this part of America and its history. Until she meets Bill, Sookie's life is dominated by old-fashioned 'Southern Belle' mores, with expectations of gracefulness, good manners, and the cultivation of a beautiful exterior, alongside a life shaped by and based in and around Bon Temps. Kathryn Lee Seidel's attempt to define what constitutes the 'circumstances and attributes' of a 'Southern belle', places her as 'usually not orphaned (although she often has lost her mother)' and 'temporarily attracted to the unsuitable seducers and sometimes reject[ing] the sensible in favor of the easy, the vain, the rich', but also used by early twentieth-century authors 'not to praise the South but to criticize and, at times, condemn'.⁴⁹ Seidel argues that 'the southern belle is the symbol of the South itself [...] ideal [...] pure and noble', but also 'the "darker" side of the belle – the repressed narcissism [...] to indict the Old South or describe the New'.⁵⁰ Faced with this dichotomy of meaning, Harris's portrayal of Sookie as motherless, both prudish and sexually curious, as well as seduced by, and rejecting of, vampires positions her as straddling the idealized as well as dark 'belle' as she narrates the 'New' of America – the (legal) recognition and (semi-)acceptance of vampires. Bill's demeanour, as a 'Southern gentleman', is informed by the hardships of fighting on the losing side of a Civil War: 'I came back from the battlefield. I was one of the lucky ones. At least I thought so at the time [...] We were in rags and starving [...] It had no

⁴⁸ Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 38

⁴⁹ Kathryn Lee Seidel, *The Southern Belle in the American Novel* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1985), pp. 3, 4

⁵⁰ Seidel (1985), pp. 26, xiv

meaning for me after I became vampire'.⁵¹ In contrast, Eric is both literally and nominatively a Northman; his history is Viking and dominated by aggressive masculinity and the resultant expectations of success, as well as a link to northern areas of America through the brief colonization by his once countrymen, and the earliest settlers, around the first millennium C.E.⁵²

With its narrative domain governed almost as much by its Southern setting as it is by vampires, there is an obvious connection to be made with Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (both Harris and Rice use Louisiana as a backdrop to their vampire tales, with Rice basing her vampires in New Orleans), and Harris does not shy away from making it. From page one, Harris's intertextual palimpsestic treatment of Rice and her vampires sees them introduced, partially erased through Sookie's blasé acknowledgment of 'the whole Anne Rice thing', and overwritten by Harris's own mythologizing of Southern vampire fiction, drawing it into contemporary culture.⁵³ Connecting Sookie's America with Rice's verges on metafictional adulation, with Harris making further associations, such as the desire of vampire Harlen Ives – a vampire from Minneapolis who looks 'maybe fifteen' – to vacation in New Orleans: 'I've been waiting to visit New Orleans for years. It's just a mecca for us, you know.'⁵⁴ Harlen displays an enthusiasm for New Orleans that borders on fanatical, and prompts an ironic echoing of fang-bangers' obsessiveness, which is, in turn, evocative of the 'frenzied mortals' who scream at and worship Rice's Lestat de Lioncourt in his guise as rock star in her second novel of the 'Vampire Chronicles' series, *The Vampire Lestat*.⁵⁵ While Harris's vampires show deference for the places and characters that inhabit Rice's series, they are less otherworldly than those of Rice's undead luminaries, such as Louis de Pointe du Lac, whose account of his vampire history veers into the confessional and

⁵¹ Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 63

⁵² 'American fascination with the Viking discovery of the New World had begun in earnest in the middle of the nineteenth century [...] Whetted by the publication of Danish scholar Carl Christian Rafn's *American Antiquities*, an 1837 compendium of historical and literary documents proposing that the Vikings had discovered the shores of America five hundred years before Columbus': J. M. Mancini, 'Discovering Viking America', *Critical Inquiry*, 28, 4 (2002), 868-907, pp. 872-873

⁵³ Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 1

⁵⁴ Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 191

⁵⁵ Anne Rice, *The Vampire Lestat* (London: Sphere, [1985] 2007), p. 580

cathartic in tone. Harris's vampires, when in Sookie's company, show negligible angst about their behaviour: as the Viking vampire Eric pragmatically states, 'We vampires are all murderers.'⁵⁶ While this is an oddly emotive term for a supernatural being whose existence depends on ingesting human blood, it reinforces the undermining of adherence to any assumed vampire vernacular that prevails in this series – these vampires are part of human culture and, as such any judgement of them is governed by human psychological understanding. Yes, these are vampires, but no, they do not conform to any assumptions or blueprints for the undead, even one as metafictionally revered as Rice's.

Alongside Harris's explicit response to Rice's vampires, there exists, as with (arguably) all American vampire fiction, an intertextual relationship with iterations of *Dracula*. Bill, as Harris's principle undead character, is a tall, dark, and handsome vampire more in keeping with Lugosi's portrayal of Dracula or Polidori's earlier Lord Ruthven (based as he was on the 'mad, bad, and dangerous to know' poet Byron).⁵⁷ Eric, equally as tall and handsome, is a Nordic blond, which resurrects the dark/fair binary of Rice's Louis and Lestat. Sookie, as the human third of this group, takes on a Renfield-come-Mina-like role, alongside other humans and were-creatures doing these vampires' daytime bidding (although Stoker's Dracula, unlike later incarnations, survives in daylight, and therefore his use of Renfield is more as a point of ingress into Britain, the heart of its then globally dominant empire).⁵⁸ Sookie also disparagingly acknowledges that her role as Eric's lover resembles that of one of Dracula's wives:

Maybe I'd spend my nights hanging around with Pam and Karin, we three blondes, waiting at Eric's beck and call – for eternity. I shuddered. The mental image of me hanging around with Karin and Pam – like Dracula's females,

⁵⁶ Harris ([2004] 2009), p. 57

⁵⁷ The description of Byron as 'mad, bad, and dangerous to know' is generally attributed to his lover, Lady Caroline Lamb

⁵⁸ The vampire Eric displays a distaste for vampiric employment of 'Renfields': "'Dracula's human servant. A degraded creature . . . Why someone of Dracula's eminence would want so debased a man as that . . .'" Eric shook his head disgustedly. "But it does happen. The best of us look askance at a vampire who makes servant after servant. The human is lost when the vampire assumes too much control [...] Sooner or later, he has to be killed.'": Charlain Harris, *Dead and Gone* (London: Gollancz, 2009), p. 178

waiting for an unwary passerby in some Gothic castle – was simply disgusting. I'd want to stake myself.⁵⁹

Aside from the obvious, that there are not many passing 'victims', 'unwary' or otherwise to be found near remote castles, as with most of the texts discussed here, Harris's narrative denounces *Dracula*, with focus here on Sookie's rejection of his vampiric polygamy, turning the top fear of Stoker's undead, staking, into a deadpan undercutting of masculine dominion and vampiric allure with self-penetration and one simple adjective: 'disgusting'.

As with most American vampires since the 1930s, Harris's undead share attributes of Lugosi's Count: they all possess an innate ability to charm and hypnotize – or 'glamor' which, as already mentioned, does not work on Sookie – humans and adhere to the chief traditional vampiric trait, a blood-based diet.⁶⁰ Alongside these characteristics, Harris sets up a teasing reference to Lugosi in Bill's first meeting with Sookie in Merlotte's bar, where he orders red wine but does not drink it. Just as Lugosi's *Dracula* states to Harker, these vampires 'never drink [dramatic pause] wine'.⁶¹ Sookie later reinforces this connection, telling her grandmother, 'He just sat and had a glass of red wine. Well, he ordered it, but he didn't drink it.'⁶² This contrasts to contemporary vampires, such as Joe Pitt, the eponymous vampire anti-hero of Charlie Huston's series of novels, who eats pizza, but eschews garlic: 'No way, no fucking garlic [...] It's not like the garlic would hurt me or anything. I just don't like the shit.'⁶³ So, while modern vampire narratives cannot avoid metafictional involvement with the ur-text of *Dracula*, they often do so as a

⁵⁹ Harris (2013), p. 131

⁶⁰ See Charlie Huston's 'Joe Pitt Casebooks' series, 2005-2009: *Already Dead* (2005); *No dominion* (2006); *Half the Blood of Brooklyn* (2007); *Every Last Drop* (2008); *My Dead Body* (2009)

⁶¹ *Dracula* (1931), 00.15.11; *Dracula*'s understanding of his relationship with Mina Harker mirrors the treatment of Sookie by both Bill and Eric, although *Dracula* offers a more one-sided deal in a corruption of Genesis 2:23: 'you [Mina...] are now to me, flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin; my bountiful wine-press for a while, and shall be later on my companion and my helper': Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. 252

⁶² Alongside this link to Lugosi's *Dracula*, there is an overt reference to these vampires' fictional ancestry in *Dead Until Dark*, when Sookie makes her first foray to Fangtasia, the vampire club owned by Eric: 'I got my first comprehensive look at Fangtasia's interior. Everything was in gray, black, and red. The walls were lined with framed pictures of every movie vampire who had shown fangs on the silver screen, from Bela Lugosi to George Hamilton to Gary Oldman, from famous to obscure': Harris ([2001] 2009), pp. 17, 115

⁶³ Huston ([2005] 2008), pp. 1-2

refutation, knowingly exploding the myths of Dracula-type vampires in favour of adaptations to contemporary anxieties that have little connection to this undead patriarch.⁶⁴

Harris's undead also borrow from Stoker in their inability to enter human homes without permission, a trait that microcosmically echoes America's 'invitation' to legal citizenship. An example of the need for invitation is used by Harris to undermine vampiric threat of sexual predation with farce when Sookie, facing potential rape and murder, rescinds hers. This leads to an uncontrolled backwards walk out of Sookie's home by Mickey, a vampire euphemistically described by Eric as 'a rogue [...] capable of ... things that are barbarous'.⁶⁵ When Sookie yells 'Your invitation is rescinded!', Mickey has no choice of action: 'looking ridiculous with his pants open [...] he went backward out of the window'.⁶⁶ However darkly humorous, Sookie's action, the expulsion of the degenerate vampire Mickey serves as a reminder, as did Stoker's Count to fin de siècle readers, that the undead are not invincible; these immortals are ultimately still subject to humans. In displaying monstrosity as part of their invitation into American Dreams, they sit between culturally-constructed binaries that continue to exist – 'security/liberty and us/them' – that, as already alluded to at the start of this chapter, place Harris's vampires as middle children, Dreams impacted by Monsters and Discords.⁶⁷ Despite over a century since Stoker first published *Dracula*, the instigation of universally acknowledged human rights, and Harris's fictional integration of vampires into U.S. society, they can still be denied access to the homely with no more than words, once more repressing revenants in a denial of the grotesque and violent unheimlich.

⁶⁴ In refuting the 'rules' of vampirism associated with Dracula, vampires continue to adapt to contemporary cultures and retain relevance. Without this malleability, the range discussed here – from the aggressive to the loving, the risible, and the questioning – would be diminished, and interest potentially reduced, their fangs metaphorically blunted. That the undead can continue to both assimilate and extend out from the influence of Dracula is testament to this character's generic importance but also to the wider impetus of vampires to reflect the culture in which they are created.

⁶⁵ Harris ([2005] 2009), p. 41

⁶⁶ Harris ([2005] 2009), p. 223

⁶⁷ Booth and Dunne (2012), p. 129

Tinged with nightmares, as this brief discussion of Harris's metafictional interfacing shows, these Dreams owe much to an understanding of generic predecessors and Southern Gothic. Harris presents an egalitarian display of both human *and* vampire fears, prejudices, and powerplays that vacillate between the rational and irrational, and judgement and action. Harris's vampire Dreams demonstrate how a cultural collective unconscious feeds into a fantastic assimilation of immortality (unachievable by scientific endeavour, as shown in the apocalyptic repercussions in Cronin's *The Passage* discussed in chapter two), but its connection to the monstrous also sees these undead dreaded and discriminated against at both local and global levels. Following three quarters of a century's worth of indigenous American vampires after Lugosi gave celluloid substance to vampirism in the Universal Studios film *Dracula*, Harris makes literal the understanding of undead as an integral part of U.S. culture. From Lugosi's *Dracula* to the vampires of Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend* (adapted for cinematic presentation three times to date), Anne Rice's 'Vampire Chronicles', and on into children's television characters, breakfast cereals, and the endless hordes of fake-fanged, cape-wearing trick-or-treaters who surface every Halloween, the undead are an accepted presence throughout American culture.⁶⁸ And, to maintain a place in America's cultural mythos requires plasticity – being both strongly contemporary and 'part of a long tradition' of national and individual Dreams.⁶⁹ Facing the need for adaptation, Harris's vampires' global televised self-revelation carries a recognition that integration requires overcoming fears and prejudices for both sides of any them-and-us equation; a meeting in the middle. And it is to this integration into contemporary American culture that discussion now turns.

⁶⁸ Matheson's 1954 novella, *I Am Legend*, was adapted for film in 1964 (*The Last Man on Earth*), 1971 (*The Omega Man*), and 2007 (*I Am Legend*). Since 1972, *Sesame Street* has had its own numbers-obsessed vampire, Count Von Count – whose appearance is modelled on Lugosi's portrayal of *Dracula* – helping children with simple mathematical concepts and, since 1971, *Count Chocula* has been in production as a breakfast cereal, with a be-fanged cartoon Count once again bearing more than a passing resemblance to Lugosi's vampire.

⁶⁹ Cullen ([2003] 2004), p. 5

‘the vampire [...] walked into the bar’: Fears, Negotiation and Pretence in American Culture⁷⁰

Not the start of an undead joke, vampire Bill’s entry into Merlotte’s at the start of *Dead Until Dark* marks the instigation of Sookie’s attraction to this newly integrated minority. As has been discussed, Sookie is emotively conjoined to her vampires through a recognition that she, too, has been, for most of her life, treated with prejudice, avoided, and subjected to negative discrimination, and so is sympathetic to any fear and prejudice that the undead encounter. Sookie’s first-person narrative follows a psychological internalization of social oppression, initially manifested in self-rejection. Established from Sookie’s first introduction of herself, her narrative displays self-deprecation that can also be read as latent anger connected to her limited interdependent affiliations, which goes some way to explaining her speedy integration into the supernatural sub-culture inhabited by the vampires: for example, human bar patrons label Sookie as ‘crazy’, but to the vampire Eric she is ‘beautiful, ‘smart’, ‘loyal’, ‘brave’, ‘responsible and hardworking’.⁷¹ As a beautiful blonde with a telepathic ‘disability’, Sookie’s life in blink-and-you-miss-it Bon Temps rarely involves ‘good times’ but, where humans fear her, these vampires see her telepathy as a positive attribute, almost to the point of reducing her to a commodity. Human prejudice is thus countered by vampiric exploitation, with Sookie as the elastic form push-pulled by living and undead alike.

Vampires are the first of Harris’s supernatural beings to ‘mainstream’, the pretence succinctly described by Bill as ‘trying to live among humans.’⁷² Bill’s use of the verb ‘trying’ affirms the ambivalence of vampires’ recognition as legal citizens alongside humans – Harris’s undead are equally attempting to assimilate and tasting or sampling what benefits might be afforded by being known / recognized entities. This is initially mentioned when Bill takes Sookie to Fangtasia, a ‘vampire bar [...] located in a suburban shopping area of Shreveport’ where

⁷⁰ Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 1

⁷¹ Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 2; Harris ([2004] 2009), pp. 208-209

⁷² Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 114

humans go for the promise that all their 'bloody dreams come true'.⁷³ These 'bloody dreams' are an ideological exchange between the living and undead made material through the shared illusion that synthetic blood will satisfy vampires and keep humans safe, without which humans could never enter into the pretence that vampires will not see them as prey. Synthetic blood acts as a comfort blanket for a global human population who want to believe that they can enjoy all that vampires have to offer – titillation and a seemingly sanitized thrill – without risk. Recognizing the fallacy of non-violent vampirism, Sookie concedes, 'Bill's big thrill was when he drank from me. He might have a pretty steady diet of LifeFlow (the most popular marketing name for the synthetic blood) but nipping my neck was incomparably better.'⁷⁴ The human-vampire relationship between Meyer's Bella and Edward, discussed in the previous chapter, although initially based on Edward's attraction to the smell of Bella's blood, presents a sexually sanitized narrative excusing the sinister side of the undead. In contrast, the evolution of Harris's vampires into romantic, and romanticized characters does not rob them of their propensity for violence and violation, but adds a humanizing dimension, acknowledging the mutual arousal of a little light S&M:

He could drink some bottled A positive in front of a whole bar full of people, but if he planned on a mouthful of Sookie Stackhouse, we had better by golly be in private, the effect was that different. Bill didn't get any kind of erotic thrill from a wineglass of LifeFlow.⁷⁵

These are Dreams that incorporate the prosaic of 'bottled A positive' but equally integrate an 'erotic thrill' that is sanitized in Meyer's 'no sex before marriage' Dreams and, in doing so, create a more thought-provoking understanding of a hypothetical absorption of fantasy characters into the human arena.

In Harris's series, the frisson of fear found in erotic thrills is part of perceptions of monstrosity that, while they may be arousing, also address a wider unease at undead deviation from the human (living) norm – seen at its most tainted and

⁷³ Harris ([2001] 2009), pp. 1, 114; Charlaine Harris, *Dead as a Doornail* (London: Gollancz, [2005] 2009), p. 211

⁷⁴ Another, less imaginative brand name for synthetic blood is 'Red Stuff': Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 24; Harris ([2005] 2009), p. 40

⁷⁵ Harris ([2005] 2009), p. 40

corrosive in the KKK-like quasi-religiosity of the Fellowship of the Sun.⁷⁶ Although discussing Ball's televised adaptation of Harris's series, *True Blood*, Dale Hudson's suggestion that 'representations of interspecies relations [in fiction] conventionally hinge on assumptions that humans are exceptional—and, moreover, that "native-born Americans" (though seldom Native Americans) are exceptional humans' is pertinent to Harris's series.⁷⁷ What Hudson describes as 'interspecies relations' calls to mind the darkness in American history that stems from what Clay Risen discusses as the 'structures of racial order and domination that had held for almost a century' in the form of the Jim Crow segregation laws.⁷⁸ Addressed (in part) by the Civil Rights Act (1964), Jim Crow-inspired attitudes and behaviours can be seen in the use of racist dogma against Harris's vampire minority, with Sookie, as narrative authority, demonstrating an understanding of the hypocrisy of legally acknowledging vampires as a minority but not allowing that minority the same rights as their human counterparts, particularly in terms of sexuality.⁷⁹ Ball's transposition of Sookie and her supernatural friends and relations to television in his series *True Blood* – named after a brand of synthetic blood drunk by Harris's vampires – brings interesting alterations to the dynamic

⁷⁶ Harris's depiction of the Fellowship parallels understanding of the Ku Klux Klan in intimidation, violence, and bigotry towards vampires and those humans with whom they are associated: 'It was just like a Fellowship member to think that he could do something as nasty as torching my house—with me in it—and no one would question him. It wasn't the first time the Fellowship of the Sun, an anti-vampire hate group, had tried to burn me alive.' The Fellowship are described as 'a collection of bigots who were bound together by hatred and fear [...] an antivampire, antitolerance organization'. Readers are left in no doubt that the Fellowship of the Sun is a culturally toxic organization: 'The Fellowship kills vampires any way they can, thinks they're unholy and an abomination, and they're capable of anything': Harris ([2005] 2009), p. 117; Harris ([2006] 2009), p. 125; Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 121; This accords with descriptions of the KKK such as David Chalmers' who describes the Ku Klux Klan, started after the American Civil War, as 'a vigilante force' aiming to return 'the Negro to the field – just as long as he didn't do too well there', and for whom if 'intimidation was not sufficient, violence was used'. 'It's greatest selling point was the protection of traditional American values [...] found in the [...] communities of white, native-born, Anglo-Saxon Protestants'. Chalmers suggests that 'The very dynamics of the Klan organization [...] eventually created revulsion. The godly came to realize that the Klan was not. Terror went too far, the extremists ranted too loudly, and the leaders were too immoral. The [...] civic-minded came to realize what a divisive force it actually was': David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan*, 3rd edn (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press [1965] 2007), pp. 2, 4-5

⁷⁷ Dale Hudson, "'Of Course There Are Werewolves and Vampires": *True Blood* and the Right to Rights for Other Species', *American Quarterly*, 65, 3 (2013), 661-687, p. 661

⁷⁸ Clay Risen, *The Bill of the Century: The Epic Battle for the Civil Rights Act* (New York, London, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Press, 2014), p. 2

⁷⁹ Racial antagonism is a spectre in American culture to which discussion will return in section three

of Harris's series, and has been investigated in terms of such topics as class, ethics, gender, and commodification, but an in-depth discussion of this lies beyond the remit of this thesis. Following Hudson's conjecture, Harris's vampires can be understood as not only the newest minority, but as a threat to 'exceptional' human dominion. The vampiric possession of immortality and heightened physical abilities, alongside their alluring appearance, places them as transgressors of Hudson's perception of conventional fictional 'interspecies relations'. Harris's vampires act as agents for unpacking what Hudson goes on to describe as a 'preponderance of animalizing and sexualizing tropes used to debase, belittle, and humiliate particular groups in order to conquer and contain difference.'⁸⁰ Where, traditionally, folkloric and monstrous vampires might be considered as animalized and base, the vampires who inhabit Harris's America feature elements of this, but their super-humanity places them beyond human containment and, like Meyer's vampire family, pushing at the boundaries of what might be needed to attain the American Dream.⁸¹

As discussed in chapter three above, Meyer's vampire family present the apex of aspirational materialism – they are a dream trifecta of physical perfection, immortality, and billionaire-level wealth – but attempt to hide their supernatural condition to assimilate and uphold American Dreams. For Harris's vampires, there is no need to hide their undead status, and so they are in a unique position to exploit human interest for gain, both monetary and sanguinary. Vampires from Polidori's *Lord Ruthven*, Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, and Stoker's *Dracula* in the nineteenth century, to the suburban hordes in Matheson's *I Am Legend*, as well as the bringers of apocalypse discussed above in chapters one and two, all embrace parasitism as a monstrous occupation, either flying under the radar or in the face of official sanction. In contrast, Harris's vampires hide their monstrosity in plain sight. This has less to do with a desire to pass as humans, espoused by Meyer's Cullen family, and more to do with recognizing the greater freedom and rights

⁸⁰ Hudson (2013), p. 661

⁸¹ See chapter three for discussion of how vampire Dreams place the American idealization of physical perfection, youth, and an ability to accrue wealth as a fantasy that lies beyond humanity

they gain by coming ‘out of the coffin’, as already alluded to.⁸² It should be noted here that critical appraisals of Harris’s series and/or Alan Ball’s televised adaptation, such as Darren Elliott-Smith’s ‘The Homosexual Vampire as Metaphor for... the Homosexual Vampire?: *True Blood*, Homonormativity and Assimilation’, make connections with American cultural prejudices towards those who identify themselves as beyond the white heterosexual male norm, in this case LGBTQ+.⁸³ It is no coincidence that ‘coming out of the coffin’ closely models the phrase ‘coming out of the closet’, euphemistically used to denote those who declare as homosexual.⁸⁴ In *Dead Reckoning*, Sookie’s language creates a parallel between vampires and the vestiges of cultural confrontation, particularly from religious groups, in openly declaring oneself non-heterosexual:

There were still vampires who didn’t want to be known as vampires, odd as that seemed to me. It was easy to forget, in today’s vampire-saturated culture, that there were still holdouts, vampires who didn’t want to be known to the public in general, vampires who preferred to sleep in the earth or in abandoned buildings rather than in a house or apartment.⁸⁵

As Harris states in answer to the question, ‘As a married woman with three children who lives in small-town Arkansas, how did you get so interested in bisexual vampires?’ in an interview with Deborah Solomon (*New York Times*), ‘I think that people might be less tense about [“Gay rights”] if we would all accept the fact that not everyone is wired the same way.’⁸⁶ But, for Harris’s ‘not [...] wired the same way’ vampires, ‘coming out’, is motivated less by sexuality or what Jennifer Culver identifies as their wanting to ‘live *with* human beings’, and more by taking advantage of ‘crossing the boundary from myth to reality’ (although it also needs to be remembered that ‘reality’ is a uchronic fictional space only treated as such by its occupying characters).⁸⁷ Culver’s premise that Harris’s

⁸² Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 1

⁸³ Elliott-Smith, ed. by Cherry (2012), 139-154

⁸⁴ See Richard A. Spears, *Slang and Euphemism: A dictionary of oaths, curses, insults, ethnic slurs, sexual slang and metaphor, drug talk, college lingo, and related matters*, 3rd rev. edn (New York: Signet, [1982] 2001)

⁸⁵ Charlaine Harris, *Dead Reckoning* (London: Gollancz, [2011] 2012), pp. 160-161

⁸⁶ Deborah Solomon, ‘Once Bitten’, *New York Times Magazine*, 30 April 2010, p. 18

⁸⁷ Jennifer Culver, ‘Dressing Up and Playing Human’, in *True Blood and Philosophy: We Wanna Think Bad Things with You*, ed. by George A. Dunn and Rebecca Housel (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), p. 20

vampires are 'playing human' in their 'mainstreaming' may be better suited to Meyer's 'family' of vampires, who live a simulated human existence, whereas Harris's undead creatures have made a decision to materialize the myth as an aid to their persistence, and not because of any imperative to be considered human.⁸⁸ These vampires 'come out' not to conform to human patterning, but to assimilate 'as is' with a view to continuing the exploitation of humans long associated with vampires.

Sookie's narrative takes on a tone of sceptical acknowledgement towards the possibility of a more *mutual* exploitation between state and undead citizen, when the undead 'coming out' is linked to the fiscal as cultural dominant, but ultimately, her viewpoint is ambivalent. In *Living Dead in Dallas*, she proffers a brief appraisal of congressional justification for granting vampires citizenship:

I was uneasily aware that any vampire worth his salt could become wealthy; after all, when you can control the minds of humans to some extent, it's not that difficult to persuade them to part with money or stock tips or investment opportunities. And until vampires gained the legal right to exist, they hadn't had to pay taxes, see. Even the U.S. government had to admit it couldn't tax the dead. But if you gave them rights, Congress had figured, and gave them the vote, then you could obligate them into paying taxes.⁸⁹

Sookie's narrative displays a wariness of governmental process and, with it, an equivocation towards the undead which opposes that shown by Meyer's ingenuous narrator-heroine Bella, whose opinion of the Cullen family is permanently non-critical, despite their direct engagement with acts of brutality (see chapter three).⁹⁰ Here, Sookie's narrative is in line with contemporary public opinion of taxation discussed by Greg M. Shaw and Laura Gaffey – 'in the early 2000s, Americans became somewhat more reconciled with middle-class tax obligations' – the recognition and obligation to contribute to the nation's

⁸⁸ Culver, ed. by Dunn and Housel (2010), p. 20

⁸⁹ Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 24

⁹⁰ Despite Bella's narrative justification as necessary for her preservation, the Cullens do not hesitate to kill the vampire tracker James, summed up by Bella in one borderline blasé sentence: 'A vicious bass growling, a shocking snapping sound, and a high keening, suddenly breaking off [...] Emmett and Jasper took care of him': Meyer (2005), pp. 394-395, 401

economy are shown as conjoined states: with 'rights' come 'taxes'.⁹¹ Both Meyer's and Harris's central vampires are seen as capitalistic exploiters of 'insider' stock / investment trading and, thus, their criminality is overlooked in favour of their value as commodities. In line with Booth and Dunne's consideration of the United States' as 'one of the few countries to treat immigration as a resource rather than a burden', the citizenship granted to Harris's undead citizens suggests an understanding that *both* vampires and humans possess the desire for ever more material gain, recognizing it as a protective resource.⁹² From individual through to Congressional, the living and the undead are seemingly willing to manipulate or glamour to achieve their goals. Here, Sookie's focus on vampires 'controlling the minds of humans' is politicized, with the enfranchisement of the undead not only providing tax dollars for America but also positive propagandizing via an emphasis on acceptance through assimilation of difference.

Harris makes clear that America's acceptance of the undead as exploiting and exploitable citizens is, if not unique, unusual. Global intolerance towards vampires affects an enhancement of America's positive disposition towards them:

Some nations – France, Italy, and Germany were the most notable – refused to accept vampires as equal citizens. Many – like Bosnia, Argentina, and most of the African nations – denied any status to the vampires, and declared them fair game for any bounty hunter.⁹³

Judgement exists within these national groupings. There appears a direct correlation with national alliances with modern America: the less countries are contemporarily understood as culturally or politically aligned with the U.S., the less they are portrayed as tolerant of the undead by Harris, who positions America as a baseline of moral arbitration. While the U.S. vampires are not averse to 'letting' Japanese vampires show themselves first, whole continents are dismissed by Harris as intolerant:

The United States vampire community had let the Japanese vampire clans come forth first. Then, simultaneously, in most of the nations of the world that had television – and who doesn't these days? – the announcement had been

⁹¹ Greg M. Shaw and Laura Gaffey, 'The Polls – Trends American Public Opinion on Economic Inequality, Taxes, and Mobility: 1990-2011', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 76, 3 (2012), 576–596, p. 593

⁹² Booth and Dunne (2012), p. 95

⁹³ Harris ([2003] 2009), p. 5

made in hundreds of different languages, by hundreds of carefully picked personable vampires [...] Reaction varied sharply, depending on the nation [...] The vampires in the predominantly Islamic nations had fared the worst. You don't even want to know what happened to the undead spokesman in Syria, though perhaps the female vamp in Afghanistan died an even more horrible – and final – death [...] But America, England, Mexico, Canada, Japan, Switzerland, and the Scandinavian countries adopted a more tolerant attitude.⁹⁴

Harris shows a narrative affinity with a U.S. animosity towards Islamic nations in her choice of countries listed as where vampires 'fared the worst' and are 'denied any status'. This is concomitant with heightened hostilities between America and the countries that make up the greater Middle East, which began shortly after the end of the 'them and us' America versus the USSR dynamics of the Cold War in 1989. Starting with the Gulf War conflict of the early 1990s, these hostilities were brought to American soil in 2001 with the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Those countries accepted by a twenty-first century U.S. as political allies, such as 'England', Canada, and Mexico (as geographically sandwiching America, their inclusion suggests an avoidance of neighbourly animosity), and Japan and Switzerland (technological and financial powerhouses, respectively) are afforded the privilege of positive prejudice by Harris and portrayed as enlightened and liberal nations.⁹⁵

Consequently, despite 'Synthetic blood and grudging human acceptance', there exists a widespread prejudice – casual and active – suggestive not only of U.S. biases towards other nations, but also its human citizens' resistance to accept vampires as a new minority.⁹⁶ In his discussion of race in nineteenth century America, Jerrold E. Hogle notes that the image of African Americans 'combine[s] the attractive and the repulsive [...] familiar and the unfamiliar [...] in one symbol'.⁹⁷ Harris's humans display an ambivalence that transposes what Hogle suggests is, at best, an uncanny cultural incongruity of otherness to the White

⁹⁴ Harris ([2003] 2009), pp. 4-5, 5-6

⁹⁵ Although it is beyond the remit of this thesis, the conflation of 'England' and 'United Kingdom' in American referencing is noteworthy

⁹⁶ Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 81

⁹⁷ Jerrold E. Hogle, 'Teaching the African American Gothic: From its Multiple Sources to *Linden Hills* and *Beloved*', in *Approaches to Teaching Gothic Fiction: the British and American Traditions*, ed. by Diane Long Hoeveler and Tamar Heller (New York: Modern Languages Association of America, 2003), 215-22, p. 216

Anglo-Saxon Protestant dominant onto the treatment of these Gothic beings. Despite decades of amendments to U.S. equal opportunities laws, designed in theory to protect the rights of minorities inclusive of race, gender, religion, age, and even (effective from November 2009) genetic information, deviation from WASP cultural authority prompts hostile prejudicial treatment.⁹⁸ Despite being powerful immortals, minority citizenship for vampires places them in a culturally subject position, with suspicion and prejudice difficult to overcome: Sookie's assertion that 'part of the deal of becoming undead [was...] you were always in sway to your maker' lends an element of justification to the legal limitation of vampire rights within America.⁹⁹ In accepting that 'Vampires have studied humans for centuries, in the way predators learn as much as they can about their prey', Sookie recognizes the undead as historically and behaviourally distinct beings, and the wider wariness of them, if not the prejudices, as an understandable reaction.¹⁰⁰

Harris may grant her undead status as 'the legally recognized undead', but the fallacy that gaining citizenship marks the end of demarcation between vampires and humans is laid to rest by the lawyer character Hugo Ayres, who acts as a legal representative for the vampire Stan Davis. Ayres, whom Sookie brands a 'traitor', is shown as prone to poor judgement in becoming besotted, addicted to, and angry with the vampire Isabel.¹⁰¹ But it is his self-pitying remorse and attempted double agency between vampires and the Fellowship that not only mark him as dangerous, but also personify a modern America willing to publicly play post-9/11 victim whilst sanctioning covert tyranny and torture.¹⁰² Ayres's admission, 'I betrayed the human race when I took the side of the vampires in court', is a

⁹⁸ 'The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) Effective – November 21, 2009', <<http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/statutes/index.cfm>> [accessed 22 January 2015]

⁹⁹ Charlaine Harris, *All Together Dead* (London: Gollancz, [2007] 2009), p. 2

¹⁰⁰ Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 108

¹⁰¹ Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 137

¹⁰² Those most hostile to vampires, the evangelical members of the Fellowship of the Sun, despite their Christian background are far from averse to visiting both sin and crime upon anyone they deem as even associated with the undead. As Sookie surmises, 'It was just like a Fellowship member to think that he could do something as nasty as torching my house – with me in it – and no one would question him. It wasn't the first time the Fellowship of the Sun, an anti-vampire hate group, had tried to burn me alive': Harris ([2005] 2009), pp. 117-118

throwaway duplicity, his wounded pride leading to a wholesale betrayal – of Sookie, vampires, and self – to the Fellowship.¹⁰³ As reported by the BBC online in July 2014:

Among the proposed responses to the Senate report [on CIA torture of terror suspects] is a description of the US interrogation programme as a ‘mistake’ that the US must ‘acknowledge, learn from, and never repeat’.¹⁰⁴

This places the nation alongside Ayres as barely one step removed from resorting to the schoolyard declarations of ‘it wasn’t me’, and ‘I didn’t mean it’. Through betrayal of vampires to the Fellowship, Ayres is shown as selfish and immature as he disingenuously states a belief that their difference goes beyond human variations that also frequently induce animosity:

Vampires *aren't* American. They aren't *even* black or Asian or Indian. They aren't Rotarians or Baptists. They're all just plain vampires. That's their color and their religion and their nationality.¹⁰⁵

Such tub-thumping rhetoric identifies a persistent undercurrent that continues illegal positioning of non-white citizens as lesser than ‘ideal’.¹⁰⁶ Erring towards vacillation with a touch of sarcasm, Sookie reasons, ‘Well, that was what happened when a minority went underground for thousands of years.’¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, Ayres conforms to a strand of petrified nationalist bigotry in his construction of the undead as ‘un-American’, his words branding vampires as perpetual others and withstanding their legal adoption into citizens.

¹⁰³ See chapter six for a full account: Harris ([2002] 2009), p.137, 132-184

¹⁰⁴ ‘Leaked memo on CIA says “No American proud” of abuse’, 31 July, 2014, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-28589393>> [accessed 1 August 2014]

¹⁰⁵ Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 137

¹⁰⁶ As examples of what appears to be deeply prejudicial treatment of vulnerable humans, see Trump’s rolling back on the U.S. as welcoming of all in his attempts to bar immigration from the Middle East and deportation of ‘illegals’: ‘Donald J. Trump Statement on Preventing Muslim Immigration’, <<https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/donald-j.-trump-statement-on-preventing-muslim-immigration>> [accessed 4 February 2016]; Although Trump declared, ‘We’re getting gang members out, we’re getting drug lords out [...] We’re getting really bad dudes out of this country, and at a rate that nobody’s ever seen before’, Katie Shepherd’s report for the BBC suggest that, ‘According to figures provided by Ice, there were 18,378 removals in January. Mr Trump took office on 20 January. Of those, 9,580 had some type of criminal record, or about 52%’: Katie Shepherd, ‘Tales of Deportation in Trump’s America’, BBC News, 17 March 2017, <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-39295297>> [17 March 2017]

¹⁰⁷ Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 138

The rhetoric of hate adopted by Ayres is strongest amongst those characters connected with the Fellowship of the Sun, using Christian-like rhetoric, such as ‘Only Jesus Rose From the Dead’, to spread hatred of vampires.¹⁰⁸ At its zealous core is the human Steve Newlin. His hyperbolic language, when discoursing about the ‘vampire question’, talking of ‘bloodsucking’, and their ‘dark side’, functions similarly to the bigoted messages of racial segregation that have existed in America since the arrival of the first European settlers, made worse by slavery and social segregation, and against whom political activists such as Martin Luther King, Stokely Carmichael, and the Black Panther Party leader Huey Newton have rallied.¹⁰⁹ Carmichael’s denouncement of 1960s American social structuring as a ‘white power structure’ subordinating black people is an argument that, over fifty years later, permeates Harris’s portrayal of the Fellowship (the continuing existence of racial antagonisms will be returned to in section three, where intra-vampiric hostilities are racially motivated).¹¹⁰ Newlin’s scatological conflation of racial and religious prejudice – ‘they want to kill us all, dominate us with their foul ways and empty promises [...] God has a special corner for vampires who’ve used up humans like toilet tissue and then flushed’ – chimes with the racial intolerance that prompted the black civil rights movement and persists over half a century later.¹¹¹ As Michael Ezra suggests, ‘mass-action protests’ that brought together ‘black Americans’ and ‘clergy and their organizational structures’ in a fight for civil rights took hold in 1950s and ‘60s Southern states ‘because the South was where the majority of black Americans lived, and because it was where legalized segregation existed’.¹¹² Ezra’s discussion of the ‘long civil rights movement model’,

¹⁰⁸ Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 120

¹⁰⁹ Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 125

¹¹⁰ Stokely Carmichael and Charles V Hamilton *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967) in Donald W. White, *The American Century: The Rise and Decline of the United States as a World Power* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 331

¹¹¹ Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 126; Sookie’s disdain for Newlin and his Fellowship, in following the rhetoric of what Yohuru Williams labels the ‘popular civil rights master narrative’ of the 1950s and 60s, opens up associations with the racism and violence prevalent in both black (‘people of colour’) and white communities: Yohuru Williams, ‘“Some Abstract Thing Called Freedom”: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Legacy of the Black Panther Party’, *OAH Magazine of History*, 22, 3 (2008), 16-21, p. 16

¹¹² ‘Introduction’, *Civil Rights Movement: People and Perspectives*, ed. by Michael Ezra (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009), p. xiii

beginning in the 1930s, ‘takes into account black nationalism and understands that self-determination was as important a goal as integration’.¹¹³ Harris exploits the fear-based tropes that have affected the rise of and resistance to civil action for minority groups as an outline for the treatment of her vampires, resurrecting ideological binaries and transgressors within her small-town semiotic sphere.

Thus, the overall tone of this series is one that, whilst promoting tolerance, acknowledges that bigotry and fanaticism prevail: as Sookie reductively declares, ‘What the Klan was to African Americans, the Fellowship of the Sun was to vampires. It was the fastest-growing cult in America.’¹¹⁴ At the forefront of this intolerance, and anathema to Sookie’s moral position, the Fellowship is, as Mutch states, ‘organised on the lines of the US evangelical churches [...] using religious and militia tactics to maintain human dominance and to destroy the vampire.’¹¹⁵ Even in ‘Vampire central’ New Orleans, interest is balanced with an awareness of prejudice; of ‘what it [is] like to be a minority.’¹¹⁶ Not as dramatic as the near wholesale destruction of a recognizable America that is central to both Cronin’s and del Toro and Hogan’s series discussed in the Monsters section above, the integration of these vampires into U.S. culture nevertheless creates repercussions that prompt irrevocable change: once out of their coffins, vampires cannot be returned.

Alongside Harris’s appropriation of racist tropes, while not as overt a presence as it is in those texts discussed in the Monsters section, above, as with other American vampire-based works of fiction from this period, Harris’s series cannot help but be informed by the paranoia surrounding terrorism (more so when, by heading north, Sookie and various vampires put themselves in the way of modern dangers: see chapters ten to thirteen of book seven, *All Together Dead*, where the vampire hotel – ‘Silent Shore’ – is bombed). As part of this, while there are a token

¹¹³ Ezra (2009), p. xiii

¹¹⁴ Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 100

¹¹⁵ Deborah Mutch, ‘Coming Out of the Coffin: The Vampire and Transnationalism in the *Twilight* and Sookie Stackhouse Series’, *Critical Survey*, 23, 2 (2011), 75-90, p. 85

¹¹⁶ Harris ([2003] 2009), p. 4; Charlaine Harris, *Definitely Dead* (Gollancz: London, [2006] 2009), p. 239

number of African American characters, and even one Oriental vampire (Chow, Eric's vampire underling at his bar, *Fangtasia*), there is a distinct absence of both undead and humans who could be considered in any way 'Middle Eastern' in origin, and any mention connected to this region and its inhabitants, as a common enemy for bonding U.S. citizens necessary since Cold War hostilities officially ceased, is, as has already been touched upon, couched in negativity. Even in a series which is predominantly set in rural Louisiana, with an insular population, the post-9/11 'cultural demonization of people who "look Middle Eastern"' has been inculcated into 'the reigning American racial system', a system in which, particularly in Southern states, historical discriminatory patterning still reverberates through contemporary culture.¹¹⁷

This is all masked within a socially-acceptable vampiric exterior behind which, as already mentioned, the reader is given a privileged glimpse, courtesy of Sookie's narrative. Sookie, as sympathetic narrator-heroine, is initially characterized as Christian and liberal in her outlook but, as the series progresses, her ideological position is adjusted to one that is morally more oblique, governed less by Christian dogma and more by experiential practicality. Thus, within Harris's series, there exists a moral tension realized in Sookie's inner monologue:

I had lost some integrity, but for the life of me, I couldn't figure out what I could do differently. The more I tried to think about it, the more confused I got. I am not used to thinking through moral issues. Things are bad to do, or they aren't.

Well, there was a gray area.¹¹⁸

Taken as an individualized reflection of national identity, Sookie's moral equivocation suggests an undermining of America as 'the Heav'n rescued land'.¹¹⁹ Instead, Sookie acknowledges the 'gray area' inherent, but unchallenged, in self-deception and self-justification on either side of the divide between mortals and immortals. The wider context of her 'maunder[ing]' on the cruel justice dispensed by vampires induces equivocation: 'a mixture that was still uneasy after two years

¹¹⁷ Jeffrey Melnick (2009), *9/11 Culture* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2009), pp. 118-119

¹¹⁸ 'I couldn't marry Bill. It wasn't legal. But then, he hadn't asked me': Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 197

¹¹⁹ Francis Scott Key, *The Star Spangled Banner*, (1814), <<http://www.usa-flag-site.org/song-lyrics/star-spangled-banner.shtml>> [accessed on 10 November 2014] (l.27)

of legally recognized vampirism'.¹²⁰ Sookie speaks for both individual and a nation in her understanding that an overt inclusion of what is considered to be monstrous creates moral confusion. It is difficult to resist the 'seductiveness' of Dreams, both American and vampire, but turning down a permanent place in this vampire sub-culture marks the end of a negotiated journey of altered Dreams and identities that is guided by Sookie's interactions with the fantastic.¹²¹

Harris's fictional welcoming of vampires as contributors to a bolstering of the U.S. image as global politico-moral arbiter, demonstrates an impetus towards vampires as endorsement of American culture. They become constructions of a presence that is as non-threatening as possible for the human contingent of American citizens: they are prey as well as predators, accepted and persecuted. But this Dream is cited as an unconvincing propaganda tool: 'Being a vampire, it really can't be explained by an allergy to silver or garlic or sunlight... that's just so much bullshit the vampires are spreading around [...] so they can be more easily accepted'.¹²² Sookie may show narrative tolerance, but these creatures remain undead killers, for whom pity or care are anathema. Their metaphoric status as immortal entities draws upon enduring fears, desires, and power dynamics as a function of an ever-changing present. Through the assimilation of vampires into human culture, identities at all levels – from global through to individual – are destabilized, and the boundaries of assumed cultural norms are shown as subject to resistance.

Although part of a contemporaneously assimilated uchronic U.S., Harris's vampires and the fictional spaces they inhabit cannot escape the influences of America's past. Intolerances intrude upon Dreams. Where Meyer's family remain covert citizens as testament to potential hostility as known entities, Harris's vampires come 'out of the coffin' to meet a mixed response of tolerance, titillation and persecution.¹²³ It is the persecution of difference that leads this discussion into the final section, vampire Discords, where the undead face intra-vampiric

¹²⁰ Harris ([2002] 2009), p. 197

¹²¹ Hochschild (1995), p. 24

¹²² Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 281

¹²³ Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 1

persecutions that display more overt criticism of contemporary culture. No Dreams of welcoming assimilation of vampires as an 'ego boost' to national identity, Discords show the damage of culturally internal animosities that reflect upon an environment destabilized by racial tensions that can be traced back to America's foundations. Where Sookie's inclusive fantasy employs human-vampire parallels with racial antagonism to demonstrate the continuing existence of darkness within the Dreams, vampire Discords serve as intra-vampiric metaphors for the violations perpetrated as part of racial antagonisms. Section three investigates this sub-genre for its cultural questioning through vampiric ambiguity. Discordant undead are individualized antidotes to perceptions of vampiric monstrosity as well as the romanticized fallacious perfection of those vampire Dreams discussed in this section. The vampire narratives in section three highlight ambiguities, doubts, fears, and power dynamics that see them as equivalences to humanity rather than monstrous adversaries or unobtainable and deceptive Dreams.

Section Three:

Vampire Discords

Chapter Five:
‘Violating all the rules’:
Vampire Identity in Andrew J. Fox’s *Fat White Vampire Blues*¹

‘This is a country that has racism in its DNA’
(Reverend Jesse Jackson, *Channel Four News*)²

‘Black guys have been gettin’ the short end of the stick for a long time, since way before I was around [...] That’s the Song of the South, pal – oldest story around these parts’ (Jules Duchon, Andrew J. Fox’s *Fat White Vampire Blues*)³

‘Jules. You’re my goddamn mirror’ (Maureen Remoulade, Andrew J. Fox’s *Fat White Vampire Blues*)⁴

This discussion has, so far, looked at vampire Monsters as fantastic embodiments of the feared potential of terroristic and apocalyptic destruction, alongside vampire Dreams as embodiments of national aspirations as an antidote to the possibilities of fears and loss of power. Section one’s Monsters, born of the divine as well as human experimentation, challenge American culture with enemies from without *and* within. Section two’s Dreams endeavour to occlude nightmares, but evidence corruptions such as deceit and criminality. And, although elements of cultural and generic interrogation persist in Monsters and Dreams narratives, in this chapter and the next, focus moves on to the powers to disquiet and prompt generic and cultural questioning that dominate in vampire Discords.

¹ Andrew J. Fox, *Fat White Vampire Blues* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), p. 173

² Reverend Jesse Jackson in an interview with John Snow, discusses the shooting dead of Walter Lamer Scott by police officer Michael Slager in South Carolina: *Channel Four News*, Channel 4, 8 April 2015, 19.00; for further discussion of this, see ‘South Carolina police charged after black man shot dead’, 8 April 2015, *BBC News: US and Canada*, <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-32213482>> [accessed 8 April 2015]; ‘Charleston shooting: “Without the video there would be no truth”’, 8 April 2015, *BBC News: US and Canada*, <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/world-us-canada-32212959/charleston-shooting-without-the-video-there-would-be-no-truth>> [accessed 8 April 2015]

³ Fox (2003), p. 160

⁴ Fox (2003), p. 29

As has been argued throughout this thesis, twenty-first century variety in recent American vampire fiction has developed to signal the fears and power dynamics within the prevailing culture. Discords provoke probing of persistent cultural assumptions and prejudices through intra-vampiric rather than vampire-human antagonisms. Discords offer disquieting mirrors that, rather than narrating America as prevailing in the face of adversity or as home to desired excellences, show prevailing cultural problems and leave readers to draw inferences. Racial tensions have persisted since the birth of this nation, founded as it is on fears and power differentials exhibited in bloodshed, violence, and slavery (as touched on in section two above).⁵ Chief among discordances within American culture, racial tensions, therefore, dominate discussion in this last section. Consequently, the current chapter and the next focus on the engagement of U.S. vampires and their narratives with racial animosities either retained from or mirroring human existences, with both Fox's protagonist, Jules Duchon, and Octavia Butler's narrator/protagonist, Shori Matthews, shown as subject to racially-influenced persecution and violence.⁶

The effects of racism reverberate through modern U.S. vampire fiction, with racial tension a culturally endemic issue summarized by Reverend Jackson's statement used as an epigraph above: America has 'racism in its DNA'.⁷ Kirk

⁵ America, and predominantly Southern states (including New Orleans, Louisiana, the narrative setting for Fox's novel) has a history that, far from being 'conceived in liberty' was, as Peter Kolchin states, 'heavily dependent on coerced labor', carrying the unavoidable inequity of 'eight of the United States' first twelve Presidents [being...] slaveholders': Peter Kolchin, *American Slavery 1619 – 1877* (New York: Hill and Wang, [1993] 2003), p. 3; Referenced above in chapter three, Jim Cullen argues that, for America, 'national identity [...] itself [is] marked by a sense of uncertainty that may well be greater than ever before', containing monstrosities built on land appropriation, bloodshed, and slavery: Jim Cullen ([2003] 2004), p. 6; See also American novelist Charles Brockden Brown's statement in an 1803 address to the U.S. Government, 'Devoted to the worst miseries is that nation which harbours in its bosom a foreign race, brought [...] from their native lands who are bereaved of humanity' as an indicator of the discordance inherent within early modern American culture: Charles Brockden Brown, *An Address to the Government of the United States on the Cession of Louisiana to the French and on the Late Breach of Treaty by the Spaniards* (Philadelphia: John Conrad & Co., 1803), p. 73

⁶ In line with Fox's narrative referencing and that used in previous chapters, Jules Duchon will subsequently be referred to by his first name only

⁷ *Channel Four News*, Channel 4, 8 April 2015, 19.00; Having been born into segregationist America, Roger Bruns outlines Jackson's early political career as 'a follower and associate of civil rights leader, Martin Luther King Jr'. After King Jr's assassination in 1968, Bruns goes on to suggest

Savage, in an examination of American monuments (like vampire fiction, another cultural artefact that brings the past into the present), recognizes that:

America originated as a slave society, holding millions of Africans and their descendants in bondage, and remained so until a civil war took the lives of a half million soldiers, some once slaves themselves [...] Far from solving an ideological crisis, the abolition of slavery precipitated [...] a momentous struggle over the idea of race and the terms of citizenship in a nation supposedly dedicated to equality.⁸

Savage's understanding of America's 'momentous struggle' over ideas of race and equality is one that, as Jackson's comment suggests, is nationally ingrained. This chapter's focus on the participation of Fox's vampires and, in particular, his central protagonist Jules, in a continuing dialogue with racial inequities demonstrates that, half a century after the introduction of the Civil Rights Act, racial antagonisms and ambivalences persist as cultural challenges. As Savage implies, equality among America's citizens remains an un-obtained ideal (touched on in Harris's 'Sookie Stackhouse' series, where vampires, as America's newest minority, meet prejudice and maltreatment from groups such as the Fellowship of the Sun – see chapter four). Where Clay Risen's contention that the 'Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the most important piece of legislation passed by Congress in the twentieth century' and that it 'reached deep into the social fabric of the nation to refashion structures of racial order and domination that had held for almost a century' in the form of the Jim Crow segregation laws may be *legally* accurate, it does not take into account attitudes and behaviours of groups and individuals who continue to espouse racist dogma or, as Jules's case makes evident, lead existences that are beset by racial ambivalences.⁹ In both life and undeath, Jules is a white male resident of the predominantly black Ninth Ward

that 'Jackson emerged as [America's] most dynamic leader for racial justice': Roger Bruns, *Jesse Jackson: A Biography* (Westport, Connecticut, London: Greenwood Press, 2005), p. ix

⁸ Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-century America* (Princeton and Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 3-4

⁹ Clay Risen, *The Bill of the Century: The Epic Battle for the Civil Rights Act* (New York, London, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Press, 2014), p. 2

of New Orleans, preying on black victims but also subject to the victimization of 'colored vampire' Malice X.¹⁰

This dissonant and antagonistic relationship between Jules and Malice demonstrates the problematics of the prevailing racially unstable environment. The cartoonish stereotyping of Malice as a black character undermines a contextual drive for equality. In 2015, over a decade after the first publication of Fox's novel, President Barack Obama addressed a continuing lack of racial equality in the U.S.: 'it's not just a matter of it not being polite to say nigger in public [...] Societies don't, overnight, completely erase everything that happened 200 to 300 years prior'.¹¹ As Deena Zaru reported for CNN, Obama's 'jarring comment comes as the nation is engaged in a debate over the role of race after a white supremacist killed nine African-Americans last week [17 June 2015] in a historically black church in Charleston.'¹² Obama's comments may well be perceived as 'jarring', forcing both sides of the racist equation to face their fears but Teasley and Ikard suggest:

Barack Obama's [...] presidency has engendered a new [...] feeling of optimism across race, class, and gender lines and pressed many of us to reassess, if not overhaul, our basic assumptions about the ways that 'race matters' in the 21st century.¹³

However, five years on from their prediction that many would 'reassess' their relationship to 'race matters', Teasley and Ikard reflect on their optimism as time-specific and a short-lived blip as racial tensions have, once again, become more culturally prominent. As they go on to acknowledge, America has not yet reached a post-racial condition: 'we have a significant way yet to go and on

¹⁰ In line with referencing to Jules Duchon, Malice X will subsequently be referred to by his first name only; Jules summarizes his affinity to place as part of his bargaining with Malice over their preying on humans: 'There's no way in hell I'm leavin' New Orleans. I was born here back when William McKinley was president. This town's in my blood. That's Number One. Two: A vampire in this town can't expect to make any kinda decent livin' preying on white victims only. The way I see things, vampires is vampires and victims is victims, no matter what color they are': Fox (2003), pp. 21, 246

¹¹ Deena Zaru, 'Obama uses N-word, says we are 'not cured' of racism', <<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/06/22/politics/barack-obama-n-word-race-relations-marc-maron-interview/index.html>> [accessed 3 July 2015]

¹² Deena Zaru [accessed 3 July 2015]

¹³ Martell Teasley and David Ikard, 'Barack Obama and the Politics of Race: The Myth of Postracism in America', *Journal of Black Studies*, 40, 3 (2010), 411-425, p. 412

multiple socio-economic fronts before we can actualize true racial transcendence'.¹⁴ It is this open-ended racially tense and ambivalent cultural atmosphere that Fox exploits within a narrative that offers no clear understandings of either Jules or Malice, instead the narrative is a unsettling mirror for the cultural dominance of racial antagonisms, with no overt condemnation or redemption for either character.

More so than the apocalypse of vampire Monsters or the romanticized fantasy of vampire Dreams, Fox's undead (and Butler's discussed in the next chapter) reflect a United States whose citizens harbour disharmonies and dysfunctions, regardless of legislation. Where vampire Monsters fantastically embody and magnify to apocalyptic levels prevailing overarching fears, as well as present a means of *human* triumph (even if, often, only temporarily), the fears and prejudiced power dynamics that accompany vampire Discords draw attention to cultural inconsistencies and ambiguities that lie outside of the 'them and us' binaries traditionally associated with the human-vampire relationship. Although they are not openly assimilated into American society, as are Harris's vampire Dreams (see chapter four), Fox's undead are (or were) American citizens and, as such, embody cultural tensions that involve twentieth-century pre- and post-segregationist attitudes, bringing this nation's past into its present as vampire Discords, mimicking intra-human antagonisms in fantastic form: the victimization *of* vampires *by* vampires.

Fox's vampires therefore exist in a setting that has been shaped by segregation and the violence and unrest that paved the way for the introduction of America's Civil Rights Act in 1964. These events form a background to explore the central animosity between Fox's protagonist, Jules, and his 'younger, sharper black vampire antagonist', Malice.¹⁵ As products of New Orleans culture, a gateway

¹⁴ Teasley and Ikard (2010), p. 413

¹⁵ Fox says of his character, Malice X, 'I decided to satirize the city's racial and class divisions by bringing in a younger, sharper black vampire antagonist for Jules (allowing me to toss in loving references to the *Blacula* films)': Andrew J. Fox, 'The Secret Origin of Jules Duchon, Vampire! Or, How Jules Duchon, New Orleans Bloodsucker, Got So Darn Fat', <<http://www.fantasticalandrewfox.com/articles/the-secret-origin-of-jules-duchon-vampire-or-how-jules-duchon-new-orleans-bloodsucker-got-so-darn-fat/>> [accessed 25 June 2015]

city shaped by the assimilation of many foreign cultures – including European, African, Caribbean and Creole – these vampires are fantastic mirrors of what Helen Taylor suggests of southern culture itself: it is ‘a hybrid, the products of black and white [...] a living process of “call and response”’ (call and response setting up a dialogic connection that not only suggests a reference to the musical ‘blues’ influence on Fox’s protagonist but also of the narrative exchange between Jules and Malice).¹⁶ Within the localized demesne of New Orleans’ Ninth Ward, the ‘call and response’ behaviour of Jules and Malice contains myriad shades of grey, with Jules’s attitudes and interactions – as the pivotal point of this chapter’s investigation of genre and context in vampiric Discords – demonstrating on an individualized level that, despite enfranchisement for all citizens and a regularly updated Civil Rights Act, American culture still houses ambivalences and antagonisms concerning race.¹⁷

Fox presents Jules as a vampire whose immortal existence is governed not by the more generically traditional attributes of confidence (verging on arrogance) and authority but by personal fears and insecurities, his vampiric powers undermined by cowardice and ineptitude. Jules reflects Robert M. Gordon’s argument that fear and power dynamics are driven by the immortality of what ‘is (or was, or will be)’: he is an individualized ‘is’ governed by what ‘was’ and determined by beliefs of what ‘will be’.¹⁸ Through Jules’s character, Fox redirects what is contextually problematic towards the rhetorically exaggerated symbolic form of vampirism. A reproducing of prevailing fears and repressions within Fox’s fantastically farcical narrative ‘safety valve’ offers a release of tensions, stage-managing racial

¹⁶ Helen Taylor, *Circling Dixie: Contemporary Southern Culture through a Transatlantic Lens* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2001), p. 23; Fox states of his vampire’s interest in Blues music, ‘Of course, Jules had to be a big music fan [...] New Orleans music has always been the one force that brings all the city’s races, classes, and ethnic groups together (visit any Jazz Fest to see what I’m talking about)’: Fox, [accessed 25 June 2015]

¹⁷ For a historical understanding of the effects of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, see the Library of Congress articles under ‘The Civil Rights Act of 1964: A Long Struggle for Freedom’, <<https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civil-rights-act/civil-rights-act-of-1964.html>> [accessed 25 June 2015]; see also, ‘Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964’, <https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/crt/legacy/2010/12/15/Title_VII_Statute.pdf> [accessed 25 June 2015]

¹⁸ Robert M. Gordon, ‘Fear’, *The Philosophical Review*, 89, 4 (1980), 560-578, p. 560

antagonisms through darkly comedic exaggerations of humanity.¹⁹ Here, Fox's protagonist is a vampire who, while incorporating many of the traditional vampiric tropes, such as shape-shifting and hypnotism, is often risible, shown as a hypochondriac (he believes he has type two diabetes), self-pitying, and regularly narrow-minded, even allowing his prejudice to impede the proffered assistance of his friends: for example, despite Rory 'Doodlebug' Richelieu (turned by Jules to act as a sidekick during World War II, to which discussion returns below) 'putting everything on hold' to help, Jules remains vehemently '*ashamed*' to be 'the one who made him a vampire', considering Doodlebug a 'little deviant' for being transgender.²⁰ Therefore, despite being Fox's protagonist, for much of the novel, Jules is an unattractive character; a trait shared with vampire Monsters, and therefore not unique within this genre. But what makes Jules different to the Monsters discussed in section one is also what makes him less-than-attractive: a humanizing fallibility.

So, as a vampire Discord, Jules is a combination of tradition and novelty, through whom generic and contextual 'norms' and biases can be challenged. Where Butler's vampire protagonist Shori (see chapter six) interrogates antagonisms surrounding hybridity (she is a genetically-engineered vampire, who appears to be a young black female), Jules's vampirism – as a white male vampire, he should conform to a generic dominant – is problematized because of his own attitudinal ambivalences. Jules's vacillations put him at the vanguard of a tradition that evolves to continue fantastically negotiating what it means to be a part of modern America. Views and opinions expressed by Jules contain dichotomies that bring forward into the twenty-first century ambivalences that incorporate twentieth century segregationist and white supremacist arguments that were prevalent during his formative years. For example, Jules's ambivalence includes principally preying on black (female) victims, as mentioned, alongside adhering to what he has been conditioned to believe is an undead governing rule – to '*never, ever creat[e] a colored vampire*' – as well as being characterized as loyal

¹⁹ For further discussion of the fantastic, see Todorov, 'Chapter Five: Discourses of the Fantastic', trans. by Howard (1973), pp. 75-90

²⁰ Fox (2003), pp. 129, 131

to African American (human) friends, including fellow cabbie John Xavier Erato and jazz musician Porkchop Chambonne.²¹

Jules is, therefore, a non-standard vampire (if, indeed, there might be considered a 'standard' within vampire fiction), with the generically traditional 'White Vampire' bookended by the unconventionality of Jules's association with both 'Fat' and 'Blues' marking him not as an antitrope but as a variant. Turning briefly to Jules's size, his characterization as a 'Fat' vampire is negatively greeted by his maker and one-time vampire lover Maureen Remoulade, who bemoans he is a 'goddamn mirror' for what she does not wish to see of herself (in line with many Americans in the early twenty-first century).²² Although Jules's size can only be touched upon here, physically, his obesity is representative of American consumerism taken to excess (while an appropriate term for humans, 'morbidly obese' seems somewhat redundant for a member of the undead). Jules's size symbolizes the dark side of a nation built on and driven by an imperative to consume, becoming a site for contesting generic norms. Beginning his undead existence as might be expected - tall, slim, charismatic – his circumstances draw attention to the problematic rise in obesity among America's adult human population, recently measured at nearly thirty-five per cent.²³ However, his obesity is not the focus of this discussion of contextual relevance despite it being an interesting departure from the generic prevalence of slimline vampires.

²¹ Fox (2003), p. 21; Despite the depiction of Jules as ambivalent towards race – although not quite the clichéd 'some of my best friends are black', Jules has a close relationship with fellow cab driver Erato and black jazz musician Porkchop, whose 'trumpet lead[s] the band into the opening bars of a new song of his own composition: "The Fat White Vampire Blues"', the final piece of music to fill Jules's ears at the end of the story – Malice is drawn as a racially clichéd foe: as previously mentioned, he is a drug dealer and gang leader: Fox (2003), p. 334

²² Maureen is described by Fox as a 'fantastic vision from an antediluvian, pre-Weight Watchers world, a fertility goddess who'd be worshiped by a tribe of blue-eyed albinos': Andrew J. Fox (2003), p. 29; As an interesting aside, Remoulade is a type of mayonnaise-based sauce, often spiced with things such as mustard and capers: see 'New Orleans Oyster Po Boy with Remoulade', *Louisiana Kitchen and Culture*, <<https://louisiana.kitchenandculture.com/recipes/new-orleans-oyster-po-boy-remoulade>> [accessed 14 April 2018]

²³ 'In 2011-2012, the prevalence of obesity in the United States was [...] 34.9% in adults': Cynthia L. Ogden, Margaret D. Carroll, Brian K. Kit, Katherine M. Flegal (2014), <<http://jama.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1832542>> [accessed 27 June 2015]; For further information and statistics, see the CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, <<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/index.html>> [accessed 27 June 2015]

Although an aid to his predation, his appearance inspiring reactions that range from disgust to pity but rarely fear, as well as assisting his final overcoming of Malice, Jules's large mass enables him to eventually renounce blood drinking to transform into a more benevolent colony of 'White rats. Dozens and dozens of them; 187 in all.'²⁴ After overcoming his enemy, Jules transforms into a mass of rats in order to stay in New Orleans and, in doing so, goes from alpha predator to omega scavenger, still scary to many but no longer a haematophagous threat. Fox's vampire confronts what is expected from America's undead; he may not be attractive or imposing, but he has a closer affiliation to fellow Americans because of it.

The other bookend – and feeding into the racial tensions that are a primary area of focus in this chapter – that defines Jules's vampirism is the 'Blues', a musical form strongly associated with African Americans, that acts as a leitmotif for Jules's persecution and for what is seen by the vampire antagonist, Malice, as a white misappropriation of culture, place, and people. However, just like Malice, during his existences as human and vampire, Jules has been tied to New Orleans, which is identified by Daphne Spain as 'one of the oldest slave trading centers in the country', and with its 'predominantly black and working-class population', as Rachel Breunlin and Helen A. Regis propose, New Orleans culture is dominated by music and dance that is born from a history of colonialism and slavery, 'of suffering but also of longing for freedom'.²⁵ In line with Fox's depiction of Jules's existence, Breunlin and Regis cite New Orleans as 'a metaphor for poverty, race, and neglect' so, although their discussion is centred on the effects of Hurricane Katrina, which struck New Orleans in August 2005 (two years after Fox's first publication of *Fat White Vampire Blues*), many of the problems of poverty and race exacerbated by this catastrophe are prefigured in this story on an individualized scale.²⁶ As Breunlin and Regis make clear in their discussion of

²⁴ Fox (2003), p. 333

²⁵ Daphne Spain, 'Race Relations and Residential Segregation in New Orleans: Two Centuries of Paradox', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 441 (1979), 82-96, p. 82; Rachel Breunlin and Helen A. Regis, 'Putting the Ninth Ward on the Map: Race, Place, and Transformation in Desire, New Orleans', *American Anthropologist*, 108, 4 (2006), 744-764, p. 746

²⁶ Breunlin and Regis (2006), p. 748

Katrina's after-effects, deprivation was dogging areas such as the Ninth Ward (home to Jules) of New Orleans long before this hurricane's devastation brought the city's racial tensions and inequalities to wider attention.²⁷

Jules's appropriation of what Clyde Woods cites as the 'blues tradition of investigation and interpretation' may correspond to the remit of discordant challenge to genre and context but, as 'one of the central institutions of African American life', Fox's inclusion of this musical motif creates a thematic irony to his white protagonist's frequent self-pity and hypocrisy: as Francis Davis proposes, in discussing the history of the blues, 'American life bulges with ironies, one of which is that the music of a people regarded as worthless except as cheap labor could turn out to be this nation's source music'.²⁸ Despite Jules's musical appreciation – 'As long as music like this endured, New Orleans would always be heaven for Jules Duchon' – his 'blues' are, as mentioned, part of a cultural appropriation that marks his character as divisive from the outset; a subjective expression of persecution that Fox 'ironically' associates with his status as a *White Vampire*.²⁹ As Woods argues of the blues, it is 'actively engaged in providing brutal confrontations with the "truths" of working-class African American life' and, as such, it may be misappropriated by Jules to speak of his miseries but it also becomes part of Malice's 'brutal confrontation' with this white vampire's predation of the local African American populace.³⁰ Woods explains of the blues tradition, it is:

a unique intellectual movement that emerged among desperate African American communities in the midst of the ashes of the Civil War, Emancipation, and the overthrow of Reconstruction. It was used to confront the daily efforts of plantation powers to erase African American leadership and the memory of social progress [...] The blues and its extensions are

²⁷ See 'Poverty Facts The Population of Poverty USA', which states that, by 2014, Americans in poverty numbered forty-seven million, or fifteen percent of the population, but the figure rise to twenty-six percent among African Americans, showing the continuing presence of racial inequality: 'Poverty Facts The Population of Poverty USA', <<http://www.povertyusa.org/the-state-of-poverty/poverty-facts/>> [accessed 28 June 2016]

²⁸ Francis Davis, *The History of the Blues: The Roots, the Music, the People* (Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press, [1995] 2003), p. 13; Clyde Woods, 'Do You Know What It Means to Miss New Orleans?: Katrina, Trap Economics, and the Rebirth of the Blues', *American Quarterly*, 57, 4 (2005), 1005-1018, p. 1008

²⁹ Fox (2003), p. 141

³⁰ Woods (2005), p. 1008

actively engaged in providing intellectually brutal confrontations with the 'truths' of working-class African American life.³¹

In relating the blues to the pivotal points of cultural conflict such as the 'Civil War, Emancipation, and the overthrow of Reconstruction' and the attempted erasure of 'African American leadership', alongside the modern catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina, which dispossessed whole neighbourhoods and exacerbated the economic deprivation of many poor black citizens of New Orleans in 2005, Woods links this music to a persistence of twentieth-century social unrest – driven by racial discrimination and ongoing antagonisms – into the twenty-first century.³²

Although the title of this chapter, 'violating all the rules', suggests a radical form of vampirism, Jules's discordancy is not a generic negation, but rather part of a melodic interplay that repurposes the notes available to create dissonant elements within a wider generic score. In his depiction of Jules, Fox appropriates many of the tropes of the blues musical genre, such as woefulness, persecution, and liberation, in a confrontation of generic expectations. Fox's vampires' challenges to race carry with them revenant links to America's pre-Civil Rights past, and to a genre where, as previous chapters have made apparent, its foremost vampires, often either monstrous or attractive, are predominantly white.

Before examining the generic assimilations present in *Fat White Vampire Blues*, for those unfamiliar with this story, it revolves around an intra-vampiric animosity and victimization of Jules by Malice: '[Jules's] whole world had been turned on its head, transformed into an evil, brutal, twisted mirror image of itself. [...] Once the proud, skillful [sic] hunter, now he found himself the hunted.'³³ Using a string of adjectives traditionally reserved for predators – 'evil, brutal,

³¹ Woods (2005), p. 1008

³² For recent examples of the debate surrounding race crime see 'Charleston shooting: Obama's evolving language on race', <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-33209047>> [accessed 18 July 2015]; 'Charleston reverend: Racial attacks "modern day lynchings"', <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-33214626>> [accessed 18 July 2015]; 'Charleston shooting: Who are US white supremacists?', <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-33198061>> [accessed 18 July 2015]

³³ Fox (2003), p. 73

twisted' – Fox highlights the ambiguities surrounding Jules's victimization: as the focalized narrative suggests, Jules's considers himself to have 'Once [been] the proud, skillful [sic] hunter'.³⁴ In a story dominated by a breaking of generic 'rules' in its racial ambivalence and equivocality, Jules's persecution turns vampirism 'on its head': as the 'white' to Malice's 'black', he is an indefinite 'twisted mirror' to the fears and power dynamics inherent within the exploitations, inequalities, and persecutions that have continued into twenty-first century U.S. culture.

In common with more overtly monstrous vampires, Jules's vampire is not conceived to inspire sympathy: even accounts of his murdering humans for their blood are laced with absurdities, such as being sedated by the laughing gas in the blood of one of his victims.³⁵ Jules goes on to learn how to enhance his vampiric skills through the teaching and friendship of the transgender vampire Doodlebug who, although it is outside the remit of this discussion, it is worth noting is described as female in appearance but referred to using the masculine pronouns, he/his/him, veering towards a transphobic prejudicial subdominant in Jules's blues.

Despite being Fox's central protagonist, Jules's appearance, actions, and attitudes arouse scorn as his 'delicate, whitish complexion that women had made such a fuss about during his younger days' is replaced: 'Now he looked more like the Pillsbury Doughboy.'³⁶ As already alluded to, this vampire's obesity reflects the extremes of both genre and context as his consumption of human life acts as a metaphor for the monstrous aberration of the 'epidemic' of over-consumption tainting modern America. The opposite of Meyer's wealthy and 'perfect' vampiric models discussed in chapter three, Jules makes a meagre living as a cab driver but his car doubles as a predatory tool, adapted with the means to trap and drain his human food supply.³⁷ Jules's consumption also includes his long-

³⁴ Fox (2003), p. 73

³⁵ See chapter four: Fox (2003), pp. 51-59

³⁶ Fox (2003), p. 2

³⁷ Although beyond the remit of this discussion, Jules's behaviour bears a link to Meyer's *Twilight* and the Cullen's vegetarianism as part of an antithesis to vampiric predation of humans: 'Jules sighed. "I been there, Father. Believe me. Been there and tried that. Way back in World War One, right after I became a vampire, I tried doin' the patriotic thing and not munch on my fellow

standing interest in and connections to the local blues music scene, as already discussed, which incorporates a large collection of rare vinyl records. Alongside his vinyl collection, Jules also owns a similarly expansive range of superhero comic books.

Inspired by comic book characters such as ‘Captain America and Bucky. Batman and Robin. The Sandman and Sandy’ during World War II, Jules becomes obsessed with using his vampirism for patriotic means, donning a costume, pseudonym and sidekick to become ‘The Hooded Terror and . . . Doodlebug’: ‘When Pearl Harbor was bombed and Jules heard President Roosevelt’s stirring declaration of war on the radio, the young vampire had felt a powerful urge to serve his country.’³⁸ However, once war is over and Doodlebug leaves, Jules lacks purpose and drifts, becoming obese and apathetic. It takes the racially linked threat extended by Malice to galvanize him: ‘You stick to your kind—that’s white folks, now, not black folks—and me an’ my brothers stick to our kind’.³⁹ Despite the obvious fact that both are vampires and, therefore, the same ‘kind’, Malice’s targeting of Jules shows the continuance of divisive attitudes and antipathies present in their earlier, human, existences. Malice approaches Jules’s choice of food source as an extension of white cultural dominance addressable by coercion (on an individual level, containing the same ‘might is right’ viewpoint that dominates the vampire Monsters narratives of section one): ‘If niggas gonna get fanged, then *niggas* is gonna do the *fangin’* [...] *That*, my friend, is the way it’s gonna *be*.’⁴⁰ He is not interested in brokering any form of truce, wanting Jules properly dead. Malice’s exhibition of antagonism towards Jules is not a straightforward reversal of the contentious racial segregation laws that governed

Americans. Instead, I put the bite on anything I could get my hands on – stray dogs and cats, mules, even a dairy cow once. I found out it’s like tryin’ to live on water and crackers – boy, did I feel like shit after a while. Later on, after Pearl Harbor, I tried the same thing again. Thought maybe I’d tolerate it better, since I’d been a vampire longer. No such luck. But I found a better way to be a good American – the docks and factories were teemin’ with fifth columnists, filthy spies and saboteurs... I ate good during the war.’” Also, the psychology of Fox’s vampire displays distinctly emotionally arrested development (most notably, he is still in his childhood home and collecting comics) alongside his vampiric halting of the aging process, warrants further examination: Fox (2003), p. 278

³⁸ Fox (2003), pp. 44-45

³⁹ Fox (2003), p. 22

⁴⁰ Fox (2003), p. 22

U.S. culture for most of the twentieth century: while he warns Jules not to prey on black victims, he continues to do so, alongside exploiting humans more generally by addicting them to a drug he invents and calls 'Horse X'.⁴¹ Malice's actions are therefore governed by ambiguities just as Jules's are, with his antagonisms driven as much by envy and perceived rivalry as by racial antipathy towards Jules as embodiment of historical exploitation of African Americans: he has literally grown fat on the 'fangin' of 'niggas'.

In his attempts to thwart Malice, Jules gains an ersatz 'family' – 'vampire wolf-dog' puppies he fathers with a stray bitch who, as with the best *deus ex machinas*, return to help Jules defeat his foe – and learns enhanced vampiric abilities from Doodlebug. He also has a disastrous attempt to raise a vampire army from twenty-three human attendees of a white supremacist rally, and awkward sexual encounters with Veronika, a secret agent for the Strategic Helium Reserve (think X-Files with plus-size agents), who has an arsenal of vampire killing equipment that includes false breasts that fire wooden stakes (more Austin Powers than 007).⁴² Eventually, Jules learns how to be a more effective vampire, defeats Malice (with the help of his puppies, as mentioned), and 'skitter[s] toward the music and darkness' as a colony of white rats, enabling him to fulfil his promise not to kill humans, made to a Catholic priest whilst bodily 'smoking' in a church confessional, as well as to stay in New Orleans.⁴³

From the opening lines, the influence of place prevails: 'Jules Duchon was a real New Orleans vampire. Born and bred in the working-class Ninth Ward, bitten in and smitten with the Big Easy.'⁴⁴ The Ninth Ward has long-term issues surrounding poverty: as 'one of the few remaining low rent areas' of New Orleans, it is '90 percent black and has some of the city's highest unemployment, illiteracy, and poverty rates.'⁴⁵ This is echoed by Jules's attempted justification of his 'food choice': 'more than three-quarters of the people who live here are

⁴¹ Fox (2003), p. 199

⁴² See chapter fourteen: Fox (2003), pp. 231-244

⁴³ Fox (2003), pp. 276, 334

⁴⁴ Fox (2003), p. 1

⁴⁵ Spain (1979), p. 91

blacks. Almost every poor person, every down-and-outer in town is, y'know, black.'⁴⁶ The Ninth Ward, with its predominantly African American population, serves to highlight continuing U.S. social division based on skin colour, with African Americans equated here with poverty and homelessness, a position that Malice aspires to surmount, his ambitions for money-making in contrast with Jules's apathy. Living in an area of deprivation, Jules can be understood as representative of the minority of New Orleans 'white trash' and, as such, the antithesis of Dracula's European aristocratic form that first introduces vampires into American popular culture. In an examination of this derogatory term, Matt Wray describes 'white trash' as a 'stigmatizing stereotype' that reveals 'fundamental tensions' within American culture, equating to an unwillingness to see the 'white male dominant' made ridiculous by poverty.⁴⁷ Fox's plot involves many of these tensions, with his supernatural protagonist risibly reduced from powerful predator to abject prey, the object of retained human prejudices. As suggested in Fox's title, Jules is a 'white' vampire living in a neighbourhood that is predominantly home to African Americans; instantly an oddity and persecuted for his difference to, as well as predation of, the localized racial dominant.

Having outlined Fox's tale and his central characters, their core identifiers and behaviours, discussion will return to Jules as both subject to and perpetrator of racial antagonisms but now it turns to *Fat White Vampire Blues* as a narrative that is home to a discordant relationship with generic identifiers present within vampire fiction, interpreting known typologies through a dissonant lens. Fox's protagonist vampire encompasses familiar undead tropes introduced in *Dracula*, such as coffin dwelling, shape-shifting, and hypnotism, alongside less traditional elements such as coffee drinking, obesity, and 'undifferentiated proto-matter' formed when shifting into smaller forms, as part of a narrative in which racial antagonism is a leading theme.⁴⁸ Alongside the connection to *Dracula* shared by many works of modern American vampire fiction (ranging the spectrum from

⁴⁶ Fox (2003), p. 23

⁴⁷ Matt Wray, *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 2

⁴⁸ Fox (2003), p. 204

positive to negative), Fox's New Orleans' semiotic space integrates aspects of Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*. And it is to Fox's narrative integration of these generic dominants that discussion now turns.

'for Varney's sake!': Generic Participation with a Little Bit of Violation⁴⁹

Jules's peculiarity as a vampire is acknowledged as part of a wryly toned narrative, that holds a discordancy that can both question and embrace what it is to be a member of America's undead: 'Who knew *what* the rules were when a vampire was involved?'⁵⁰ Fox's vampire is not revolutionary – he obeys many widely understood tropes such as haematophagy and sleeping in a coffin containing native soil, but his character highlights ambiguities that lie at the core of the American vampire genre on an individual level. What this fantastic being does in 'violating all the rules' (as much as they can be violated in a genre that has such plastic parameters) of vampiric identity, is offer up a generic mirror that disturbs rather than displaces expectations of vampirism. From the first line, Fox plays with generic understanding: Jules might be a 'real New Orleans vampire', but he also 'barely fit[s] behind the steering wheel of his very big Cadillac taxicab [...] with the bench seat pushed all the way back', and displays a risible hypochondria in his concern that he is 'coming down with diabetes'.⁵¹ Jules is, as already alluded to, a self-centred hypochondriac who, despite his vampirism, is firmly associated with the human population of New Orleans, portrayed in a newspaper clipping he has as the 'Fattest City in [the] Nation': 'Half the population of New Orleans over the age of forty had [diabetes], and Jules was well past forty.'⁵² This is a vampire who, according to generic tradition, should be powerful and intimidating but is, instead, often ineffectual and absurd.

⁴⁹ *Varney the Vampire or the Feast of Blood* was a Victorian 'Penny Dreadful' serialization by James Malcolm Rhymer (1845-1847). Here, Fox has his vampires use 'Varney' as a knowing form of blasphemous expletive, and an intertextual mock-deification of the American vampire genre's European pre-history: 'praying to Varney and Jesus and Moses and Mary and any other deity he could think of': Fox (2003), pp. 32, 69

⁵⁰ Fox (2003), p. 325

⁵¹ Fox (2003), p. 1

⁵² Fox (2003), p. 1

Following what can be considered a *de rigueur* patterning of Dracula as the progenitive figure within American vampire fiction, much of what makes Jules a vampire can be traced directly to American traditions begun with Lugosi's cinematic portrayal of Stoker's Count, such as sleeping in a coffin and shape-shifting.⁵³ Many of the traits that identify Fox's vampires as part of an undead continuum are dismissed by Doodlebug as part of 'the petrified forest of European legends' – fixed, rigid, and anathema to the supposed liberality of modern America.⁵⁴ As he explains to Jules, generic conventions pose limitations:

Oh, I used to swim in vampire lore. *Weird Tales*, comic books, movies—*Dracula's Daughter*, *Son of Dracula*, *Mark of the Vampire* – I saw them all. By the time I met you, I knew perfectly well what to expect [...] Vampires sleep in coffins. They need to drink blood every couple of nights or so. They can change into three other forms—bat, wolf, and mist. So when I became one myself, I only tried doing those things I already believed vampires were capable of. I was limited by what I thought I knew.⁵⁵

The metafictionality of Doodlebug's self-analysis reflects upon assumptions of the genre as a whole and prevailing tropes formed in Lugosi's portrayal of Dracula, which are expanded upon in the fictions he notes, including *Dracula* sequels, alongside expected attributes he lists, such as transmutation into 'bat, wolf, and mist'. In his self-limitation through expectation there exists an

⁵³ Stoker's *Dracula*, as source material for the prime within modern American vampirism, has also been investigated as a racial trope: for example, see Stephen D. Arata, 'The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization', in Stoker, Bram *Dracula*, ed. by Auerbach, Nina and Skal, David J. (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 1997), pp.462-470 (first publ. in *Victorian Studies*, 22, 4 (1990), 627-34); *Draculas, Vampires, and Other Undead Forms: Essays on Gender, Race, and Culture*, ed. by John Edgar Browning, Caroline Joan (Kay) Picart (Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, New York, Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press, 2009); Steven Jay Schneider, 'Mixed Blood Couples: Monsters and Miscegenation in U.S. Horror Cinema', in *The Gothic Other: Racial and Social Constructions in the Literary Imagination*, ed. by Ruth Bienstock Anolik and Douglas L. Howard (Jefferson, North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, 2004), pp. 72-89

⁵⁴ Although Fox's vampires adhere to many of the assumed 'rules' such as sleeping in coffins, shape-shifting, and blood ingestion, the ossified solidity of 'petrified legends' contrasts with Jules as an amorously plump and soft entity: Fox (2003), p. 207

⁵⁵ Fox (2003), p. 207; This acknowledgement of vampirism within popular fiction echoes the thought processes of Cronin's human character Richards as he ruminates on the basis of belief in the undead: 'As a kid Richards had read his share of such stories, not just the comic books – *Tales from the Crypt* and *Dark Shadows* and all the rest – but the original Bram Stoker, and seen the movies too. A bunch of silliness and bad sex, he knew that even then, and yet wasn't there something about them that struck a deep chord of recognition, even of memory? The teeth, the blood hunger, the immortal union with darkness – what if these things weren't fantasy but recollection or even instinct, a feeling etched over eons into human DNA, of some dark power that lay within the human animal? A power that could be reactivated, refined, brought under control?': Justin Cronin, *The Passage* (London: Orion, 2010), p. 86

understanding that the validity of conformity to perceived norms warrants questioning. Through such blatant intertextuality, Fox's tale embraces vampiric traditions in conjunction with recognizing the need for a continuing evolution of form. Yes, Jules sleeps in a coffin of sorts – he needs a 'grand-piano case' to contain his bulk – he drinks blood, and shape-shifts, but his size, behaviour and attitude drain the potential of dread and awe more traditionally associated with the undead.⁵⁶ As Doodlebug identifies, petrification plays no part in the modern American vampire genre, and – as a transgender vampire taught by Tibetan monks who abstain from all blood – Doodlebug is a conduit for expanding the understanding of vampirism for protagonist and reader alike.⁵⁷ While Jules possesses traits that place him on the generic margins, principally his obesity and race-related ambivalence, it is Doodlebug's explaining and training that expand this vampire's self-awareness. Using a combination of faith – 'what we can do as vampires is all a mind-over-matter kinda thing' – and (pseudo-)science – 'mass can be converted to energy, but mass can never simply disappear' – Doodlebug voices an attempt to make plausible the vampiric shape-shifting process so central to both Stoker's and Browning's *Dracula*.⁵⁸ Taken as a metaphor for the fluid nature of this genre, Doodlebug teaches Jules that it is possible for vampires to adopt any form less than or equal to their original mass. Doodlebug's use of science, in the form of a bastardizing of Einstein's 'Conservation of Mass' follows a long-standing inclusion of scientific language to lend credibility to fantastic vampiric attributes that again goes back to the principle source of American vampire lore, Stoker's *Dracula*. Van Helsing and his Crew of Light use contemporary scientific advances to both understand and combat vampirism, as does Neville when faced with vampire foes in Matheson's *I Am Legend* (discussed

⁵⁶ Fox (2003), p. 175

⁵⁷ Contemporary to Fox, see Charlie Huston's 'Joe Pitt' series where the 'Enclave' clan deny themselves blood for spiritual reward; Fox and Huston's 'Joe Pitt' series introduce vampire factions modelled on Tibetan monks, but the level of narrative positivity shown to Doodlebug as a transgender vampire is not paralleled in Huston's series, where the vampire Sela is described as 'a pre-op tranny a huge chick with a dick, shoulders and tits the size of bowling balls': Charlie Huston, *Already Dead* (London: Orbit, [2005] 2008), p. 229

⁵⁸ Fox (2003), pp. 207, 204

above in relation to vampire Monsters).⁵⁹ As with these earlier uses of ‘science’, discrepancies in Fox’s explanation overlook that Einstein’s special relativity was just that –*relative* interconnectivity between mass and energy. What is proposed by Doodlebug is a fantastic variant on the closed system: bodies – human or vampire – cannot be considered ‘closed’, and so what is presented must be taken as a simplification. Disbelief is suspended in favour of a basic understanding that mass, if within a truly closed system, remains a constant, and any residual mass somehow transfers to a vampire’s coffin until needed.⁶⁰ And so, much of what typifies Jules et al. as figures of discordancy also serves to assimilate the traditionally vampiric as a necessary component of a thriving form: the ‘450 pounds of Grade-A, USDA-choice vampire’ that should undermine Jules’s vampire credentials becomes the means of his salvation, gaining him puppy offspring, victory over his antagonist, and a rat-shaped freedom of the city of New Orleans.⁶¹

As the character locus for this chapter, how Fox’s novel interconnects with the generic network is predicated on Jules. Physically, Jules is a rarity among American vampires, if not among its citizens, in being obese.⁶² In placing

⁵⁹ Fox (2003), p. 204; Einstein’s law regarding the Conservation of Mass is briefly summarized as: ‘matter can be changed from one form into another, mixtures can be separated or made, and pure substances can be decomposed, but the total amount of mass remains constant’: Elizabeth Rogers, Iris Stovall, Loretta Jones, Ruth Chabay, Elizabeth Kean, and Stanley Smith, ‘The Law of Conservation of Mass’, <<http://www.chem.wisc.edu/deptfiles/genchem/sstutorial/Text1/Tx14/tx14.html>> [accessed 7 August 2015]

⁶⁰ Einstein’s theory does not separate the conservation of mass and energy. Where ‘common experience is of bodies moving with velocities very much less than c [in this instance, Fox’s vampires...] $m = m_0$, and the mass does not appear to vary.’ This only pertains to the observable, rather than sub-atomic, which transference of shape such as that undertaken by Fox’s vampires would embrace: Wendy Brown, Terry Emery, Martin Gregory, Roger Hackett, Colin Yates, in *Advanced Physics*, ed. by Jonathan Ling (Harlow: Longman Group, 1995), p. 97

⁶¹ Fox (2003), p. 298

⁶² Obesity amongst vampire characters can be seen in British author Kim Newman’s finale to his 1992 novel, *Anno Dracula*, with the progenitor of modern U.S. vampirism, Dracula, as ‘massive as a commemorative statue, his enormously bloated face a rich red under withered grey’: Kim Newman, *Anno Dracula* (New York: Avon Books, [1992] 1994), p. 390; An American obese vampire predecessor is Pearl, the flatulent minor character from director Stephen Norrington’s 1998 film *Blade*; And subsequent to Fox’s *Fat White Vampire*, Adam Rex’s YA novel *Fat Vampire: A Never Coming of Age Story* features Doug, a teenage protagonist who shares Jules’s self-pity, but is obese before becoming a vampire in line with the generically traditional state of stasis: ‘I’m a vampire! I’m a fat vampire [...] I was trying to lose weight before I got bitten. Now I’m screwed’: Adam Rex, *Fat Vampire: A Never Coming of Age Story* (New York: Balzer + Bray, 2010), p. 7

corpulence as a fundamental part of Jules's characterization, Fox demonstrates an undead evolutionary attention to context. Contemporary excessive consumption (briefly discussed above) is a taboo reflected in Jules's radical form, with Fox's vampire divergent to generic preferences for lean, and even gaunt, undead beings. Jules's appearance, as suggested, carries forward Dracula's veiled monstrosity but, where Dracula uses his imposing aristocratic mien to entice victims, Jules's size acts as a decoy. Within the first chapter, Jules is shown to follow generic norms in his deliberate intent to take human life, if not in its execution, finding a suitable victim, lulling her into a false sense of security, draining her, destroying her brain stem, and disposing of her body.⁶³ Where Lugosi's portrayal of Dracula's commanding and aristocratic vampire is 'fascinating' to Frances Dade's Lucy, who is portrayed as greedy for the possibility of wealth and a title, Jules's first victim, Bessie, is guided by (more necessitous) material appetite, risking the company of a stranger for the promise of an 'oyster po' boy and all the fixin's' and a bed for the night.⁶⁴ Jules may not be monstrously terrifying and imposing, or an attractive dream, but his very ordinariness bordering on the comically repulsive is as much an effective predatory attribute as Dracula's aristocratic arrogance.

Fox maintains further vampiric attributes established by Stoker's Dracula and Lugosi's portrayal of him, such as a lack of reflection (when performing her burlesque act, Maureen dances with the mirrors covered '[be]cause it'd freak out the clientele to not see [her] reflected in any of those mirrors, right?'), extreme photosensitivity (as *our* shadows, they are confined to *the* shadows, the areas where our fears and darker desires preside), shape-shifting, and a lack of resistance to Christian symbolism.⁶⁵ Fox parodies instances such as Dracula's thwarting by Christian symbols and sacraments to the point where he cowers as

⁶³ Fox (2003), pp. 6-13

⁶⁴ *Dracula* (1931), 00.25.45; Fox (2003), p. 3

⁶⁵ When Jules enters a Catholic church to seek absolution, he starts to feel negative effects: 'The church was air-conditioned; still, Jules felt like a king cake baking inside a McKenzie's Pastry Shoppe oven. Sweat coursed down every square inch of his body, but it failed to cool his burning skin. The stale air inside the [confessional] booth was soon clouded with white, oily smoke': Fox (2003), pp. 29, 275

Van Helsing and his Crew of Light advance on him with crucifixes portraying, for example, Jules's reminiscence about the change from mass said in Latin to English as 'merely caus[ing] him to be violently sick to his stomach, instead of making his skin smoke and his hair catch fire.'⁶⁶ All remind readers that the American vampire genre, which began with *Dracula*, continues to be coloured by this understanding regardless of undead diversification.

In perverting *Dracula's* progenitory form, Fox uses the vampiric arsenal as and when it suits. Like all other vampires, Jules mostly uses his supernatural abilities to selfish ends but, as part of his rehabilitation and overcoming of his perceived victimization, learns how to be a more effective and less venal vampire. These skills are, as previously mentioned, honed through the tutelage of Doodlebug. Unlike Butler's amnesiac vampire protagonist (discussed in chapter six), Jules's situation cannot be attributed to lost memory, his ignorance more to do with isolation and lack of confidence (a knock-on from his human existence as a culturally peripheral figure – in life, he was a poor, white mummy's boy in a predominantly black neighbourhood). Fox's use of Jules, as an incongruous figure, challenges and expands upon vampiric tropes associated with those *Monsters and Dreams* examined above. Here, vampirism draws tradition into farce, with Jules a parody of generically-inspired expectations:

Jules thought bat-thoughts. His old familiar body, with which he'd shared a decades-long love-hate relationship, melted away [...] He tested his wings, beating them tentatively against the stubborn pull of gravity. No dice [...] his bat-form was still too obese to become airborne under its own power. Why? Why couldn't he become a thin bat?⁶⁷

The uncertainty in Jules's thinking and testing of the familiarity of his body ends in a repeated whining 'why?' In response to the generic 'pull of gravity' that prompts Jules to assume he is unable to be a valid vampire, Doodlebug becomes a physical incarnation of the self-improvement manual, supporting and encouraging his old friend:

⁶⁶ 'The Count [...] cowered, as we, lifting our crucifixes, advanced': Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. 247; Fox (2003), p. 14

⁶⁷ Fox (2003), p. 213

I don't believe your other bodies have to be fat and slow at all. I think you create them that way out of habit. I think that, somewhere along the road, you got used to the notion of Jules Duchon as obese and clumsy, and you got comfortable with that. I think your wolf-belly drags the ground because you believe it should, and that your bat can't fly because you believe it shouldn't.⁶⁸

Through Doodlebug, Jules's personal insecurities are questioned, with a repeated 'I think', 'you' and 'your' emphasizing the need for Jules to develop undead self-mastery. Doodlebug takes on the psychological tone of a self-help guru, offering betterment alongside a denigration of Jules's self-invented 'obese and clumsy [...] and comfortable' beliefs in a confronting of generic 'rules' of undead transformation, blending genre and context to ratify this variant of vampirism.⁶⁹

Although Fox's generic incorporation of Dracula is strongly evidenced, his choice of New Orleans as semiotic space owes an understanding of vampiric place to a popularizing of New Orleans as an American vampiric magnet.⁷⁰ For this, Fox is indebted to Rice (as discussed in chapter four, where Harris's vampire Harlen Ives is excited to vacation in New Orleans as 'a mecca for [vampires]').⁷¹ Environment plays a pivotal role in the formation of this genre, with the South, and New Orleans in particular, like the discordant vampires examined here, representing a cultural difference that authors such as Rice and Brite have integrated into their narratives. In his analysis of America's southern states in a documentary series for BBC2, Reginald D. Hunter – an American expatriate born and raised in the southern state of Georgia – suggests of New Orleans: it is the 'most un-American American city [...] and America is better for it'⁷² There remain tensions and idiosyncrasies in this area of the U.S. that are a part of its historical complexities: part of what Andrei Codrescu suggests are a trifecta of historic commodifications, slavery is reduced to sitting alongside rum and sugar as

⁶⁸ Fox (2003), p. 264

⁶⁹ Fox (2003), p. 264

⁷⁰ As Jules somewhat unromantically avows of New Orleans, 'this old town's a part of me, like my fingernails or the calluses on the bottoms of my feet': Fox (2003), p. 108

⁷¹ Harris ([2001] 2009), p. 191

⁷² *Reginald D. Hunter's Song of the South*, BBC 2, 7 March 2015, 22.00

central to the early 'development of New Orleans', but Codrescu's discussion of a modern, post-hurricane Katrina redevelopment of New Orleans places the city as 'a window into the complexity of [...] race relations' where its 'power structure' shows an ongoing 'segregat[ion] by race and [...] neighborhood'.⁷³ With 'un-ness' built into Jules's vampiric liminality, Fox's undead narrative is a source of exploring and questioning, echoing what Hunter suggests of New Orleans: the wider genre being 'better for it'.

As with Fox's interpretations of *Dracula*, his use of New Orleans as a narrative space raises generic contrasts. Where Rice's New Orleans incorporates a degree of degeneracy that speaks of a population drawn to the corrupt and perverse – 'There was something forever savage and primitive there' – Fox's New Orleans Ninth Ward is home to an environmental degeneration evidenced in Jules's hurricane battered house, with its 'riverward tilt' of 'at least ten degrees' set within a neighbourhood of 'weed-strewn lots and graffiti-covered, termite-eaten shotgun houses'.⁷⁴ As is made plain, Jules's character is strongly determined by place: 'The [Mississippi] river [...] Midwestern mud, fertilizer runoff, toxic discharges from chemical plants [...] were in his blood'.⁷⁵ Fox continues a romanticizing of dereliction and degradation that positions the New Orleans of both authors as drawing on the same Southern Gothic tropes of the 'macabre', 'violent', and decayed that can be seen as influential in Harris's 'Sookie Stackhouse' series discussed in chapter four.⁷⁶

Beyond the adherence to New Orleans as a narrative space for both Fox's and Rice's characters, Jules displays a self-reflection and self-pity that can be seen in Rice's central narrative voice of Louis. It might be assumed Jules's negative

⁷³ Andrei Codrescu, 'New Orleans: A Lecture', *Callaloo*, American Tragedy: New Orleans under Water, 29, 4, (2006), 1098-1102, pp. 1100, 1099

⁷⁴ Fox (2003), p. 16

⁷⁵ Anne Rice, *Interview with the Vampire* (New York, London: Time Warner, [1976] 2006), p. 219; Fox (2003), pp. 17, 59; Also prior to Fox, Poppy Z. Brite uses New Orleans as a backdrop to her vampires' actions, describing it as a place of tawdry commercialism: 'gaudy [...] posters [...] racks of postcards [...] T-shirts, bars [...] fireworks [...] air [...] thick with smoke and liquor-breath and river-mist [and...] the sleazy lights of Bourbon Street': Poppy Z. Brite, *Lost Souls* (London, New York: Penguin, [1992] 1994), p. 6

⁷⁶ Punter and Byron (2004), pp. 116-117

attributes, such as obesity and hypochondria, would place him beyond generic plausibility and interconnectivity with characters such as Rice's Louis but, as argued above, rather than antithetical, he is an exaggerative form. Like Louis, Jules's narrative arc is dominated by a desire to change, to be something other than a killer of humans: 'Jules felt a desperate, burning [being inside a church, the pun is intended] need for—what? Forgiveness? Absolution? Redemption, maybe? Whatever this nebulous but powerful need was, he knew that he felt scared, abandoned, sick of being who he was.'⁷⁷ Jules is an unappealing exaggeration of the self-reflection of the earlier more glamorous, Byronic, and romanticized New Orleans resident, Rice's Louis who, as his name – de Pointe du Lac – suggests, might also be undermined as a glamorous entity when considered as a little 'wet'.⁷⁸ When his ennui is challenged by an anonymous interviewer – 'that's what it is, isn't it? Despair?' – Louis's response displays a fatalism similar to Jules's: where Louis states 'it could not have ended any other way', Jules's 'heart [sinks] lower and lower [...] the only way this war [with Malice] could go down was dirty and personal.'⁷⁹ However, this is where Louis's narrative reaches a conclusion, but for Fox's vampire this is the apex of a narrative arc that leads to the thwarting of Malice and a means to remain in New Orleans.

While this chapter, as with the others, investigates Fox's vampire narrative for its reflection of and upon generic antecedents, particularly iterations of Dracula, his vampires, again in line with the others discussed here, act as culturally interpretive tools – here, Fox's narrative is directed by racially-centred tensions. As another palimpsestic modification of vampiric modelling, Fox's novel assimilates specific intra-cultural perceptions surrounding fear and power dynamics associated with race-related patterning as an insidiously inbuilt undermining of America's role as global moral arbiter.

⁷⁷ Fox (2003), p. 275

⁷⁸ As an ironic aside, like Jules, Byron's excesses caused him to struggle with weight issues. Stephan Rössner unkindly describes Byron as 'a fat boy with a limp', whose diet and exercise regime included extreme physical activity, strange food combinations such as 'mashed potato spiced with vinegar and pepper', and bulimic vomiting: Stephan Rössner, 'Stephan's Corner: Lord Byron', *Obesity Review*, 14 (2013), 263-264, p.263

⁷⁹ Rice ([1976] 2006), p. 364; Fox (2003), p. 186

'I'm a white guy. He's a black guy. He resents me for it.': Race, Identity, and Alienation⁸⁰

Central to a narrative that is dominated by the questionable point-of-view of Jules as a (Fat) White Vampire is, as already argued, his problematic relationship to race. Stephan Palmié, in an investigation of the links between genomics and social identity, maintains that:

'race' has simply not gone away [...] in the United States, disparities in health, wealth, and social inclusion among 'racially defined' populations have widened [...] in the post-civil rights era, in the process eroding [...] the credibility of the idea of a 'raceless' meritocratic society.⁸¹

Fox's narrative demonstration of continuing 'disparities [...] among "racially defined" populations' plays on a lack of cultural evolution towards a cohesive structure within American culture. Despite ongoing legal addressing through updating of the Civil Rights Act countering Palmié's suggestion of a modern 'post-civil rights era', a frustration of assumptions of 'raceless' meritocracy is central to the depiction of Jules, whose cultural 'superiority of a straight white male identity' is challenged by Malice, as foil to Fox's flawed 'hero'.⁸² Despite his non-traditional traits, as the 'straight white male' narrative hegemon, Jules is shown to triumph, and even be delivered from the harms of vampiric excesses by no longer subsisting on human blood (as Stoker's Dracula did, he transforms into a colony of rats, but stays in this form, described by Doodlebug in Fox's sequel, *Bride of the Fat White Vampire*, as conforming to a more benign framework: 'unshackled [...] from his blood-lust. He's found a way to live in this world and enjoy the things he loves without harming another soul').⁸³ Thus, as the title quotation of this sub-section ('I'm a white guy. He's a black guy. He resents me for it') suggests, inter-racial antipathies persist: despite over half a century since the introduction of America's Civil Rights Act, there remains a need to challenge inequalities and injustices, but Fox makes little attempt to liberate Malice's

⁸⁰ Fox (2003), p. 160

⁸¹ Stephan Palmié, 'Genomics, Divination, "Racecraft"', *American Ethnologist*, 34, 2 (2007), 205-222, pp. 205-206

⁸² Benshoff (2000), p. 32

⁸³ Benshoff (2000), p. 32; Andrew J. Fox, *Bride of the Fat White Vampire* (New York, Toronto: Ballantine Books, 2004), p. 25

character from a 'white guy [...] black guy' dialogic that disquietingly mirrors an America that still harbours racial divides.⁸⁴

As with Palmié's investigation of the inherent problems within a biotechnological approach to race, whereby 'the geneticization of "race" [...] will in all likelihood only provide an alternative (if powerful) ideological technos for dehistoricizing and obscuring the social relations that "race" conceals', Teasley and Ikard's exploration of what they deem the 'myth' of post-racism in America identifies that:

in U.S. policy formation, it becomes imperative [to...] challenge and reject, if necessary, postracial thinking that romanticizes self-determination or ignores [...] rocky historical legacy of racial inequities in the United States.⁸⁵

In its vampiric reflection of cultural instabilities, *Fat White Vampire Blues* follows the remit of these arguments, placing racial tensions as thematically central to plot but doing little to address the need for challenging the 'rocky historical legacy of racial inequities in the United States'.⁸⁶ The interaction between Malice and Jules draws the 'legacy of racial inequities' into the vampire genre through

⁸⁴ Fox (2003), p. 160; One such forum for challenging racial inequalities and injustices is Color of Change, an online platform that seeks American unity 'behind a simple, powerful pledge: we will do all we can to make sure all Americans are represented, served, and protected - regardless of race or class.' This campaign group speak of a continuing blight within American culture, with them seeking to redress problems such as the actions of white supremacists, segregation in employment, and policing and prison-based racial bias. Color of Change started after the catastrophic damage caused by Hurricane Katrina displaced a predominantly black local population, and the New Orleans Department of Housing and Urban Development opted to 'bulldoze 4.500 units of affordable public housing' when many were in need: <www.colorofchange.org/campaigns/new-orleans-housing/> [accessed 1 August 2015]; <www.colorofchange.org/campaigns> [accessed 1 August 2015]; 'About Color of Change', <www.colorofchange.org/about> [accessed 1 August 2015]; Jules's understanding of the racial power dynamics between him and Malice continues the narrative ambivalence and suggests it is somehow an unalterable cultural state: 'Black guys have been gettin' the short end of the stick for a long time, since way before I was around. You [Doodlebug] and me both remember the Jim Crow days here in New Orleans, so those days weren't so far back. I'm a white guy. He's a black guy. He resents me for it. That's the Song of the South, pal – oldest story around these parts. Case closed': Fox (2003), p. 160

⁸⁵ Palmié (2007), p. 215; Teasley and Ikard (2010), p. 416

⁸⁶ Teasley and Ikard (2010), p. 416; The 'myth' of a post-racial culture is made evident in news stories that continue to show unfavourable prejudicial behaviour towards African Americans: for example, see BBC online news reports such as 'Ferguson anniversary: State of emergency declared as dozens arrested', <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-33858353>> [accessed 11 August 2015]; 'The damning report that made Ferguson's police chief quit', <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-31849421>> [accessed 13 March 2015]; 'Selma to Montgomery: Is the US justice system racist?', <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-31742999>> [accessed 6 March 2015]

the use of hackneyed animosities such as Jules's knee-jerk use of White supremacists as part of his ambiguous connection to the racial antagonisms that continue to shape U.S. culture: '*Who could be better for me to recruit than nutcases who already hate black folks?*' However, not only does Fox show Jules as ideologically disinterested in these extremists (seldom is anyone admired referred to as a 'nutcase') – 'Jules had never given Nathan Knight and his followers much thought' – but he also dilutes the divisiveness of such hate groups by reducing their significance to less than a filling meal (unlike his African American victims): 'He'd always been too concerned about where his next meal was coming from to pay any attention'.⁸⁷ When turned into vampires and told they are Jules's new army, recruited to rid New Orleans of a '*foul plague of [...] Negro vampirism*', these white supremacists' response further undermines what are the historically damaging effects of movements such as the Ku Klux Klan whose 'terror' Allen W. Trelease cites as having 'colored nearly every aspect of Southern life and politics' since the 1860s.⁸⁸ Such an insidious form of culturally internal terror directly aimed at African Americans is reduced by Fox to little more than a group of self-interested and lazy far-right Republicans: 'You ... want us... to go back to that cesspool of miscegenation and niggrism? After we spent half our lives making enough money to get the hell away from there? [...] Fuck New Orleans!'⁸⁹ Having moved away from the Ninth Ward of New Orleans, these 'white supremacists' generalize the entire city as an abject space, with the impurity of bodily waste conflated with 'niggrism' and 'miscegenation'.⁹⁰ Antipathy gives way to apathy. Fox's brief inclusion of white supremacism ends in the slapstick image of the attendees of the meeting coming to a sticky end – 'twenty-three newborn vampires [are] reduced to twenty-three puddles of

⁸⁷ Fox (2003), p. 110

⁸⁸ Allen W. Trelease, *White Terror: the Ku Klux Klan Conspiracy and Southern Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press [1971] 1995), p. xii

⁸⁹ Fox (2003), p. 167

⁹⁰ Miscegenation is a contentious term created in the 1860s and a bolster to American laws that positioned 'interracial marriage' as illegal and 'unnatural', whereby 'conceptions of race' provide a 'framework of white supremacy' that has continued to affect legal and cultural determinants 'into the 1960s' and, as Fox's white supremacists show, continues to persist as a misused and misunderstood cultural undercurrent: Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 2

smoking, bubbling goo' after being tricked into drinking their own blood by Doodlebug.⁹¹ And so, while Jules's narrative arc assimilates aspects of white male cultural dominance, as previously suggested, the admixture of racially motivated viewpoints in Fox's tale leaves his protagonist as an ambivalent figure.

In focusing this part of the thesis on Jules's race-related interactions, particularly in terms of identity, alienation and ambivalence, a microcosmic echoing on a localized and individualized level of large scale 'racial inequities' such as segregation and misappropriation becomes apparent in this twenty-first century reflection of American history.⁹² Jules's apparent position as a 'white trash' male living in a district of New Orleans that is predominantly populated by underprivileged African Americans is a central challenge to his position as protagonist: despite his own hardships, he is 'resented', his whiteness marking him as different to localized norms and a magnet for animosities. Unpacking the phrase 'white trash', and separating it into its two components, as Wray does in his examination of this divisive term (touched on earlier in this chapter), reinforces Jules's position as part of a web of cultural inequalities which Wray cites as a shorthand for 'deep structural antinomies'; a paradoxical conjunction of 'purity and impurity'.⁹³ While outwardly appearing to adhere to Wray's definition of 'white trash', Jules does not fit neatly into this categorization, generally used to denote 'poor, ignorant, racist whites': yes, he's poor, yes, he displays elements of ignorance (see Jules's intolerant attitude towards Doodlebug's transgender status), but his 'racism' is not clear-cut, ranging between reverence and friendship for African American jazz musicians and attempting to use white supremacists to create an 'army of two hundred white supremacist vampires [who] would make Malice X shit his skintight leather pants'.⁹⁴ Wray's expansion of the term 'white trash' also represents it as a

⁹¹ Fox (2003), p. 168

⁹² Jules's identity rests on his position as a stigmatized marginal figure and the inherent generic problem of being a vampire trying to 'live' amongst humans, which is overcome by Laurell K. Hamilton in her 'Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter' series – 1993 to present – and by Harris, who has her vampires 'come out of the coffin' – see chapter four – with both authors offering readers uchronic parallels to contemporary America in which vampires are shown as 'real'

⁹³ Wray (2006), p. 2

⁹⁴ Wray (2006), p. 1; Fox (2003), p. 115

'disturbing liminality', 'a monstrous, transgressive identity [...] a dangerous threshold state of being' that 'threatens the symbolic and social order' and 'evoke[s] strong emotions of contempt, anger, and disgust' and, as such, shares much with the generic location of vampiric Discords, and of Jules in particular.⁹⁵ As a vampire hiding in plain sight, Jules is a threat to the social order, preying on humans, eliciting derision from those ignorant of his supernatural abilities, and often antipathy and antagonism in those who know.⁹⁶ In paralleling human deviation from what might be considered as normative within U.S. culture (he is far from any suburban 'Stepford' ideal), Jules embodies a disturbing liminality: an unwelcome reminder of imperfections within American culture, he is an unwanted aberration. Jules is an abject being: his rejection as white trash *and* as a vampire raises generic oppositions. He is not 'white' enough to be accepted by the more traditional '*Caucasian, pale-skinned*' 'High Krewe of Vlad Tepes' (an exclusive gated community of white vampires who keep and farm mentally disabled humans for their blood), but white enough for the synecdochal warning to keep '*out of Africa*' and 'stop fangin' black folks' made by Malice.⁹⁷ His victimization is thus part of a 'threshold state' distinct to his apparent conformity to 'white trash' identifiers: as a white male vampire, Jules might be expected to be a dominant figure like Krauss, Katz, and Besthoff, the leaders of the High Krewe, but in conjunction with other traits, such as his size and poverty, Jules is opened to 'contempt, anger, and disgust' from those who share his skin tone as well as those who do not.⁹⁸

Jules's simplistic summary of his relationship to Malice – 'I'm a white guy. He's a black guy. He resents me for it' – gives a binarized impression to the problems surrounding racial tensions within modern America (which shares similarities to

⁹⁵ Wray (2006), p. 2

⁹⁶ Examples of those who know Jules's vampiric status and display antagonism towards him include the High Krewe who, as white privileged undead not only disdain Jules as an embarrassment to be ignored but also 'were supposed to be even more prejudiced against blacks, Jews, and Italians than Maureen was'; Maureen who, as Jules's vampire maker, has a perpetual love-hate relationship with him; and Malice who, as Jules's primary antagonist, is openly intent on destroying him: Fox (2003), p. 22

⁹⁷ Fox (2003), pp. 38, 31, 22, 31

⁹⁸ Wray (2006), p. 2

the human-vampire antagonism that dominates vampire Monsters narratives).⁹⁹ This is particularly evident in those southern states, such as Louisiana, with a history in which ‘the omnipresent slave became the symbol [...] and the cornerstone of its culture.’¹⁰⁰ Fox’s fictional space of New Orleans reflects the prevailing effects of this historic American ‘cornerstone’ on ‘racially stratified urban context’ which, although discussed by Martha Mahoney with respect to government housing policies, represents what she identifies as ‘an increase in racial concentration’ exacerbating the ‘ongoing role of racism and race’ with a perpetuation of ‘geographic [...] isolation’.¹⁰¹ This is an apartheid that, counter to what Mahoney identifies in the late twentieth century as ‘benign [governmental] quotas to maintain integration and other measures to promote desegregation’, Malice seeks to perpetuate in his bullying of Jules: ‘You stick to [...] white folks now, not black folks’.¹⁰² Malice’s assigning of human food sources thus reinforces rather than undermines what Mahoney identifies as ongoing racist segregation: Malice’s proclamation that Jules and he stick to their ‘kind[s]’ speaks less of an intent to protect other African Americans than it does of his desire to thwart Jules. Malice highlights a dichotomy within U.S. culture: although many African Americans continue to fight for democracy and equality, he is shown as adhering to what is perceived to be the segregationist ideology of the Black Panthers movement of the late 1960s, which was frequently associated with violence. In their 1973 comparative survey, Daniel Levine et al. conclude that ‘Panther supporters were more likely to disagree with the “ideas of black people who argue that non-violence is the best way to achieve the goals of black people” than were NAACP supporters.’¹⁰³ Here, the ‘bad blood’ between Jules

⁹⁹ Fox (2003), p. 160

¹⁰⁰ Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York, Toronto: Vintage, [1956] 1989), p. 6

¹⁰¹ Martha Mahoney, ‘Law and Racial Geography: Public Housing and the Economy in New Orleans’, *Stanford Law Review*, 42, 5 (1990), 1251-1290, pp. 1252, 1270, 1285

¹⁰² Mahoney (1990), p. 1252; Fox (2003), p. 22

¹⁰³ The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People is an American organization that advocates for racial equality across all areas of culture, with their ‘Vision Statement’ to ‘ensure a society in which all individuals have equal rights without discrimination based on race’: ‘What Does NAACP Stand For?’, <<http://www.naacp.org/about-us/>> [accessed 1 August 2015]. In comparing reactions and understanding of ‘youth’ responses to the Black Panthers and NAACP movements, Daniel Levine et al. propose ‘Panther supporters more frequently answered

and Malice comes as part of a narrative that, while incorporating the binaries of 'black and white', and even presenting readers with a conservative extermination of Malice, as already argued, does not shy away from showing its protagonist as flawed in his indeterminacy towards race. Fox shows two sides to Jules's understanding of his persecution by Malice: his appreciation of his cabbie friend Erato who, as 'a black man' would 'have to have insights into Jules's predicament that were beyond Jules's reach', is countered by his statement to white supremacists that 'colored, bloodsucking hordes [...] destroy all that is good and pure about white culture!' (this is the same 'white' culture' that houses the High Krewe and white supremacists who show no empathy or understanding towards Jules or his predicament).¹⁰⁴

Although Jules's narrative arc manifests much of what the late blues legend B.B. King saw in this music – 'an expression of anger against shame or humiliation' – he is also positioned by Malice as another in a long line of white oppressors: a 'Great White Hunter'.¹⁰⁵ Contrary to Malice's perspective, but still in line with the notion that the blues is about resistance as much as oppression, the narrative focalizing through Jules fixes on Malice's persecution as unjust:

The more he thought about it, the more the injustice of Malice X's threats rankled. Of all the white vampires out there, why pick on him, Jules Duchon? Jules had always been decent to black folks, even back during the old Jim

"Definitely not" in responding to the item, "Do you think the problems between blacks and whites will be solved in a peaceful and constructive way?" than did the NAACP supporters.' The survey results of Levine et al. show that 'Panther supporters more frequently felt (23%) it would be desirable for the U.S. to be "separated into two nations, one black and one white" than did NAACP supporters (7%). Conversely, 24 per cent of the NAACP supporters as compared with 16 per cent of the Panther supporters felt such separation would be very undesirable.' Levine et al. conclude that 'As compared with NAACP supporters, Panther supporters were more distrustful of whites, more inclined to support separation of the United States into "two nations, one black and one white," less favorable toward the police, more inclined to reject non-violence, more inclined to see "guerilla warfare" as a means to help black people, less expectant that black-white problems will be peacefully and constructively resolved, and more fatalistic about the chances that "people like me" have to succeed in life.' This is all despite an overview by Levine et al. that argues the Panthers movement 'reject[s] separatism as a goal for black Americans and [...] vigorously oppos[es] cultural nationalist groups on this issue'. However, as Levine et al. also suggest, support for the Panthers signifies African American 'alienation': Daniel U. Levine, Norman S. Fiddmont, Robert S. Stephenson and Charles Wilkinson, 'Differences Between Black Youth Who Support the Black Panthers and the NAACP', *The Journal of Negro Education*, 42, 1 (1973), 19-32, pp. 19, 28, 29, 28, 31, 32

¹⁰⁴ Fox (2003), pp. 270, 167

¹⁰⁵ Ulrich Adelt, 'Black, White, and Blue: Racial Politics in B.B. King's Music from the 1960s', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 44, 2 (2011), 195-216, p. 202; Fox (2003), p. 22

Crow days. Heck, nearly all the musicians on his most-admired list were black guys from New Orleans.¹⁰⁶

In mentioning ‘the old Jim Crow days’, the longevity of Jules’s vampirism is reinforced alongside a raising of race-related ‘rules’ and attitudes that are underscored using anachronistically condescending language: Jules considers himself as having ‘always been decent to black folks’.¹⁰⁷ Jules’s exhibition of racist unconscious bias is shaped by the era of his human existence, drawing on an American cultural history that, in ‘Jim Crow Blues’, Leon Litwack suggests ‘operated with ruthless efficiency in upholding the absolute power of whites to command the labor and subordination of blacks.’¹⁰⁸ Jim Crow laws introduced in the 1890s brought with them segregationist policies ironically attributed to Fox’s black vampire Malice. Jim Crow requirements for such things as ‘separate railroad passenger cars for black and white patrons travelling first class [...] separate black and white waiting rooms in railroad depots and [...] outlawed interracial marriages’ are transposed into Malice’s uncomplicated directive to Jules, ‘No more big fat black mamas for you. Capeesh?’¹⁰⁹ Instead of upholding ‘the premise that race is artificial, constructed, and without inherent meaning’, the free indirect reporting of Jules’s thoughts displays a revenant unconscious affinity with the social segregations of his human life and early existence as a vampire during the early-to-mid-twentieth century in its inadvertent according with Malice’s no ‘fangin’ of ‘black folks’ rule.¹¹⁰

The racist antagonisms of Jules’s characterization as a white male predominantly predated African Americans are underplayed as concerns including ‘white fears of black [...] equality’ are anticlimactically undermined by Maureen’s

¹⁰⁶ Fox (2003), p. 47

¹⁰⁷ Fox (2003), p. 47

¹⁰⁸ Leon F. Litwack, ‘Jim Crow Blues’, *OAH Magazine of History*, 18, 2 (2004), 7-11, p. 7

¹⁰⁹ In the early twentieth century, these three Jim Crow rules were augmented by the introduction of ‘segregation of all hotels, theatres, bars, soda fountains, restaurants, social clubs, warehouses, churches, streetcars, courts, libraries, parks, playgrounds, drinking fountains, restrooms, hospitals, insane asylums and cemeteries’, effectively creating intra-cultural physical and ideological divides: Jerah Johnson, ‘Jim Crow Laws of the 1890s and the Origins of New Orleans Jazz: Correction of an Error’, *Popular Music*, 19, 2 (2000), 243-251, pp. 248, 249; Fox (2003), p. 22

¹¹⁰ Fox (2003), p. 22

admonishment of Jules's choice of prey not for its inequity but for its unhealthiness: 'you've always preferred the colored victims. Always said they were tastier. Do you know what those people eat? Fatback. Pigs' knuckles. They fry their vegetables, for Varney's sake!'.¹¹¹ Maureen's 'them and us' rebuke tells of her hypocritical and prejudiced desire to distance both herself and Jules from the local majority population as lesser beings whose 'them' diet of 'Fatback. Pig's knuckles' and fried vegetables' is met with the 'us' of the generically inspired expletive of 'for Varney's sake!'.¹¹² Where Fox's title demarcates Jules as a 'white' vampire and narrative dominant, Malice, rather than being principally presented as a vampire – and non-human – is reduced by the racial stereotyping typified by Maureen. Little better than a stock character, Malice is relegated to a 'subjective ideological construct', his race part of a combined obstacle to and impetus for Jules's personal journey.¹¹³ As previously submitted, Jules and Malice embody a doubling of erroneous belief – they are both vampires, just as they were both human, their racially motivated antagonism a human inheritance used as part of an undead wrangling for authority.

Momentarily returning to the generic interplay in Fox's novel, Malice is, like Jules, generically ambiguous. His appearance, although it continues a tradition of well-dressed vampires established by Lugosi's on-screen personification of Dracula – he is 'tall and broad-shouldered, dressed in a sharply tailored black suit, starched white shirt, and crimson bow tie' owes more to the disquieting Blaxploitation films of the 1970s that, as Novotny Lawrence proposes, reflect '[black] sociopolitical status in America' as somehow 'second-rate'.¹¹⁴ Malice's 'sharp'

¹¹¹ Peter Kolchin, 'Whiteness Studies: The New History of Race in America', *The Journal of American History*, 89, 1 (2002), 154-173, p. 157; Litwack (2004), p. 8; Fox (2003), p. 32

¹¹² Maureen's hypocrisy is twofold: she is also obese and therefore needs to look to curbing her own dietary excesses but, more importantly, she is Malice's vampire maker; As noted above, Maureen's expletive, 'for Varney's sake!' is influenced by *Varney the Vampire or the Feast of Blood*, which was a Victorian 'Penny Dreadful' serialization by James Malcolm Rhymer (1845-1847)

¹¹³ Kolchin (2002), p. 159

¹¹⁴ Fox (2003), p. 20; Novotny Lawrence, *Blaxploitation Films of the 1970s: Blackness and Genre* (New York, Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p. 1; Although outside the remit of this discussion, the term Blaxploitation seems to be as ambivalently received as vampires are themselves, seen as both positive and negative, exploitative and empowering, bringing new black archetypes that can be seen in Fox's Malice: 'drug dealers, pimps, and hardened criminals': David Walker, 'Introduction', in *Reflections on Blaxploitation: Actors and Directors Speak*, ed. by David Walker,

tailoring and pseudo-confidence that – to Jules – look ‘enough to lead the Saints to a Super Bowl win’ are diminished in their first confrontation, as Malice bemoans the overall generic paucity of black vampires:¹¹⁵

You white vampires are lucky, you know that? You got tons of *bad*, I mean *bad* mothafuckin’ bloodsuckahs to watch on the tube. You know? Christopher Lee. That dude is *bad*, man! And what do *I* have to watch? Fuckin’ *Blacula*, man.¹¹⁶

In his generic reflection, Malice’s position further highlights the ambivalence within Fox’s narrative. Malice’s outburst, citing an intertextual inequality that only provides ‘Fuckin’ *Blacula*’ as a role model, echoes Doodlebug’s understanding of the limitations of conforming to generic role models. Alongside this, Malice’s desire for African American ‘bad mothafuckin’ bloodsuckah’ paradigms points towards a need for redress of the wider genre’s historically white racial norms that provide ‘tons’ of role models.

In line with generic as well as idiosyncratic narrative ambivalence towards black vampirism, Harry M. Benshoff, in his examination of ‘the concept of African American agency’ within the Blaxploitation film genre, suggests that American films ‘use race as a marker of monstrosity in ways generically consistent with the larger social body’s assumptions about white superiority.’¹¹⁷ Malice may elicit fear in Jules but his monstrosity is cartoonish, with his use of race a justification-come-excuse to threaten and eventually challenge Jules to a ‘Duel by Stake’ positioning him less as a narrative determinant and more as catalyst for Jules’s (un)lifestyle changes.¹¹⁸ Having introduced Malice as key antagonist, Fox falls short of addressing a generic racial imbalance as his characterization is reduced to a bullying drug dealer whose demise becomes difficult to interpret beyond functioning as an expendable contributor to the rehabilitation of a Fat *White*

Andrew J. Rausch, Chris Watson (Lanham, Maryland, Toronto, Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press, 2009), p. ix

¹¹⁵ Fox (2003), p. 20

¹¹⁶ Fox (2003), p. 23

¹¹⁷ Historically spanning from the late 1960s to mid-1970s, Benshoff explores Blaxploitation films from the position that they signify ‘a historically specific subgenre that potentially explores (rather than simply exploits) race and race consciousness as core structuring principles’: Harry M. Benshoff, ‘Blaxploitation Horror Films: Generic Reappropriation or Reinscription?’, *Cinema Journal*, 39, 2 (2000), 31-50, p. 31

¹¹⁸ Fox (2003), p. 314

Vampire. Although Fox foregrounds Malice's character being a 'colored vampire', his expunging overlooks the racial antagonisms that are set up, Malice's ethnicity becoming merely a buttress for his role as Jules's 'nemesis'.¹¹⁹

Ultimately, Fox's characterization of Malice can be understood as a reflection of modern American intra-cultural ambivalences as, for example the Malice-Black Panthers link is made literal: 'The black vampire's form shimmered [...] His limbs contracted, his face elongated, and his gray skin sprouted a dense, smooth coat of coal-black fur.'¹²⁰ Arguably more attractive than the scurrying mass of white rats into which Jules turns, Fox enhances Malice's nominative modelling of Malcolm X through his literal transformation into a powerful black panther. This is a character, then, whose stereotypical portrayal, in his leadership of a 'gang' of vampires and drug manufacture and distribution, tells of continuing cultural assumptions and inequalities, with the deliberate nominative association clumsy in its overtness as well as crass in its misappropriation of the memory of Malcolm X for a character who is a predominantly clichéd 'angry black man': this upholds what Malcolm X's biographer Alex Haley reports, 'He [X] argued that the Negro only tells the white man what he believes the white man wishes to hear'.¹²¹ Fox's use of race as part of an intra-vampiric antagonism of his protagonist serves to do what vampire fiction does best: it reflects the prevailing insecurities and instabilities, inequalities and inequities of its host nation.

Whatever and whoever the influences are on his undead existence, Jules remains a white vampire, and Fox's narrative a questioning of notions of a post-racial culture that are again brought to the fore in chapter six, where Butler's use of a courtroom scenario presents an overt questioning of redundant racial antagonisms through the cross-examination of intra-vampiric racial protectionism in the face of the narrator-protagonist Shori Matthews' vampire-African American human hybridity. Fox, although challenging generic understanding in his reinterpretation of (white male) vampirism through his

¹¹⁹ Fox (2003), pp. 38, 248

¹²⁰ Fox (203), p. 24

¹²¹ Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X as told to Alex Haley* (New York: Ballantine Books, [1964] 1999), p. xxvii

characterization of Jules, introduces a discordancy that counterintuitively relies on stereotypes. As discussed, Malice's characterization may be a stereotypical portrait in many ways, but he and Jules are part of the same community and, as such, subject to many of the same influences of place and prejudice. Fox cannot encompass the scope of scientific lack of consensus regarding the possibilities of race in terms of biological variants so, instead, Jules's interactions are founded in the materiality of oppression. While Malice is made an expendable 'bad guy', there is no narrative rejoicing at his demise as there would be for a more monstrous vampire, and Jules is not portrayed as 'victor'. Instead, thanks to the aid of friends and family, Jules destroys Malice, and then atones for his vampiric 'sins', allowing him to freely continue to live in New Orleans, albeit in the form of nearly two hundred white rats. Fox gives his Fat White Vampire an agency denied to Malice: he chooses his own identity and, as a pack of rats, creates his own community-within-a-community. Unlike Monster narratives, in which the vampire is often defeated by a band of human heroes, or Dreams in which vampires are (partially) redeemed, living as part of human society, Jules is both victor and vanquished and therefore an ambivalent discordancy within vampire fiction. Fox's story might end with the 'hero' Jules triumphing over his adversary, Malice, but he also removes himself from the predatory equation by renouncing his vampire form.

Jules is thus an epitome of vampiric ambiguity. He embodies much that is recognizable as undead within a markedly abject vampire persona, and his reactive existence – in line with many predecessors – is dominated by the actions of others. He is driven by physical and emotional urges and threats, as often seen in Monsters narratives, but also by friendship, family, and assistance, more in line with Dreams. With the help of friends and 'vampire wolf-dog' offspring, Jules goes from being an obese and self-pitying hypochondriac, blaming anyone and anything for his problems, to autonomy, taking responsibility for his own actions.¹²² And it is Jules' final physical shifting of shape from vampiric (human) form into rat colony that allows for a transformation of understanding. In

¹²² Fox (2003), p. 321

choosing to cast off his existence as an animated corpse, Jules can be seen to break down the boundaries of what is assumed of the undead. Existing as vermin may be argued as a less harmful alternative to killing and draining humans, but it still presents what, for many, is a disturbing form.¹²³

Consequently, in Fox's vampire, the parameters of an already fluid genre are further expanded, reinventing the 'rules' in Jules's choice to exist (as rats) on human left-overs rather than humans. In deviating from generic expectations, this is a vampire story that, through its risible protagonist, prompts cultural questioning through the tensions and contradictions embodied in its central characters: to again borrow from Fox, 'Who [knows] *what* the rules [are] when a vampire [is] involved?'¹²⁴ And it is from this unassailable ambivalence within the vampire genre that discussion now turns to Butler's *Fledgling*, as arguably the most discordant of modern American vampire narratives. A petite, genetically hybrid female once again faces racist antagonism from other vampires, but here as part of a near-closed universe paralleling of prevailing human culture. In her hybridity – a 'form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions' – Shori's narrative again positions a vampire protagonist as both prey and predator, embodying a questioning that continues the evolutionary expansion of the genre through vampiric discordancy.¹²⁵

¹²³ For a narrative that places rats as central focus of horror, see James Herbert's trilogy, *The Rats* (1974), *Lair* (1979), and *Domain* (1984)

¹²⁴ Fox (2003), p. 325

¹²⁵ Cohen (1996), pp. 6, 7

Chapter Six:
‘I awoke to darkness’:
Vampire Hybridity and Ambiguity in Octavia E. Butler’s *Fledgling*¹

‘America originat[ing] as a slave society, hold[s] a momentous struggle over the idea of race and the terms of citizenship in a nation supposedly dedicated to equality.’ (Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves*)²

‘You want them to get black, human children from her [...] When I came to this country, such people were kept as property, as slaves.’ (Katharine Dahlman, Octavia E. Butler’s *Fledgling*)³

‘the science of genetics is often closely intertwined with social attitudes and political considerations’ (William Provine, ‘Geneticists and the Biology of Race Crossing’)⁴

‘Some of us have tried for centuries to find ways to be less vulnerable during the day. Shori is our latest and most successful effort in that direction.’ (Iosif Petrescu, Octavia E. Butler’s *Fledgling*)⁵

As with chapter five’s examination of Fox’s tale, ambivalence and ambiguity are key to this chapter’s questioning of the relationship between Octavia Butler’s *Fledgling* and contemporary culture alongside antecedents within the vampire genre. As the title above suggests, this is a story that revolves around darkneses – mental, physical, and cultural – from the literal opening darkness of an unlit cave to the climactic darkness of racist antagonisms, all are questioned. Where Fox’s narrative is dominated by a white male vampire, Butler’s protagonist, Shori Matthews, is a petite, young (looking) vampire-African American human hybrid central to a narrative that draws on her as a transgressor of boundaries and beliefs

¹ Octavia E. Butler, *Fledgling* (New York and Boston: Warner Books, 2005), p. 1

² Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-century America* (Princeton and Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 3-4

³ Butler (2005), p. 272

⁴ William Provine, ‘Geneticists and the Biology of Race Crossing’, *Science*, New Series, 182, 4114 (1973), 790-796, p. 796

⁵ Butler (2005), p. 66

that affect white cultural bias as well as narrative control.⁶ With vampire fiction as a field of writing that has traditionally paralleled (white) western cultural biases, Butler interrogates both genre and context by placing narrative control with a character who is in a position of antithesis to the white dominant. Through the first-person amnesiac perspective of Shori, Butler presents a narrative questioning of persistent cultural assumptions and prejudices alongside generic tradition, principally through intra-vampiric racial antagonisms.

Taking the Inas as a microcosmic adaptation of America's history, Shori's amnesia follows Chandan Reddy's proposition that 'a national "memory" [...] cannot be admitted as that subject enacts imperial violence and appropriation'.⁷ Shori, as an embodiment of violations perpetrated within national 'memory', is subject to violence and attempted appropriation resonant of a history founded on blood and exploitation. Shori is a physical manifestation of violent violation from the outset, shown in her first person understanding of her predicament: 'It hurt to move. It hurt even to breathe [...] The sound of my voice, even the touch of my hands seemed to make the pain worse. In two places my head felt crusty and lumpy and . . . almost soft', and she is also 'burned – all over.'⁸ Like those vampires such as Shori who are themselves American products, violence and exploitation are revenant forces that cannot be suppressed and remain visible in the twenty-first century, brought into contemporary light through such means as the publication of the *Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program*, where those considered 'terrorists' have been subjected to torture by the C.I.A.⁹ As well as politically sanctioned violence against perceived threats to the U.S. as global hegemon, a steady stream of recent journalistic reports of antagonisms principally follow an intra-cultural dynamic of white male

⁶ In line with Butler's narrative, and the precedent set in previous chapters, reference to Shori Matthews will subsequently be by first name only. Treatment of all other characters will follow the same remit, unless clarity of understanding dictates otherwise

⁷ Chandan Reddy, 'Globality and the Ends of the Nation-Form: A Response to Edward Watts', *American Literary History*, 22, 2 (2010), 471-479, p. 473

⁸ Butler (2005), pp. 1, 19

⁹ For an abridged report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence findings, see the *Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program*, <<http://www.intelligence.senate.gov/study2014/sscistudy1.pdf>> [accessed 9 March 2015]

authority figures in conflict with young African American males, beatings and deaths sitting beside a disproportionately high number of black prison detainees.¹⁰ Shori's gradual relearning of her *own* history and the violence inherent within it (perpetrated by and against her) informs what is, through the Ina 'Council of Judgment' (returned to below), a discursive critique of justice and morality, as well as racial ideology within American culture.¹¹

Culturally internal ambivalences are interrogated below as Shori's racially motivated persecution is undercut by her use of symbionts – humans who are targeted for lifetime indenture, sometimes as little better than cattle with benefits, they provide sustenance in return for bed, board, and an extended life of chemically-induced happiness and love – complicating her maltreatment with a correspondence to what American cultural historian Brenda Dixon Gottschild summarizes as 'the American legacy of slavery'.¹² Human 'syms' also straddle boundaries, ranging between 'tools', lovers, and blood cattle, the latter of which connects to del Toro and Hogan's vampiric farming of humans in del Toro and Hogan's *The Strain* (see chapter one). Although Shori and the Ina who are sympathetic towards her are portrayed as benevolent and caring towards their syms, the Silks and Katharine Dahlman – as vampire antagonists – are portrayed as less benign: 'guilty of having made human beings their tools and sen[ding] those

¹⁰ The NAACP online fact sheet subsection 'Racial Disparities in Incarceration' states that 'African Americans are incarcerated at nearly six times the rate of whites' and 'Together, African American and Hispanics comprised 58% of all prisoners in 2008, even though African Americans and Hispanics make up approximately one quarter of the US population': 'Racial Disparities in Incarceration', <<http://www.naacp.org/pages/criminal-justice-fact-sheet>> [accessed 13 April 2015]

¹¹ As the Ina Daniel Gordon explains, the Council of Judgment 'isn't about following laws so strictly that the guilty go unpunished or the innocent are made to suffer [...] Our judges are our elders, people who have lived three, four, five centuries. They sense truth more effectively than people my age [...] problems arise when friendship or family connections get in the way of honest judgment': Butler (2005), p. 220

¹² Dixon Gottschild goes on to argue that racial antagonisms within U.S. culture persist from a legacy of slavery and segregation that is 'deep in the DNA' as part of the reasons 'why African Americans are having so much trouble [processing and moving on from this legacy] in the U.S.A. now'. Dixon Gottschild is an American cultural historian at Temple University, Philadelphia: *Black Music in Europe: A Hidden History, 1920-1930*, BBC Radio 4, 9 January 2018, 21.30; In a further generic link to Butler's symbiosis, where blood 'freely' given is no longer something to be feared, Matheson's human narrator Neville flippantly articulates of vampires, 'Really, now, search your soul, lovie – is the vampire so bad? All he does is drink blood': Richard Matheson, *I Am Legend* (London: Gollancz, [1954] 2001), p. 26

human tools to kill the Petrescu and the Matthews families [...] guilty of sending their tools to burn the Petrescu guest house where Shori Matthews and her symbionts were staying [...] guilty of sending their tools to attack the Gordon family [...] And [...] Katharine Dahlman, the Silks' first advocate [in the Ina trial of these offences], [is] guilty of sending one of her symbionts, Jack Roan, to kill one of Shori Matthews's symbionts, Theodora Harden'.¹³ This treatment of humans as 'tools' is a narrative trope that chimes with Kirk Savage's declaration that 'America originated as a slave society'.¹⁴ Savage's proposal that there continues to be an attendant 'struggle over the idea of race and the terms of citizenship in a nation supposedly dedicated to equality' also echoes Dixon Gottschild's position and finds a probing in Butler's narrative of prevailing racial animosities from within the almost-closed society that houses her vampire Inas (Ina being the collective noun Butler uses for her vampires).¹⁵

Also discussed in chapter five, Savage's identification of an ongoing racial 'struggle' within U.S. culture implies the possibility of an idealized state that Butler's vampire Ina, as with Fox's vampires, show as uncertain at best – Shori's genetic hybridity, as a vampire spliced with human African American DNA (returned to below alongside an ambiguity towards slavery / ownership), is not only key to her personal journey but pivotal to a narrative interrogation of strong reactions and hostilities made evident in three words uttered by the vampire Russell Silk: 'black mongrel bitch'.¹⁶ Because Shori is initially positioned as unknowing narrator, her hybridity takes on vulnerabilities generically associated with human characters, marking her as a boundary being. In line with Homi Bhabha's post-colonial discussion of *Nation and Narration*, Shori's hybridity is 'Janus-faced', and the site of 'antagonism and unpredictable forces'.¹⁷ Shori's very

¹³ Butler (2005), pp. 293-294

¹⁴ Savage (1999), p. 3

¹⁵ Savage (1999), p. 4

¹⁶ As a brief aside, even Russell Silk's racist and animalizing outburst is treated with ambivalence, as there is an implication of temporary derangement. Thwarted in his attempt to attack Shori by family members, his reaction sees him described as 'curled on his side, moaning and choking [...] slowly regaining his sanity': Butler (2005), pp. 300, 300-301

¹⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, 'Introduction: narrating the nation', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (Abingdon: Routledge, [1990] 2010), p. 4

body becomes politicized, a vessel for ‘incomplete signification’ that is ‘*in-between*’ traditional ‘spaces through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated’.¹⁸ Where *Monsters*, and even *Dreams*, uphold more conservatively oriented generic notions of vampires as beyond human, in Shori’s hybridity the vampire ‘is never outside or beyond’ the vampiric *and* the human: and so the ‘them and us’ of vampire fiction expands to include the ‘them-and-us’.¹⁹

While genetic engineering of vampires is not unique to Butler’s *Fledgling* – it is a central premise of Cronin’s *The Passage*, discussed in chapter two above – Shori’s individualized hybridity, in providing an overarching plot impetus, houses a genetic manipulation that goes beyond the impulse to maintain America’s global martial hegemony through military experimentation with vampirism as seen in *The Passage*. Where Cronin’s vampires are bio-weapons created by an American military whose ‘biggest challenge [...] is keeping soldiers on the field’, and are monstrous bringers of apocalypse, the genetic engineering of Shori is primarily motivated by the need for defence; a way to be ‘less vulnerable during the day.’²⁰ Both the vampire *Monsters* and *Discords* texts discussed here complicate the traditional binaries of predator and prey but, where Cronin’s *Virals* are shown to predominantly sustain a monstrosity which sees vampirism as subsuming humanity and driven by violent blood-lust, Shori, who ‘through genetic engineering, [is] part human’, offers a more benign development of the vampire genre.²¹ Shori’s being and her narrative are thus generically discordant, antithetical to traditional perceptions of vampires and functioning as instruments for interrogating genre alongside context within this narrative space: she is, as

¹⁸ Bhabha, ed. by Bhabha ([1990] 2010), p. 4

¹⁹ Bhabha, ed. by Bhabha ([1990] 2010), p. 4

²⁰ Cronin (2010), p. 43; Butler (2005), p. 66

²¹ Although Shori is not identifiable as a ‘Monster’ as discussed above, her initial behaviour is determined by an instinct, driving her to kill and eat the symbiont Hugh Tang. Although not genetically engineered, Meyer’s vampire Bella also offers a benevolent and protective superpower – she is able to create a protective shield around herself and others: it is explained by the vampire Eleazar that, ‘Talents that are purely defensive, that protect some aspect of the bearer, are always called shields’ and after battling the Volturi, Edward also tells Bella that ‘it was [her] shield that had made the Volturi run away with their tails between their legs’: Butler (2005), p. 66; Stephenie Meyer, *Breaking Dawn* (London: Atom, [2008] 2009), pp. 596, 747

already mentioned, a petite, black female in a genre dominated by tall, pale males, necessarily driven to studying, understanding, and re-enculturation. A brief aside: Shori's appearance as a petite ('I'm 4 feet 11 inches tall') pre-pubescent (initially, Shori looks like she 'can't be any more than ten or eleven') black female belies her age ('My father told me I am fifty-three') and strength as a vampire (in the human Wright Hamlin's words, she is 'a hell of a lot stronger than [she has] any right to be').²² Shori is also unique among fellow Ina who, in line with a Lugosi-inspired American generic norm, are 'tall, ultrapale, lean, wiry people' who, in line with more traditional understanding of vampires, look 'like foreigners, and [are...] treated like foreigners – suspected, disliked, driven out, or killed [by humans]'.²³ In turn, through the fear-induced reactionary behaviour of Inas such as the Silk clan, Shori and her family are subjected to suspicion, intra-vampirically 'disliked, driven out, or killed'.²⁴ Shori's hybridity, deviant to vampires such as the Silks, whose otherness to humans potentially places them as subject to suspicion and violence, goes beyond what Fred Botting identifies as an essential component of vampire fiction: while Shori may show as 'disturbingly ambivalent' in being a persecuted predator, her physical being, behaviour, thoughts, and morality are at odds with other vampires as well as traditional perceptions of vampirism.²⁵

As Botting recognizes, inconsistencies and uncertainties are generically fundamental and, through her hybridity, Shori extends them as part of a deconstructive exposing and cross-examination of more typical binary oppositions such as vampire-human, black-white, male-female. *Fledgling* differs from previously discussed vampires such as Meyer's Cullen family in the *Twilight* series (see chapter three). While the Cullens may face intra-vampiric hostility from the Volturi, as self-appointed policers of Meyer's vampire world, this is because of what they *do*, not who they *are*. Actions are met with reactions. Shori's hybridity marks her as divergent from the reinforcing of American ideology in the guise of Meyer's dream vampire family: where the Cullens embody perceived cultural

²² Butler (2005), pp. 8, 242, 40

²³ Butler (2005), p. 130

²⁴ Butler (2005), p. 130

²⁵ Fred Botting, *Gothic* (Abingdon, Oxon. and New York: Routledge, [1996] 2005), p. 145

ideals, Shori starts from a position of violation, a lack of material comfort, and only a cursory self-awareness. Through Shori, Butler affects the re-imagining of a potentially more benign vampirism (but still with predatory attributes, such as speed and strength alongside supernatural coerciveness), which corresponds to the apparent aims of Meyer's Cullen family, who do all they can to pass as the humans they once were, but still possess and use predatory attributes.

Where the previous chapter's focus on the engagement of vampires with racial ambivalences, ambiguities and animosities is a *retention* from the human existences of Fox's characters Jules and Malice, Butler's Shori, as part of a near but non-human species, is subject to an antagonistic mimesis of contextually recognizable racial hostility. Butler makes no conclusions or proposals here. Instead, she explores possibilities within a framework of animosity and violence. The grand narratives of monstrous apocalypse seen in section one are cast aside for an individualized narrative of self-discovery, detection, and judgement. *Fledgling* is an open-ended reflection on generic and contextual hierarchies that begins and ends in ambiguity, from literal 'darkness' to the potential positivity of 'I will.'²⁶ The 'darkness' of this chapter's title, as fundamental to the initial expressions of thought in Shori's first-person narrative, is understandable as both literal and metaphorical. This story begins with a lack of physical light, but also awakening mental and emotional desires for knowledge and understanding for Shori who, as an amnesiac, must learn about who and what she is – the first-person narrative reliance on a delayed decoding drawing reader sympathy towards the challenges faced by Butler's vampire heroine. Alongside this, Butler amplifies the ambiguity of this descriptively significant noun when it is made explicit that Shori's very being – her hybrid state – incorporates the physical signifier of all she must overcome and endure: a cutaneous 'darkness'.

On first viewing herself in a mirror (she has a reflection, unlike Dracula and Fox's vampires), Shori's self-appraisal carries none of the judgement directed at her by third parties but does acknowledge her paucity of self-cognizance: 'I was a lean,

²⁶ Butler (2005), p. 310

sharp-faced, large-eyed, brown-skinned person – a complete stranger'.²⁷ All is unrecognized and unknown to this protagonist, including her own persona and history, and encountered from a position of neutral uncertainty and curiosity. Shori's positioning as a physically and ideologically intermediate figure sets her apart from the generic norm: as a hybrid, she reflects what Ewa Plonowska Ziarek's investigation of female vulnerabilities indicates is 'intertwined with historical, political, and cultural power relations.'²⁸ Shori, as a blend of vampire and human, represents both cultural and generic discordancy: despite her fantastic strengths, she is vulnerable to subjugation and violence, and potential eradication from (Ina) history. As will be returned to, the Silks mirror racist tropes that persist within American culture in their murder of over eighty of Shori's vampire kin and their symbionts because of their connections to her as a reactionary fear response to what they perceive as the potential for their eventual redundancy of form.²⁹ Through the overt bigotry of the Silks, Butler introduces a vampiric facsimile of many of the disquieting racial tropes and slurs which have fuelled historic segregation and animosity in the U.S., and which, as much as it might not make for comfortable contemplation, remains ongoing.

²⁷ Butler (2005), p. 18

²⁸ Ewa Plonowska Ziarek, 'Feminist Reflections on Vulnerability: Disrespect, Obligation, Action', *SubStance*, 42, 3 (2013) 67-84, p. 75; While the focus of this discussion is the dominance of racial antagonism and hybridity, what Barbara Creed labels as the 'monstrous-feminine' plays a part in Shori's reception amongst some of those she encounters – she is sexualized, and her gender is used as a negative / pejorative by her antagonists the Silks – the focus of this chapter is not on the fear of her monstrosity as a female, but on a fear of her genetic hybridity. She is an ambiguous figure who is both aggressor and victim (a state that falls outside of traditional gendered readings) where, as a female vampire, she is a walking, talking literal manifestation of the horror that is *vagina dentata*. This female predation as a direct link to masculine fears of predated power and, particularly, masculine libidinal vulnerability must, for now, be put to one side: Barbara Creed, *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, [1993] 2007), pp. 1, 3

²⁹ Butler's narrative is not, as Susanna Sturgis proposes, 'for the ethically or politically squeamish', with language and characterization reminiscent of pre-Civil Rights era attitudes: the violent attacks masterminded against those supporting Shori and denigration of her as a 'nigger bitch' are all part of a white supremacist-style antagonism against this vampire that is discussed further below. The Silk family massacre Shori's mothers, fathers, siblings and symbionts, and attempt to do the same to the Ina Gordon family once it is known that they have given refuge to her: Susanna J. Sturgis, 'Living the Undead Life', *The Women's Review of Books*, 23, 1 (2006), 11-12, p. 11; Butler (2005), p. 173; See chapter five's discussion of Barack Obama's use of the word nigger: 'it's not just a matter of it not being polite to say nigger in public [...] Societies don't, overnight, completely erase everything that happened 200 to 300 years prior': Deena Zaru, 'Obama uses N-word, says we are 'not cured' of racism', <<http://edition.cnn.com/2015/06/22/politics/barack-obama-n-word-race-relations-marc-maron-interview/index.html>> [accessed 3 July 2015]

Through Shori's persecution, judgement, and legal vindication, a case is made for ambivalences and inconsistencies, if not direct exclusions, in the American Dreams central to the previous section. They remain Dreams that are biased in favour of the white male hegemonic associated so closely with those vampires discussed above. While, as discussed in chapter four, Harris employs racist tropes as part of a human animosity towards vampires as part of her 'Sookie Stackhouse' series – seen at its most violently intolerant in the members of a newly formed anti-vampire 'church', the Fellowship of the Sun – her central undead characters are romanticized white males. Butler stretches the genre beyond Harris's antagonisms, which rely on human fears of vampiric maltreatment; this is a stigmatizing and persecution of vampires by vampires and, as such, Ina fears and power dynamics offer imitations rather than incorporations of context. Shori's 'mongrel' status parallels continuing tensions within America that, while they may have taken something of a hiatus after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 – when a show of national unity was necessary – and even with the appointment of Barack Obama as the first African-American U.S. president in 2009, continue to erupt in pockets of hostility primarily between white authority figures and black youths.³⁰ Shori (also named Renee by her first symbiont, Wright – "A friend of mine told me it means 'reborn'" – when she has no idea of who or what she is, but also a

³⁰ In the last couple of years, recent news reports have stated such things as 'The US justice department has launched [an] investigation to determine whether Baltimore's police department engages in routine bias or excessive force', alongside headlines like 'Michael Brown shooting: "Stark racial divide" in American views', and 'Ferguson unrest: From shooting to nationwide protests' as testament to a continuing need for the scrutinizing of ongoing institutional violations of Civil Rights. That race relations remain a national dilemma can not only be seen in headlines like these but also in the need for new activist movements such as Black Lives Matter, which began in 2013 as a hashtag campaign against violence towards African Americans, particularly by the police. Praised by Obama for being "really effective in bringing attention to problems" of racial injustice'. Institutional violation of Civil Rights again faces scrutiny as 'The US justice department has launched [an] investigation to determine whether Baltimore's police department engages in routine bias or excessive force': 'Michael Brown shooting: "Stark racial divide" in American views', <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-28844868>> [accessed 20 August 2014]; 'South Carolina police charged after black man shot dead', <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-32213482>> [accessed 8 April 2015]; 'Ferguson unrest: From shooting to nationwide protests', <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-30193354>> [accessed 12 April 2015]; 'US Justice Department to Probe Baltimore Police', <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-32632516>> [accessed 08 May 2015]; 'President Obama criticizes Black Lives Matter movement during London town hall, says supporters "can't just keep on yelling"', <<http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/obama-black-lives-matter-movement-yelling-article-1.2612848>> [accessed on 16 May 2016]

nominative indicator of what Butler is attempting to do with the vampire genre) is the narrative voice through whom the reader gains insight into intolerance of difference to the white dominant within American culture that, while exaggerative, revisits a need for this mongrel nation to embrace assimilation of diversity as a positive.³¹

For those unfamiliar with Butler's novel, a brief outline of *Fledgling* presents Shori's beginning as a-historical and a-cultural – out of time, out of memory – and presents a protagonist seemingly denied the strength and self-determination of many other vampires. Shori wakes alone, with a history that, to borrow from Gregory Jerome Hampton, 'is written upon the body' as the violence she has endured is evident in her damaged form: 'There was nothing in my world but hunger and pain'.³² Shori's narrative goes on to include finding symbionts for food, company / sex, and comfort. Her response to the humans she makes her sym (Wright, Theodora Harden, two black women – Celia and Brook – who are symbionts of her dead father Iosif, and the 'strong and wiry and healthy and brown' Joel Harrison, who is the son of a symbiont) is instinctual, based on primary desires.³³ Shori also learns about the irrationality that leads to the massacre of her mothers' family; finds her father and quickly loses him as part of the Silks' extended campaign of mass murder; averts the deaths of the Ina Gordon clan; and finally faces the Silks in a courtroom scenario where they are prosecuted for murder and the attempted extermination of Shori, who they perceive as a threat to their racial purity. While the Silks see Shori as endangering their model for vampirism, most Ina, as the symbiont Brook explains to Shori's new 'sym' Wright, 'don't care about white or black'.³⁴ The Silks' behaviour both belies Brook's statement and forms the primary animus for the narrative of Shori's learning process.

³¹ A point of interest lies in Shori's being given two names as a reinforcement of her role as hybrid and 'fledgling': as well as Renee, 'Shori is the name of [...] an East African crested nightingale': Butler (2005), pp. 13, 132

³² Gregory Jerome Hampton, *Changing Bodies in the Fiction of Octavia E. Butler: Slaves, Aliens and Vampires* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, [2010] 2014), p. xiii; Butler (2005), p. 1

³³ Butler (2005), p. 154

³⁴ 'Sym' is the abbreviation Butler uses to describe her symbionts: Butler (2005), p. 162

Shori must overcome a personal mystery through assistance, which is gained through the combined assistance of her syms and friendly Ina, such as the Gordon family and Joan Braithwaite. This learning process begins with Wright starting Shori's journey of self-discovery by telling her: 'You're a vampire, you know'.³⁵ Just as Saberhagen provides Dracula with his own narrative in his 1974 novel, *The Dracula Tapes*, so Butler's vampire protagonist is given narrative sovereignty, crafting her own story, not only discovering who and what she is, but how and why she has been denied her own history. In this way, Butler stretches the genre beyond the apocalyptic omniscience of Monsters narratives and human female first-person narratives of the Dreams section above to present readers with Shori as a reworking of vampire mythology, melding it with Science Fantasy (returned to below) to question cultural attitudes from within a hybrid boundary form – combining concerns about genetic engineering and racist attitudes in the outwardly unexceptional form of a young, black female.

Butler's endowing of a narrative voice to Shori may invite reader consideration but, as the title of this chapter suggests, hers is a voice of equivocation, exhibiting compassion and understanding alongside viscerally repellent acts of violence and bloodshed. Shori, unaware of who or what she is, wakes in anonymity and doubt: 'I awoke to darkness [...] There was nothing in my world but hunger and pain, no other people, no other time, no other feelings.'³⁶ All is unfamiliar to both protagonist and reader, with Shori's cognitive domain couched in negativity and need. As touched on above, literal, emotional, and metaphorical darkneses shape Butler's tale from the outset, as her narrative focuses on moral ambiguities, irrational fears, and racially antagonistic power dynamics. Shori's narrative starts in ambiguity and Id-based instincts and she is apparently utterly vulnerable and dispossessed. However, it must be remembered that Shori is genetically engineered *not* to be vulnerable. Even though her outward appearance is one that would usually be associated with vulnerability, from the beginning she acknowledges a preternatural strength. She wakes with a craving for raw meat,

³⁵ Butler (2005), pp. 153, 12

³⁶ Butler (2005), p. 1

satiated on what she later learns is a human symbiont, Hugh Tang, sent to search for her by her father, Iosif, alongside deer, which she hunts, kills, and eats raw. This is a vampire who, like those such as Meyer's Cullens, houses a monstrosity within that cannot be discounted. Thus, although sympathy might gravitate towards Shori and those to whom she is closest, there is no definitive portrayal of right or wrong and morality is shown as plastic.

Returning to Baudrillard and extrapolating from his philosophical engagement with the antipathies that shape and determine context aids understanding of Butler's supernatural shadowing of American culture. In his premise that social states only function through agreement, Baudrillard suggests that if members choose not to conform, what results is terror, here seen in the Silks' non-conformist bigoted condemnation and attempted eradication of what they perceive to be different. Butler's 'terror' is unilaterally driven by the Silks' ideological imperative for Ina 'integrity' – these are vampires who tolerate their human symbionts because they are necessary, but who believe that 'mixing human genes with [their] own would weaken' their power.³⁷ Their irrational fear of Shori's hybridity plays on wider cultural misunderstandings of 'race' which, in *Fledgling*, manifest in the annihilation of any Ina immediately associated with the genetic experimentation surrounding Shori. What starts out as a fear-based ideology turns into the kind of persecution which previously sees the Ina vampires leave Europe for America. In doing so, the Silks go from an understanding of being part of the wider Ina and 'treated like foreigners –suspected, disliked, driven out, or killed' to the other side of the equation.³⁸ The persecuted here turn persecutors and, as with all acts of terror, the Silks' behaviour lacks orthodoxy or legality, displaying what Baudrillard identifies as an extreme '[il]logic of violence and uncertainty' as they seek to delegitimize all Ina associated with Shori's creation.³⁹ Lacking legitimacy and credibility, the Silks' fears and uncertainty provoke terroristic acts, reflecting prevailing post-9/11 concerns surrounding ideologically-

³⁷ Butler (2005), p. 225

³⁸ Butler (2005), p. 130

³⁹ Jean Baudrillard, 'Hypotheses on Terrorism', in *The Spirit of Terrorism and Other Essays*, trans. by Chris Turner (London, New York: Verso, [2002] 2003), p. 58

motivated violent persecution of those considered anathema to U.S. authority. America, having assumed global hegemony, even if only what Marc Redfield declares is a 'pseudo-sovereign[ty]', 'went to "war" against terrorism in 2001 because the United States cherishes its sovereign exceptionalism' just as the Silks go to 'war' against what they paint as a threat to their own exceptionalism.⁴⁰ The bellicose actions of both nation and clan exhibit what Andrew Bacevich describes as America's 'peculiar combination of arrogance and narcissism' (a U.S. assumption that promotes its own brand of 'freedom' and 'democracy' as global moral guide to the detriment of alternatives).⁴¹

Through Shori, Butler thus presents a reasoned response to irrationality that contrasts to a contextual politicized failure to understand that terrorism is, as Redfield states, 'not an act of war but a crime'.⁴² As Vice Chair, Dianne Feinstein's introduction to the 2014 Senate Select Committee on Intelligence report reads, 'It is worth remembering the pervasive fear in late 2001 and how immediate the threat felt', with high 'expect[at]ions of] further attacks against the nation': a statement that seems to almost excuse the failure of those in authority in America to act rationally.⁴³ America has proved itself institutionally tautological, introducing the Patriot Act as a supposed safeguard for its citizens, but then facing criticism nationally and internationally for its misuse, the greatest evidence of which has been the C.I.A.'s detention without trial and torture of 'terrorist'

⁴⁰ Marc Redfield, *The Rhetoric of Terror Reflections on 9/11 and the War on Terror* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2009), pp. 65, 66

⁴¹ Discussing a post-9/11 understanding of American exceptionalism, Bacevich proposes that, during the last decade of the twentieth century 'Americans became accustomed to thinking of their country as "the indispensable nation" [...] carr[ying] with it both responsibilities and prerogatives [...] to preside over [...] globalization', which serves as a 'euphemism for soft, or informal, empire [...] creating something akin to [self-appointed] Pax Americana' [...] bountiful reserves of power – economic, political, cultural [...] military' leading to the appearance of unassailability. But, after 9/11, America has increasingly resorted to coercive control to shore up its superpower status: Andrew J. Bacevich, *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, [2008] 2009), pp. 7, 2

⁴² As Redfield goes on to suggest, the U.S. 'went to "war" against terrorism in 2001 because it [...] cherishes its sovereign exceptionalism [...] its dominant position within a globally interdependent [...] world': Redfield (2009), p. 66

⁴³ Dianne Feinstein, 'Foreward', in *Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program* (United States Senate, 2014), <<http://www.intelligence.senate.gov/study2014/sscistudy1.pdf>> [accessed 29 January 2015] (p. 2)

captives. Just as Feinstein states in her report on the actions of the C.I.A., that ‘regardless of the pressures and the need to act, the Intelligence Community’s actions must always reflect who we are as a nation, and adhere to our laws and standards’, so too does the legitimacy of both the fear-based irrational behaviours of the Silk family and Shori’s status as a genetically modified being come under scrutiny.⁴⁴ Despite judicial support falling in her favour, Shori’s narrative arc ‘does not resolve [...] antagonism’; she, too, ultimately fails to find an answer to the terrors she encounters, and recognizes the potential for irrational violence within herself: when facing Russell in the Council of Judgement, Shori realizes ‘coldly that [...] If he came after me and I could kill him, I would – joyfully.’⁴⁵ With existence a constant state of flux, as Baudrillard identifies, ‘Good and Evil advance together’, as points on a spectrum of moral judgement and in Shori, as a hybrid, both good and evil and the arguments that form around them progress as one but affect no solutions, no definites.⁴⁶

Constant to Shori’s ambivalent character is Butler’s incorporation of pseudo-science and race in her narrative of discovery and judgement, bringing into question the ‘genes’ of this genre in an engagement of modern America and vampirism. Shori is a disruptive figure both in terms of perceived status quo within the story and in Butler’s re-imagining of vampirism as a participatory tool in an ongoing cultural dialogue that, even in the twenty-first century, still contains unhealthy, unhelpful, and unreasoned oppositions. Pramod Nayar’s argument takes up this dialogic understanding as he argues that *Fledgling* ‘is neither the postmodern rejection of all origins nor the essentialist desire to claim a gender,

⁴⁴ Dianne Feinstein’s introduction to the SSCI report reads, ‘I have attempted throughout to remember the impact on the nation and to the CIA workforce from the attacks of September 11, 2001. I can understand the CIA’s impulse to consider the use of every possible tool to gather intelligence and remove terrorists from the battlefield, and [the] CIA was encouraged by political leaders and the public to do whatever it could to prevent another attack. [...] Nevertheless, such pressure, fear, and expectation of further terrorist plots do not justify, temper, or excuse improper actions taken by individuals or organizations in the name of national security [...] It is precisely at these times of national crisis that our government must be guided by the lessons of our history and subject decisions to internal and external review’: Dianne Feinstein (2014), <<http://www.intelligence.senate.gov/study2014/sscistudy1.pdf>> [accessed 29 January 2015] (p. 2)

⁴⁵ Baudrillard, trans. by Turner ([2002] 2003), p. 58; Butler (2005), p. 299

⁴⁶ Baudrillard, trans. by Turner ([2002] 2003), p. 13

species, or racial identity, but a dialogue'.⁴⁷ This is, in part, true but, as a part of this dialogue, Butler does not unreservedly condemn any one viewpoint, with even the Silks gaining a degree of narrative sympathy, despite their supremacist attitudes and mass murder: Shori sympathises with their 'obvious pain' at the judicial dissolution of their family, whilst recognizing her own murderous predisposition when pushed towards self-preservation or protection of loved ones, for example in her acknowledgement that she 'meant to destroy' Katharine Dahlman for instigating the murder of her symbiont, Theodora.⁴⁸ Thus, Butler stages a defence of Shori primarily in terms of a stand against the Silks' extremist racial prejudice, but this is principally part of her portrayal as an *individual* whose existence is blighted and rights are violated merely because of her difference to a perceived norm that persists as a dominant in both text and context.

Butler's vampires, part of but apart from the nation they have made home, scrutinize a complex, and often partisan American culture, where individualism is both paramount and subsumed. While America is constitutionally built on the rights and freedoms of individuals 'to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects' – recent history has delivered a curtailment of these rights, with the 'anti-terrorist' Patriot Act based on a vagueness that allows for political and martial weakening of personal liberties: 'To deter and punish [...] and for [unspecified and therefore open to misappropriation] other purposes.'⁴⁹ This, like Russell's retroactive attempts to justify a failed unilateral expunging of all who are party to Shori's creation – 'We are not them [...] Nor would we try to be them. Ever. Not for any reason. Not even to gain the day, the cost is too great' – has left

⁴⁷ Pramod K. Nayar, 'A New Biological Citizenship: Posthumanism in Octavia E. Butler's *Fledgling*', *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*, 58, 4 (2012), 796-817, p. 809

⁴⁸ Butler (2005), pp. 302, 306

⁴⁹ 'Article the sixth', 'Transcription of the 1789 Joint Resolution of Congress Proposing 12 Amendments to the U.S. Constitution', *Bill of Rights*, http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html> [accessed 30 May 2015]; *Uniting and Strengthening of America by Providing Appropriate Tools required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism (USA PATRIOT ACT) of 2001* Public Law 107-56 107th Congress, <<https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-107hr3162enr/pdf/BILLS-107hr3162enr.pdf>> [accessed 10 April 2012] (p. 1)

individuals prey to the paranoid attitudes of those who consider themselves in authority.⁵⁰

Butler's narrative is unafraid in its highlighting of flaws and inconsistencies within America's legal system, with the Ina Daniel Gordon – one of the male sons of this clan picked to be a future mate for Shori – stating: 'Human trials are often games [...] if a murderer has a good lawyer, he might go unpunished even though his guilt is obvious.'⁵¹ But central to this remains Butler's primary focus (and one to which this discussion will return): a targeting of Shori and her family predominantly based on a prejudicial over-reaction to her hybridity: she is denigrated as a 'Dirty little nigger bitch'.⁵² Negotiating perceptions of difference is central to *Fledgling*, and the following sub-sections, in line with previous chapters, deal with this novel's distinction from two positions: generic and contextual.

Shori's burgeoning self-awareness in the statement, 'I think I'm an experiment', is both indicative of her position as a hybridized Ina, persecuted for embodying racial modification, and that of Butler's negotiation of the wider vampire genre.⁵³ In Shori's (re-)learning about Ina history and a wider comprehension of vampirism, she places Ina as 'probably responsible for most vampire legends', which enables Butler to weave a narrative around redefining modern vampire fiction.⁵⁴ Shori's musing introduces a realist tone into this vampire narrative, questioning traditional generic expectations alongside her existence:

they're [...] undead [...] they drink blood [...] have no reflection in mirrors [...] can become bats or wolves, they turn other people into vampires [...] They were fictional beings. Folklore. There were no vampires. So what was I?⁵⁵

In the following sub-section, attention turns to Butler's modification of both vampire protagonist and genre, 'experimenting' with vampire fiction as a field of writing that has traditionally paralleled western culture's white male dominant through Shori's narrative hegemony.

⁵⁰ Butler (2005), p. 292

⁵¹ Butler (2005), p. 220

⁵² Butler (2005), p. 173

⁵³ Butler (2005), p. 31

⁵⁴ Butler (2005), p. 123

⁵⁵ Butler (2005), p. 16

‘I think I’m an experiment’: Blurring the Genetics of a Genre⁵⁶

As the last novel to be discussed in this thesis, Butler’s *Fledgling*, like those examined above, displays clear understanding of the ur-text *Dracula* fundamentally in terms of negation alongside showing connectivity to generic cousin-texts, such as Cronin’s *The Passage*, with which it shares a narrative concentration on genetic engineering (see chapter two). Part of a genre that has, despite its supernatural core, frequent recourse to a scientifically-based (pseudo) rationale that can be traced back, once more, to *Dracula*, *Fledgling* follows on from attempts to present biological illuminations of vampirism by human characters such as Stoker’s Van Helsing, Matheson’s Neville, and Fox’s Doodlebug (discussed in the previous chapter).⁵⁷ The genetic engineering touched upon in *Fledgling* draws on the same recourse to scientific jargon employed in the Monsters texts of section one that involve such things as gene splicing, RNA, DNA, mutation, and experimentation. In a modern world where science dominates the everyday, vampirism has necessarily embraced the need to ‘rationalize’ the supernatural, with Butler’s Shori a scientific as well as genetic experiment. Butler’s dovetailing of science fiction (SF) and vampire fantasy is determined by what is here described as ‘mutualistic symbiosis’, applicable as much to genre as to the relationship between Butler’s Ina and their human companions in its fusion of forms.⁵⁸ In line with Auerbach’s recognition, it is their ‘differences that keep vampires alive’, both vampires and genre are fluid forms that thrive through ever-

⁵⁶ Butler (2005), p. 31

⁵⁷ Director Boris Sagal’s 1971 film, *The Omega Man*, is one of several film adaptations made in over half a century since the first publication of Matheson’s *I Am Legend*. The change of title for Sagal’s film draws attention to anthropocentric finality by using the last letter of the classic Greek alphabet

⁵⁸ ‘mutualistic symbiosis’ creates as strong a desire in Ina as in symbiont and, arguably, Butler’s vampires are enslaved to their food sources. As the Ina Joan Braithwaite explains to Shori: ‘We need our symbionts [...] not only their blood, but physical contact with them and emotional reassurance from them. Companionship [...] We either weave ourselves a family of symbionts, or we die’: my emphasis, Butler (2005), pp. 123, 270; As Nancy Moran explains of symbiosis, ‘In mutualistic associations, both host and symbiont often evolve to accommodate one another [...] Many symbionts provide clear-cut cases of mutualism, providing their hosts with nutrients or defenses. But other cases are less readily categorized. Any microbe that forms chronic infections in an individual host or in a host lineage may evolve to conserve or even to benefit its host, as this will help to maintain its immediate ecological resource. Many host-associated microorganisms are thus expected to combine mutualistic and pathogenic properties, in the sense that they can invade novel hosts but do not kill them immediately’: Nancy A. Moran, ‘Symbiosis’, *Current Biology*, 16, 20 (2006), 866-871, p. 867

changing iterations, with Shori's hybridity a literal interpretation of a need for adaptation.⁵⁹

Butler's assimilation of SF tropes model what Ken MacLeod argues of Science Fiction – it is 'essentially the literature of progress' – with her narrative inclusion of biology, and specifically genetic engineering, employing a scientific dynamic.⁶⁰ The assimilation of (pseudo-)science expands the vampiric supernatural form to parallel Gothic concerns generated by scientific advances that go back two centuries to the 'modern Prometheus' of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, where Victor Frankenstein's experimentation leads to the creation of a patchwork man who also has to learn who/what he is.⁶¹ Alongside this, Butler taps into contemporary concerns surrounding medical science, seen in the potential for bio-warfare discussed in the Monsters section, but here mirroring a cultural reflex concern for potential unknown consequences that come with genetic manipulation. While notions of normativity (whether cultural or generic) are themselves subject to variation, dependant on constructed ideas of what should be valued or decried, *Fledgling* does little to conform to either cultural or generic norms. Even in her acknowledgement of a generic continuum, with references to *Dracula* and folkloric myths, Butler's narrative pushes at the boundaries of what it means to be part of this genre, with her hybrid protagonist, Shori, starting afresh – and taking the reader with her – on a journey of both personal understanding and a wider consideration of vampirism: through Shori, as with all the texts discussed in this thesis, there is a demonstration of the need to understand generic history, to look back in order to move the genre forward.

Significant within modern American vampire fiction, Butler's exploration therefore undermines many established generic tropes. Physically, Shori and the

⁵⁹ Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 1

⁶⁰ *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. by Edward James and Farah Mendelsohn (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 231

⁶¹ Despite possibly being considered as 'unscholarly', David Pringle, in his introduction to *Science Fiction: the 100 Best Novels*, defines SF as 'a form of fantastic fiction which exploits the imaginative perspectives of modern science' and the supernatural as dominated by the 'irrational [and...] inexplicable in terms of the modern scientific world-view': David Pringle, *Science Fiction: the 100 Best Novels* (New York: Carroll and Graf, [1985] 1997), p. 11

Ina present some fundamental variants to U.S. generic norms which stem from Lugosi's cinematic portrayal of Dracula. Shori's father, Iosif, acknowledges that Ina are vampires and, in teaching her and her symbiont Wright about them, also provides the reader with an understanding of their deviation from the generic modelling of *Dracula*. As Iosif tells them:

We have very little in common with the vampire creatures Bram Stoker describes in *Dracula*, but we are long-lived blood-drinkers [...] We live alongside, yet apart from, human beings, except for those humans who become our symbionts. We have much longer lives than humans. Most of us must sleep during the day and, yes, we need blood to live. Human blood is most satisfying to us, and fortunately, we don't have to injure the humans we take it from. But we are born as we are. We can't magically convert humans into our kind. We do keep those who join with us healthier, stronger, and harder to kill [...] In that way, we lengthen their lives by several decades.⁶²

Iosif's summary makes clear perceived distinctions between Ina and Stoker's 'vampire creatures' (a term that categorizes vampires as not only sub-human, but also sub-Ina). His words are matter-of-fact, typifying a narrative imperative towards a rationalizing of the supernatural that is, in itself, impossible. But, there is no means of divesting vampirism of its uncanniness through the use of modern science: as Jonathan Harker acknowledges in *Dracula*, these revenants bring with them 'powers [...] which mere "modernity" cannot kill.'⁶³ Here, vampires are a near-human species, born (not created) to be long-lived nocturnal haemovores, and closely bonded to their human symbionts.⁶⁴ Their form of parasitism is shown as extending and enhancing the lives of their human symbionts, but also sharing attributes of slavery, in lifelong (chemically-induced 'voluntary') human indenture, to which this discussion will return below: as Wright declares of his sym-Shori status, 'It scares me a little. I want to be with [Shori], need to be with her, even though I don't really understand what I'm getting into'.⁶⁵ Consequently,

⁶² Butler (2005), p. 63

⁶³ Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. 41

⁶⁴ Butler (2005), p. 63

⁶⁵ As the Ina Joan Braithwaite explains to Shori, 'Symbionts – fully bound symbionts – give up a great deal of freedom to be with us. Sometimes, after a while, they resent us even though they don't truly want to leave, even though they love us. As a result, they behave badly'. However, as Joan goes on to state, 'it's extremely difficult for [Ina] to kill or injure our bound symbionts.' In discussing the Ina Milo Silk, Joan continues, 'He resents his need of them, sees it as a weakness, and yet he loves them. He would stand between his symbionts and any danger. He might shout at

it is difficult to reconcile the relationship between Inas and symbionts as entirely symbiotic – it is as much abusive as benevolent. Butler takes vampiric oppression beyond a more usual capitalistic monstrous mining of lives and into an addictive symbiosis. The Ina-Symbiont relationship, in contrast with a Dracula-inspired typical vampiric parasitism of humans, is fraught with traumatic ambiguity, at once both an enslavement through addiction and a loving bond that, if broken, results in death. As Iosif's statement confirms, relationships formed with humans are necessarily species-serving; they are all about the Ina 'we'. The repeated inclusive pronoun does not speak of objectivity. Iosif's 'we' is firm in its subjective focus on Ina needs, with human symbionts necessary, but very much secondary, to their survival. This is a fundamental for them, an existential imperative. Consequently, *Fledging* conveys an expansion of what can be identified as vampiric, pushing understanding of a genre that has been dominated by a vampire-predator / human-prey typology.

From the early nineteenth-century publication of Polidori's fascinating but deadly Lord Ruthven in *The Vampyre*, and the poetic femme fatales of Coleridge's 'Christabel', and Keats' 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci' through to the many be-fanged Mills and Boon-type romantic heroes of late-twentieth and early twenty-first century paranormal romances who, like Meyer's Edward Cullen (chapter three), seemingly crave human affection as much as blood, Butler's Ina vampirize mind, body, and soul of their symbionts. Iosif's words (above) make plain a continuation of vampiric selfishness, manipulating 'mutualistic' human bondage for Ina survival. The bite of these Inas, unlike other vampires, induces euphoria and devotion. As Shori deduces, even while isolated and unaware of her background, 'there [was] something in my saliva that pacified [...] and pleased'.⁶⁶ Although she acknowledges it as 'important' to help 'her' humans, this does little to distance

them, but even then, he would be careful. He would not order them to harm themselves or one another. And he would never harm one of them. I think it's an instinct for self-preservation on our part. We need our symbionts more than most of them know. We need not only their blood, but physical contact with them and emotional reassurance from them. Companionship. I've never known even one of us to survive without symbionts. We should be able to do it—survive through casual hunting. But the truth is that that only works for short periods. Then we sicken': Butler (2005), pp. 63, 269-270

⁶⁶ Butler (2005), p. 26

these vampires from the generically prevalent use of humans as fodder.⁶⁷ Humans are essentially commodities no matter how well they may be treated or what perks and joys they gain from being symbionts, even used by the Silks ‘as weapons’, sent during the day-time to murder those Ina (and their symbionts) associated with Shori while they are unconscious.⁶⁸

Butler also undermines the prevailing generic norm of vampiric immortality, contradicting the premise that vampires are ‘immortal unless someone stabs them in the heart with a wooden stake’.⁶⁹ Her Ina vampires are not undead but long-living *mortals*. As part of this, even the folkloric revenance associated with vampires is rationalized: ‘[humans] hacked at us until they thought we were dead, then buried us. When we healed, we came out of our graves confused, mad with hunger [...] we became the “walking dead” or the “undead” [and...] they learned to burn or behead us’.⁷⁰ Butler absorbs folkloric / earlier generic elements and bonds them with benevolent scientific intent into a narrative that is predicated on Shori’s need to establish a personal understanding of genre / gene inheritance: ‘your mother made genetic alterations directly to the germ line so that you’ll be able to pass on your strengths to your children [...] to be awake and alert during the day, able to walk in sun-light’.⁷¹ Thus, from the outset, indeterminacy dominates Shori’s narrative connection with vampirism, with her initial research leading not to self-understanding but to uncertainty: ‘They were fictional beings. Folklore. There were no vampires. So what was I?’⁷² In line with *Dracula* as ur-text for the modern American vampire genre, there is ambivalence surrounding Shori’s identity but, unlike *Dracula* and the majority of subsequent vampire fiction, any confusion – and even disbelief – are voiced by a vampire and not by humans.

⁶⁷ Butler (2005), p. 26

⁶⁸ Butler (2005), p. 257

⁶⁹ Butler (2005), p. 15

⁷⁰ Butler (2005), p. 189

⁷¹ Butler (2005), p. 218; As with Meyer’s *Twilight* examined in chapter three, Butler draws on Stoker’s Count’s ability to function, albeit in a reduced capacity, during the daytime: see chapter three, above, for a discussion of Meyer’s *Twilight* in relation to *Dracula*’s daylight abilities

⁷² Butler (2005), p. 16

As much as Butler has attempted to reinvent the relationship between vampire and human, the seduction and addiction of human symbionts by Ina creates a truer parasitism than that most often ascribed to vampirism.⁷³ Parasites need their host(s) alive and, frequently, those vampires considered as monstrous, have less to do with parasitism than with straightforward slaughter, often on a mass scale (as seen in the apocalyptic narratives of section one above), tending towards an amassing of exsanguinated corpses or a glut of undead minions. Humans, in 'classic' vampire tales are therefore usually victims or prey. Even those supposedly desired or loved by their vampires, such as Stoker's Mina Harker, and even Harris's Sookie (see chapter five, above), do not escape coercion and exploitation. Here, what Butler gives her reader is (blood related) 'families' of vampires who retain much that is understood as vampiric, but who distance themselves from others in this genre through the narrative questioning of a monstrous rationale:

All [vampires] took something from their subjects, usually not caring how they injured the subject. Many killed their subjects. Many were dead themselves, but magically reanimated by the blood, flesh, or energy they took. One feeding usually meant the taking of one life. And that made no sense, at least for those who took blood. Who could need that much blood? Why kill a person who would willingly feed you again and again if you handled them carefully? No wonder vampires in folklore were feared, hated, and hunted.⁷⁴

Butler's vampires buck a generic trend towards the magical transformative abilities of vampire bites turning human victims into members of the undead that spans the other texts investigated here.⁷⁵ Shori's apparently pragmatic approach lends the supernatural a degree of simplistic logic: 'If a dog bit a man no one would expect the man to become a dog'.⁷⁶ Ina infection of humans to bind rather than turn them counters the generic elephant in the room: as demonstrated in the Monsters narratives discussed in section one, the mass turning of humans can only lead to vampiric unsustainability.

⁷³ See the ur-text(s) of *Dracula*, where – with few exceptions, such as his brides / Mina – the Count parasitizes for blood / puppeteering until his victims are no longer needed / exsanguinated, then moves on to the next human resource

⁷⁴ Butler (2005), p. 37

⁷⁵ Butler (2005), pp. 73, 261, 181

⁷⁶ Butler (2005), p. 123

Although it is possible to read Shori's ruminating on the nature of vampirism as anything from naïve to pragmatic, above all it is interrogative. As a Discord, it must be remembered that Shori's character affords a means of examining what it is to be a vampire, and how they negotiate modern American culture. Her narrative reflections on the 'all', 'many', and 'who' of pre-modern 'vampires in folklore' serves to linguistically distance Shori: as an 'experiment', she identifies herself with a potential future for those vampires that move away from the folkloric or reanimated corpses portrayed here as killers, 'feared, hated, and hunted' by humans.⁷⁷ However, once again, mixed messages are exposed. It could be argued that Shori's amnesiac state, at least in part, justifies her de-personalized distancing from other vampires, but the adjectival reduction of humans to 'subjects' portrays an instinctive positioning of her (vampire) self as dominant. Her no-nonsense approach to feeding – 'Why kill a person who would willingly feed you again and again' – reveals a ruthless undertone, despite claims to symbiotic loving relationships. Here, it must be noted that, biologically, symbiosis is not of equal benefit to all entities within the system and, while the human symbionts do benefit from a sexual euphoria (alongside extended lifespans) when bitten, this interaction, as touched on above, ultimately benefits vampires more than symbionts: as Russell admits under cross-examination, '[human] lives are brief and, without us, riddled with disease and violence. And yet, we need them [...] We could not live without them.'⁷⁸ Following on from the question, 'Why kill a person who would willingly feed you?', is the narrative understanding that prolonging human life expedites Ina parasitism, simplifying their long-term need for humans as help-meets as well as food sources. Ina ambiguity, understood through Shori's personal arc of learning, mirrors generic evolution. Character mimics genre, as these vampires morph to engage with prejudices and hostilities that remain ingrained in modern American culture.

In a genre where white male hegemony has, as mentioned above, long been the standard, Butler's narrative represents a discordance, transforming the white

⁷⁷ Butler (2005), p. 37

⁷⁸ Butler (2005), p. 292

male from self-assured dominant to violent actor of fears of vulnerabilities. As Anne Williams suggests, a 'heroine-centred narrative' is rare enough within the Gothic, but a prepubescent(looking)-black-female-vampire-centred narrative shines out as unique.⁷⁹ Where, up until this chapter, the vampire fiction discussed has been dominated by pallid males, with females either secondary figures or, at best, of equal vampiric (if not narrative) merit, or besotted human narrators, Shori presents a challenge that has repercussive generic possibilities as much as it threatens the norms of the Ina world of Butler's making and, where one vampire tale dares to go, others will follow.⁸⁰

'Dirty little nigger bitch': Vampires and Revenant Racism in America⁸¹

Shori, although the moral guiding force for this story, as already outlined, is vilified for her racial hybridity: 'Dirty little nigger bitch [...] Goddamn mongrel cub'.⁸² Propagandizing surrounding otherness to a perceived Ina 'purity' emanates from Russell as head of the Silk clan who, at his most virulent, ludicrously states, 'What will she give us all? Fur? Tails?'⁸³ This mirrors a persistent cultural trope with, as Patricia Hill Collins argues, black people having long been culturally positioned as occupying the boundary space between white people and animals.⁸⁴ Hill Collins goes on to state that 'viewing Africans and animals alike as [...] ruled by "instinct or bodily impulses" work[s] to [...] dehumanize Black people' and, in doing so, functions to de-problematize, or position as less ethically troubling, their subordination and/or segregation.⁸⁵ Shori's introductory portrayal as 'ruled by' instinctive survival urges is catalyst for an interrogation of everybody and

⁷⁹ Anne Williams, 'The Fiction of Feminine Desire: Not the Mirror but the Lamp', *Women's Writing*, 1, 2 (1994), 229-240, p. 229

⁸⁰ The hybridity of science fiction and the fantastic brings to mind the well-known 'split infinitive' opening phrase from every episode of the *Star Trek* television series, as well as many of the film adaptations: 'to boldly go where no man has gone before'. As a black female vampire, Shori takes the genre in a generically enlivening direction, if not the 'final frontier'

⁸¹ Butler (2005), p. 173

⁸² Butler (2005), p. 173

⁸³ Butler (2005), p. 300

⁸⁴ Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), p. 99

⁸⁵ Hill Collins (2004), p. 100

everything she encounters: she is a 'new' vampire. As an unsettling form, drawing attention to 'instinct or bodily impulses' as part of her vampirism, Shori's hybridity ushers in a discordancy that draws attention to a white male cultural hegemonic within the vampire genre but, as will be returned to, her use of human syms clouds her position, making her both subordinated and subordinator.⁸⁶ While black vampiric predecessors exist beyond this novel, such as the comic book and film character Blade, white male generic dominance has gone largely unchallenged since Polidori's Lord Ruthven's 'deadly hue [...] never gained a warmer tint' and set a precedent for parasitic white aristocrats in Western literature in *The Vampyre* in 1819.⁸⁷

These generically adopted culturally ingrained prejudices and hostilities are, within *Fledgling*, dominated by an argument surrounding fear of what Shori's creation represents to her Ina antagonists. As Beth Innocenti identifies in her discussion of the rhetoric of 'fear appeals', they are 'practically inevitable in civic discourse' (and, therefore, equally inevitable within the fictions that shadow these discourses).⁸⁸ These 'fear appeals', as persuasive means to 'induce action', encourage social cohesion in the face of potential 'harmful consequences' emanating from deviations.⁸⁹ As with all fictions created within its borders, *Fledgling* is part of America's 'civic discourse', its 'fear appeals' engaging with a continuing cultural racial bias in favour of pale-skinned people. Fear-created irrationality is central to the Silks' reactionary, flailing, closed-circuit violent lashing out against what they deem to be Shori's 'deviations' in favour of the *status quo ante scientia*. Returning to Gordon's suggestion that 'all fearing is "propositional," [and] that all fears are fears that something is (or was, or will be) the case', where other Ina see Shori's African American characteristics as a positive genetic evolutionary intervention, the Silks can only see her as a force for

⁸⁶ Hill Collins (2004), p. 100

⁸⁷ John Polidori, *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre*, ed. by Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1997] 1998), p. 3

⁸⁸ Beth Innocenti, 'A Normative Pragmatic Model of Making Fear Appeals', *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 44, 3 (2011), 273-290, p. 27

⁸⁹ Innocenti (2011), p. 273

the 'will be' defeat of their existence.⁹⁰ Neither the American nation nor Ina collective, both built on blood and exploitation (as already touched on), can escape their revenant histories. Shori's genetically modified form incorporates past (human) aberrations within future (Ina) possibilities and, in so doing, creates schisms within her community. The bigoted extremism of Russell's propagandizing for Ina 'purity' is met with the opposition of those whose opinions display traits of liberality and progressiveness, such as the Ina Alice Rappaport, who voices the undesirability of such irrational hostility: 'Over the centuries, I've seen too much racial prejudice among humans. It isn't a weed we need growing among us.'⁹¹ This racial tension is debated by Butler through the catalyst of a courtroom scenario (the Ina Council of Judgment), where an argument is constructed surrounding Shori's genetic assimilation of African American human DNA.

Butler's Council of Judgment puts prevailing racist dogma on trial via the medium of vampire fiction and, through it, unsettling but not prescribing to readers. Through the elucidation of vampire Daniel Gordon, this Ina legal system is opened up to Shori's understanding:

the work of a Council of Judgement is to learn the truth and then decide what to do about it within our law [...] the problem might be fear and intimidation [...] It dishonors everyone involved, and everyone remembers.⁹²

Revenant racial tensions are debated by Butler with arguments constructed for and against hybridity, although, as mentioned above, the narrative remains open-ended and, despite a guilty verdict exercised against the Silks and Katharine Dahlman, any 'truth' surrounding understanding of race unqualified. In bringing together a 'jury' of representatives from thirteen vampire clans to reach a verdict and pass sentence, there is a correlation between fact and fiction, as the violence and subsequent arbitration of the Silks' vigilante racial protectionism mirrors a contemporary need to address unresolved cultural tensions and inequalities. The

⁹⁰ Robert M. Gordon, *The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre*, ed. by Robert Morrison and Chris Baldick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1997] 1998), p. 560; for further discussion, see Michael Pfau, 'Whose Afraid of Fear Appeals? Contingency, Courage and Deliberation in Rhetorical Theory and Practice', *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 40, 2 (2007), 216-237

⁹¹ Butler (2005), pp. 292, 274

⁹² Butler (2005), p. 220

Silks may be found guilty and even punished, but they show no sign of repentance or attitudinal change, giving insight into an intolerance of difference to a white absolute as Shori is made party to a vampirically a-historical reminder that whatever America is facing at present, similar has been seen before and will be seen again.

Central to the Silks' hostility towards genetic modification (even when of benefit), is a politicizing of attitudes about which historian William Provine states:

changing social attitudes will influence areas of biology where little is known and the conclusions are possibly socially explosive [...] Geneticists and the public should realize that the science of genetics is often closely intertwined with social attitudes and political considerations.⁹³

Butler presents politics and scientific advancement as inseparable through the Silks' 'socially explosive' fear of genetic redundancy. The Silks argue that 'mixing human genes with ours would weaken us' (despite empirical evidence to the contrary, such as Shori's surviving being beaten and burnt where her non-modified family do not), to justify their attempted extermination of all those connected to the genetic modification of Ina vampires.⁹⁴ Without having them give voice to the refrain, what the Silks' actions and attempted justifications exclaim can be summarized as the reactionary rallying cry, 'we don't like change!' Here are a privileged group who represent feared usurpation of supremacy in terms of both vampirism and wider culture. They are affluent white males, top of their food chain and reluctant to lose their power base, albeit from within what for Ina is reported to be a matriarchal culture. Shori, as the embodiment of potential for positive advancement comes with what the Silks see as the demise of their authority: in their fear, the Silks only perceive Shori as the bringer of a binary either/or scenario.⁹⁵ The Ina, as a microcosm of wider U.S. culture, show a

⁹³ Provine (1973), p. 796

⁹⁴ Butler (2005), p. 225

⁹⁵ The Silks are portrayed as hysterical white men, desperate to maintain their power when faced with an Ina backlash in favour of Shori (Russell is even held down by two of his sons during the Council trial when asked if he accepts his family's sentence for their crimes). As Neil Foley suggests of modern American culture, 'few white Americans feel obliged to ponder how membership in the major race gives them powers and privileges. America is inherently a "white" country: in character, in structure, in culture': Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*

distinct division between those who perceive Shori as vanguard for a better future and those who desire to cling to a divided and divisive past. Returning to Nayar, he focuses his reading of Shori's character in terms of her biology, acknowledging her as:

an exception to the species (Ina) norm [...] the radical other of the vampire species (itself the other to the human) [...] her dubious biological-ontological status and the representation-recognition of her as a hybrid [who] has attracted animosity and attacks.⁹⁶

In line with the argument proposed here, Nayar identifies an ambiguity in Shori's difference to the '(Ina) norm', considering her as a 'radical' point of 'biological-ontological' destabilizing and, as such, the focus for a hostility to change. The racially-centred fear-laden opposition of the Silks is condensed in Russell's outburst during the cross-questioning of the Council: 'We are not them [humans]!'⁹⁷ Butler's narrative ambivalence sees the Silks expunged if not absolutely censured for using Shori's 'exceptionality' as an argument to justify their attempted violent purging of her as a perceived threat to (their) Ina integrity.

With the story climax dominated by a Council of Judgement, in which the Silks are challenged to defend their prejudiced actions, courtroom arguments open up examinations of their fallacious positioning regarding subjects such as miscegenation and eugenics, and the pros and cons of 'designer' DNA versus Darwinian survival of the fittest. One of the human raiders sent to kill Shori as well as the Gordon family and their symbionts, Victor Colon (whose name instantaneously connects his utterances to the production of faecal matter!), under the mental influence of the Silks, spews forth an abusive tirade that summarizes the Silks' divisive position: 'Dirty little nigger bitch [...] Goddamn mongrel [...] Couldn't let you and...your kind...your family...breed'.⁹⁸ This invective discharge highlights the Silk-led dread of miscegenation, exhibiting a paranoia that this genetically-engineered Ina might reduce their social significance to the point

(New York, London, Toronto, Sydney: Scribner, [1992] 2003), p. 4; see also, Neil Foley, 'Black, White, and Brown', *The Journal of Southern History*, 70, 2 (2004), 343-350

⁹⁶ Nayar (2012), p. 798

⁹⁷ Butler (2005), p. 292

⁹⁸ Butler (2005), p. 173

of being 'like symbionts'; lacking authority and autonomy.⁹⁹ Unable or unwilling to openly express their terror, the Silk family adopt recognizable racist rhetoric that continues to privilege America's pale-skinned citizens.¹⁰⁰

Shori's garnering of unthinking prejudice from the racist vigilantism of the Silks places her at the centre of a meditation about the social and moral ramifications of racism and racial 'purity', with hybridity being a liminal and, therefore, unstable state. The Silks' employment of extrajudicial methods to maintain their vampiric 'white supremacy' through the killing of all Ina and symbionts associated with Shori (except for Celia and Brook, the two symbionts belonging to Shori's father Iosif, who are away from home when the Petrescu clan are murdered) draws on the killings perpetrated by American lynch mobs between the late eighteenth century and the 1960s. The term 'white supremacy' carries multiple meanings ranging from specious scientific arguments that genetic distinctions somehow point to superiority of fair skinned races, to errant ideological assumptions of 'white' intellectual and moral superiority, and the societal structuring that privileges whiteness. Un-scientific arguments attached to 'white supremacy' have been adopted and adapted by Americans through such agents as the Ku Klux Klan, anti-miscegenation laws, and the banning of mixed marriages (only fully repealed in 1967).¹⁰¹ Shori's colour is covered by Butler from the position of the unrest her difference causes within Ina society. As a 'black-skinned' vampire, the Silks negative appellation of her as 'dirty' employs a hackneyed racial trope that does nothing to underpin their argument.¹⁰² Transferred into a vampiric community, racial antagonism allows for a hypothesizing about the reasoning behind the targeting of Shori and her family. Shori's symbiont Wright proposes three probabilities:

⁹⁹ Butler (2005), p. 109

¹⁰⁰ For an outline of the argument whereby the privilege of white dominance is frequently unquestioned in its role as cultural 'norm', see Kendall Clark, 'Defining "White Privilege"', <http://racism.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=387:whiteness05a&catid=69&Itemid=165> [accessed 7 April 2015]

¹⁰¹ For a brief précis of America's miscegenation laws, see <<http://www.tn.gov/tsla/exhibits/blackhistory/pdfs/Miscegenation%20laws.pdf>> [accessed 17 March 2015]

¹⁰² Butler (2005), p. 173

some human group has [...] decided you're all dangerous, evil vampires. Or [...] some Ina group or Ina individual is jealous [sic] of the success Shori's family had with blending human and Ina DNA and having children who can stay awake through the day and not burn so easily in the sun. Or [...] because Shori is black, and racists [...] don't like the idea that a good part of the answer to your daytime problems is melanin.¹⁰³

Taking these three excuses for violence against Shori one at a time, the first reads as influenced by monstrous vampire narratives (as discussed in section one above) whereby a 'human group', such as Stoker's paradigmatic 'Crew of Light', hunt down and destroy a perceived vampire threat.¹⁰⁴ The second can be associated with the Dreams of section two, whereby there is a desire, manifested as envy, for the abilities afforded to Shori through genetically splicing her vampire genes with those of a black human 'mother'. But it is the third hypothetical excuse for the extremist behaviour meted out that marks this story as culturally discordant: Ina vampires act on racist ideologies, turning on their own kind in fear of highlighting their biggest weaknesses as vampires (intolerance to sunlight and unconsciousness during the daytime) and, through it, potential cessation of power. Shori's narrative is thus dominated by the effects of racially-motivated persecution and exploitation, with her hybridity positioned as a (misconceived) miscegenatory threat to Ina collective identity by the Silks' conservative faction.¹⁰⁵

As already suggested, Shori's hybridity also meets positive rational responses which are grounded in an admiration of her as a genetically modified entity bridging the divide between vampires and humans. The vampire Preston Gordon synopsis Shori as having:

¹⁰³ Butler (2005), pp. 272, 147

¹⁰⁴ As previously discussed, 'Crew of Light' is Christopher Craft's collective noun for Stoker's 'group of crusaders includes Van Helsing himself, Dr. John Seward, Arthur Holmwood, Quincey Morris, and later Jonathan Harker'. Leaving aside the gender implications of his exclusion of the contribution to their tracking and destruction of Dracula made by Mina Harker that cannot be addressed here, this term directs readers towards understanding the oppositions as part of a standard questing narrative, where 'good' (or 'light') humans triumph over the 'evil' (or 'dark') vampire monster: Craft, in Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. 445

¹⁰⁵ From within an overarching matriarchal social structure, Butler's Ina live in gendered clans, with adult males and females only spending significant time together for reproductive or legal activities

potentially life-saving human DNA that has darkened her skin and given her something we've sought for generations: the ability to walk in sunlight, to stay awake and alert during the day.¹⁰⁶

Preston avoids the emotive language that dominates the Silks' arguments, instead reducing skin tone to functionality – the human melanin acts as a means of increased protection against extreme photosensitivity as well as affecting an alteration to Shori's circadian rhythm, allowing her to remain conscious during daylight hours. Through such reason and logic, Butler evidences the fallacy of a (white dominant) espousal of racist dogma that contradicts purported effects of the Civil Rights Act (and subsequent amendments) that, in Risen's rose-tinted opinion, 'reache[s] deep into the social fabric of the nation to refashion structures of racial order and domination'.¹⁰⁷ Butler's engagement with tropes of race and slavery have less to do with revisiting historical horrors, or even campaigning against continued cultural inequalities as such, but serve to expose a divisive, toxic, and hollow 'them and us' intra-cultural ideology that draws on continuing racial hostilities within American culture.¹⁰⁸ Shori personifies what Nayar contends is a 'double-bind of alterity': as a vampire with the genetic assimilation of African American DNA, she is a source of change and, as such, perceived as both threat and promise to Ina status quo.¹⁰⁹ The violence against Shori and those who aid her situates Butler's novel (alongside Fox's) in a continuing dialogue with racial inequities that demonstrate a lack of cultural evolution in the half a century since the initial introduction of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. Racial animosities continue to be culturally challenging with, as the epigraph from Savage at the start of this chapter implies, equality among U.S. citizens an as-yet far-from-obtained ideal.¹¹⁰

Racial inequalities founded on white European human settlers' assumptions of superiority over enslaved black people are reignited through Ina history, despite

¹⁰⁶ Butler (2005), p. 272

¹⁰⁷ Clay Risen, *The Bill of the Century: The Epic Battle for the Civil Rights Act* (New York, London, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Press, 2014), p. 2

¹⁰⁸ See the online forum for challenging racial inequalities and injustices, Color of Change, which seeks American cultural unity: 'behind a simple, powerful pledge: we will do all we can to make sure all Americans are represented, served, and protected - regardless of race or class': <www.colorofchange.org/campaigns/new-orleans-housing/> [accessed 1 August 2015]

¹⁰⁹ Nayar, p. 799

¹¹⁰ Savage (1999), pp. 3-4

the chemically-induced slave-like bonds between Ina vampires and humans being less overtly abusive and lethal than is more traditionally found in vampires (as already discussed, they do not kill their human ‘blood donors’, but ‘reward’ them with improved health and prolonged lifespans that equate to longer access to regular blood supplies and devotion). In contrast with widespread contemporary attitudes to bondage which follow the thirteenth amendment to the U.S. Constitution, symbionts are subject to what might be considered as ‘involuntary servitude’.¹¹¹ For every comment such as the Symbiont Martin Harrison’s, who states, ‘I thought it sounded more like slavery than symbiosis’, there is another such as Brook’s: ‘They take over our lives [...] And we let them because they give us so much satisfaction’.¹¹² However it is positioned, however seemingly willing they may be, Butler’s symbionts are subjected to slave-like bonds, and even among the more open-minded of Butler’s vampires, there exists an acceptance of manipulation and addiction, shown in the vampire Iosif’s patronizingly paternalistic summary offered to Shori:¹¹³

We addict them to a substance in our saliva [...] a powerful hypnotic drug. It makes them highly suggestible and deeply attached to the source of the substance [...] they will willingly commit their lives to you. Bully them, control them out of fear or malice or just for your own convenience, and [...] you’ll have to spend all your time thinking for them, controlling them, and stifling their resentment.¹¹⁴

While more moderate vampires such as Iosif might seek to justify their binding of humans by couching it in terms of a ‘willing’ action, this is still an addiction-based bondage, and the codicil that humans should not be bullied, thought for, or controlled does nothing to detract from this form of symbiosis being, as already

¹¹¹ Butler (2005), pp. 204, 161

¹¹² The thirteenth amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ‘*Passed by Congress January 31, 1865. Ratified December 6, 1865* [sic]’ reads ‘Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction’: ‘Constitution of the United States Amendments 11 – 27’, <http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution_amendments_11-27.html> [accessed 8 April 2015]

¹¹³ Despite Shori’s questioning and her status as a hybrid, she is party to the manipulation and (controlled) consumption of those humans she chooses to make her symbionts – even if they are chosen for the ‘right’ reasons, they are still enslaved, unable to break free of their bondage. Their ‘choice’ is only made once there is vampire venom in their blood, clouding their judgement

¹¹⁴ Butler (2005), p. 73

alluded to, of greater benefit to vampires, with humans as commodified resources. Unlike the Monsters of chapters one and two, where pseudo-science is used to make credible the *incredible* of transformation, Butler casts aside the metamorphic in favour of the mundane, with addiction where there would more typically be wholesale alteration. Addicted to Ina saliva and unable to part from their vampires, Butler's humans form intensified versions of Renfield-esque relationships with the Ina that, while skewed in favour of these vampires, offer syms a positive step-change from being exsanguinated to the point of death, waking to an existence that prevents diurnal activity, and existing on non-consensual blood bestowments, or simply being drained and killed.¹¹⁵ Even Meyer's 'vegetarian' vampire family examined in chapter three, with all the benevolent intentions authorially endowed, pass on transformative venom if they bite humans. And so, Butler's Ina challenge the wider generic hegemony of traditional vampirism, where the potential of human extinction is harboured in a bite.

In line with Edward Baptist's appraisal of 'America's first generation of professional historians' as justifiers of 'the exclusions of Jim Crow and disenfranchisement by telling a story about the nation's past of slavery and civil war that seemed to confirm, for many white Americans, that white supremacy was just and necessary', the Silks and their allies draw America's disquieting history into the present.¹¹⁶ Baptist's discussion of slavery and modern American capitalism reinforces the Silks' bigoted dynamics in proposing that in the early twentieth century '[m]ost whites [...] believed that science proved that there were biologically distinct human races, and that Europeans were members of the superior one'.¹¹⁷ The Silks and Katharine Dahlman evidence what Baptist reports of 'abolitionists'' interpretation of slavery: it is described as a 'psychopathic realm

¹¹⁵ Renfield is overheard beseeching Dracula: 'I am here to do Your bidding, Master. I am Your slave, and You will reward me, for I shall be faithful. I have worshipped You long and afar off. Now that You are near, I await Your commands, and You will not pass me by, will You, dear Master, in Your distribution of good things?': Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p. 98

¹¹⁶ Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (Philadelphia, PA: Basic Books, 2014), p. xvi

¹¹⁷ Baptist (2014), p. xvi

of whipping, rape, and family separation'.¹¹⁸ As Katharine's outburst – 'When I came to this country, such people were kept as property, as slaves' – demonstrates, vampires, as a-temporal beings, attest to the cultural disquiet that 'some fundamental assumptions about the history of slavery and the history of the United States remain [...] unchanged' among a narrow demographic of modern Americans.¹¹⁹ Like Katharine, the Silk fathers and elderfathers, having lived through the centuries in which Africans were brought to America as sub-human 'tools' to be exploited for the capital gain of their white owners, continue to see all humans (even their own symbionts) as theirs to exploit.¹²⁰

Despite Shori facing obvious racist aggression, her Ina status necessitates the acquisition of human symbionts, effecting a 'soft' coercion by venom present in Ina bites: 'It's like coke or something.'¹²¹ When Shori meets her first symbiont Wright, all he initially sees is a 'soaking wet and filthy' girl who 'can't be any more than ten or eleven' walking along a deserted road in the dark.¹²² His sympathy and even fear is superseded by uncomfortably paedophilic-like sexual attraction, which is brought about only after she bites him: Shori's bite fixes Wright's loyalty and affection towards her despite his recognition that she looks like 'Super jailbait'.¹²³ Their relationship is, therefore, one that teases and manipulates the imagery of bondage, with Wright frequently inverting ownership. As a white male his language often displays an assumed dominance and jealousy of Shori, calling her 'My little vampire' (an expression that, alongside the disquiet of ownership, conjures images of plastic toy ponies).¹²⁴ But, however much Wright plays the boyfriend, he is 'tied' to her in a drug-induced lifetime indenture: '[humans] die if

¹¹⁸ Baptist (2014), p. xvi

¹¹⁹ Butler (2005), p. 272; Baptist (2014), p. xviii

¹²⁰ As Preston Gordon argues in the Council of Judgement, 'Our symbionts are not tools to be used to kill other people's symbionts': Octavia E. Butler (2005), p. 273; See also Charles Darwin's evolutionary perspective regarding the self-interest of slave owners. In Darwin's letter dated 'April 14th' in chapter two of *The Voyage of the Beagle*, he expresses clear contempt: 'It may be said there exists no limit to the blindness of interest and selfish habit': Charles Darwin, 'Chapter II', *The Voyage of the Beagle*, <<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/944/pg944-images.html>> [accessed 14 June 2018]

¹²¹ Butler (2005), p. 181

¹²² Butler (2005), p. 8

¹²³ Butler (2005), p. 12

¹²⁴ Butler (2005), p. 157

they're taken from [Ina] or if [Ina] die.'¹²⁵ The symbiont servitude analogy, as a sub-set of Butler's racially antagonistic plot, continues an equivocality, with the Ina-sym relationship a double-bind of enslavement, with all parties within the equation participating in the agency, Inas as primarily enslaved to their need for blood and symbionts chemically addicted to their Ina, unable to break their bonds. Ziarek's summary of such mutualism positions it as a demonstration that 'intersubjective agency means that every agent is at the same time an actor and a passive "sufferer"'.¹²⁶ Consequently, the Ina-sym power dynamic is not based on the generically prevalent predator-prey imperative but remains an owner-owned association, with the Ina able, if not always willing, to resort to monstrous predation if necessary.

Butler's tale, more show than tell, with a narrative that remains very much open-ended and ethically ambiguous, is a story driven by a quest for learning and understanding that, as argued, interrogates racial antagonisms and animosities but offers no concrete answers. This novel's very title, *Fledgling*, suggests flux and uncertainty. While establishing a generic link to vampires and vampirism – it is the name given to newly created vampires by Rice in her 'Vampire Chronicles' series – when simultaneously considered as noun and adjective, 'fledgling' ties Shori and, by extension, those associated with her, to youthful acquisition of knowledge, a newness of experience and/or experimentation, all or any of which might be considered as unsettling. Shori's (self)understanding, moral questioning, and defence of herself and those for whom she cares in the face of violent and irrational persecution may stir sympathy, but not all her actions, in line with the nation as a whole, can be condoned. Just as Michael Pfau suggests that civic 'fear appeals' induce 'deliberation about challenges facing the community of citizens', so too does Shori's narrative, and the judgements made within it, lead to the uncertainties of 'deliberation' and 'challenge'.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Butler (2005), pp. 48, 73

¹²⁶ Plonowska Ziarek (2013), p. 78

¹²⁷ Pfau (2007), p. 228

By subverting generic assumptions to show intra-vampiric fears and powerplays, the traditional human-vampire enmity is replaced by cultural paralleling: human racial antagonisms within America are transposed into a judicial vying for authority between Ina conservative and progressive factions played out through fears surrounding hybridity. Butler's narrative sits alongside cultural contemplations that, even in questioning, unwittingly maintain binaries that place the white male as Western dominant: to borrow from Edward Said's suggestion, there 'has not yet [been] developed a discourse in the American public space that does anything more than identify with power'.¹²⁸ While Said may not have in mind vampires for his discussion of imperialistic dominants that continue to quite literally colour American culture, his generalization chimes with an assumption of widespread genre conformity to a hegemonic racial identifier that equates paleness with power. *Fledgling*, as a work of vampire fiction that occupies a place in 'the American public space' does little to 'identify' with this power but does not absolutely condemn it.¹²⁹ With Shori's existence extrajudicially determined by the Silks, she is signifier for unsettling through interrogation of racial fallacies that govern both genre and context.

From Shori's position of narrative marginality comes a commentary on irrational fears dominated by tropes based on physical appearance as opposed to empirical evidence. The negativity of labels such as 'mongrel bitch', and 'nigger' pertain only to the material and establish, as mooted at the start of this chapter, the narrative dominance of an obfuscatory divisive, toxic, and hollow 'them and us' intra-cultural ideology (played out in a courtroom battle rather than the literal battles evident in chapters one, two, and three). *Fledgling*, centred on the learning process and judgements of Shori, offers no clear-cut personal, generic, or historical conclusions, just as Baudrillard and Feinstein (see above) demonstrate, questioning the thought processes and behaviours of those faced with what they perceive as threatening to established cultural power dynamics.

¹²⁸ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 364

¹²⁹ Said (1994), p. 364

Although vindication by the Ina Council of Judgment signals a legitimizing triumph for Shori, it ultimately invites equivocation in relation to the vampiric: 'I wonder how you can be honorable and still kill the innocent?'¹³⁰ Shori is a vampire, and so her morality is tempered by the need for human blood. As a being who exists on consuming humans (even if this is mostly through 'willing' donation), Shori cannot escape the parasitism of her more overtly monstrous kin. But, as the moral guide within a narrative that mimics contextual antagonisms and ambivalences, Shori acknowledges her idiosyncratic positioning as part of a whole that, in harbouring freedoms cannot shut out the transgressive. While what is 'right' or 'good' are repeated rhetorical devices that give *Fledgling* its moralistic tone, these are subjective rights, subjective goods. 'Honour' and 'innocence' are unfixed, and unfixable, abstract nouns, with neither those who are killed nor those who kill wholly able to lay claim to them. Shori's hybridity acts as a metaphor for a need to understand that, having been founded as something of a mongrel nation, there are no absolutes for America's citizens, whether human or vampire.

¹³⁰ Butler (2005), p. 309

Conclusion:
**‘with these have grown [...] something greater than before’:
Vampires, Undying Fear, and Power Dynamics in America¹**

‘May we remember always that our strength flows from our uniqueness and our unity’ (Milo Silk, Octavia Butler’s *Fledgling*)²

‘all vampires share [...] the power to move between and undo borders otherwise holding identities in place’ (Erik Butler, *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film*)³

As Auerbach so appositely identifies, vampires do indeed go ‘where power is’, transcending cultural and fictional borders to infest our imaginations as the most adaptable of Gothic creatures, sublimates of contemporary cultural drilling down into the dominant concerns of time, place, and people. Through investigating key literary works of twenty-first century U.S. vampire fiction, this thesis has addressed how they reflect and respond to dominant cultural fears and power dynamics alongside how they expand upon influential generic paradigms, particularly the ur-figure(s) of Dracula, demonstrating a sub-generic evolution into three types: Monsters, Dreams, and Discords. Despite evolving into these three sub-generic forms, as this thesis advances, America’s vampires can all be understood as reminders that while humans walk in light shadows are cast, and darkneses are a part of us that cannot be shucked. Borrowing from Holly Furneaux’s introduction to Tennyson’s ‘In Memoriam, A. H. H.’, through these narratives there can be perceived a ‘shattering of certainties’.⁴ Vampires, however

¹ Tennyson’s ‘In Memoriam’ is, once again, turned to for a shorthand signalling the role of literary vampires and their narratives within twenty-first century American culture. As the above quote makes evident, the evolution of form that has been discussed here continues a generic improvement, marking the latest diversifications as ‘something greater than before’, expanding to encompass ever-changing fears and power dynamics within the U.S. as current global hegemon: Alfred, Lord Tennyson, ‘In Memoriam A.H.H.: Epilogue’, *Alfred, Lord Tennyson Selected Poems*, ed. by Aidan Day (London: Penguin, [1991] 2003), LVI.22, p. 166

² Octavia E. Butler, *Fledgling* (New York and Boston: Warner Books, 2005), pp. 232-3

³ Erik Butler, *Metamorphoses of the Vampire in Literature and Film: Cultural Transformations in Europe, 1732 – 1933* (Rochester, New York: Camden House, 2010), p. 1

⁴ Holly Furneaux, ‘An introduction to “In Memoriam A.H.H.”’ (2014), <<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/in-memoriam>> [accessed 1 August 2017]

benign or romanticized they may appear, are fictional products of negative human experience, always possessors of the ability to unsettle and disquiet by embodying the spectrum of our terrors.

As metaphorical concepts, vampires are creatures who, as Gordon and Hollinger propose, 'take on the allegorical weight of changing times and collective psyches'.⁵ Somewhere between life and death, vampires exist, showing us who we are, what we do, and why we do it. The undead offer each culture, each generation, even each individual an insight into the fears and powerplays that drive the world around them. So, *in vampires veritas*: within the pages of vampire fiction can be seen the dynamics of surrounding culture. As the above epigraphic quote from Butler's *Fledgling* suggests, those creatures perceived as vampires are as diverse as the human cultures from whence they come: their 'strength flows from [...] uniqueness'; there is no one-size-fits-all understanding of what is represented through words or beings.⁶ As this thesis has sought to show, diversification among America's modern undead means that what for one person might be an animalistic, sharp-toothed, barely autonomous haematophage, for another might be a sparkly, beautiful, and manipulative 'vegetarian', or look like a young and ingenuous girl despite possessing extraordinary abilities.

This examination of twenty-first century American literary vampire narratives shows that the U.S. vampire genre has, to once more borrow from Tennyson, grown to be 'something greater than before' with, as discussed in the introduction, a generic diversification identified by this thesis as a post-millennial sub-generic tripartite branching suggestive of a national impetus towards an expanding undead investigation of the prevailing fears and dominations within its culture.⁷ Vampires and their narratives can only be understood as abstracts; as the variants discussed here show, they cannot be confined to a typology, as the characteristics with which they are imbued stem from contexts – both cultural and fictional. As this thesis shows, it is impossible to read (all) twenty-first century

⁵ Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger, 'Introduction: The Shape of Vampires', ed. by Gordon and Hollinger (1997), p. 4

⁶ Butler (2005), pp. 232-3

⁷ Tennyson, 'Epilogue', ed. by Day ([1991] 2003), ll.19-20, p. 220

American vampires as monstrous superhumans. They are, as with their undead predecessors, numinously diverse beings. Where less nuanced discussion continues to identify vampires as merely monstrous, their evolution over the course of the twentieth century has led to a generic flexibility of form, whereby they have become ever more diverse, reflecting fears of destabilized dominants.⁸ To return to the summative understanding shown in the introduction's opening epigraph taken from Auerbach's *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, 'To the jaded eye, all vampires seem alike, but they are wonderful in their versatility'.⁹ Although this thesis acknowledges the 'wonderful versatility' of America's undead, as stated at the opening of the introduction, they also adhere to three conceptual constants: one, that they are recognized within all human cultures; two, that vampires are agents for human fears; and three, that they evidence power dynamics.

Assimilating antecedent dominants, particularly iterations of Dracula, they all reflect (upon) American culturally ascendant fears and power dynamics specific to the opening long decade of the twenty-first century. Monsters directly address these fears and power dynamics, interpreting the culturally pervasive post-9/11

⁸ As discussion above shows, monstrosity continues to underpin vampire characterization, but it cannot be considered as dominant within all iterations; Towards the end of this project, understanding of the fear and power dynamics driving wider American culture appears to have seen a downturn with the presidency of Donald Trump. Nationalistic rhetoric like the empty promise of 'make America great again', an inability to retain or recruit Whitehouse staff, and an insularity / tendency towards unilateralism that has drawn America into animosities with trading partners are all suggestive of a cultural decline that may harbour some interesting generic developments in response. A divisive destabilizing of cultural environment suggests that the vampire fictions to come may, like Cronin's *The Passage*, reflect reactions to terrors that are homegrown, with the naïve nationalistic isolationism of Trump's administration equating to the dogma of vampire Monsters in what appears to be close to a totalitarianistic regime where there is only one ruler – a trait that seems to be spreading globally, with America's Cold War antagonism rising again with Russia's President Vladimir Putin and China's President Xi Jinping: Putin's re-election as president and Xi's effectively becoming president for life have already begun raising concerns. See reports such as 'China's anti-corruption campaign expands with new agency', where 'anti-corruption' is almost euphemistically employed for what Nicholas Bequelin, 'East Asia director at Amnesty International in Hong Kong', implies are 'systemic threat to human rights', placing 'tens of millions of people at the mercy of a secretive and virtually unaccountable system that is above the law': 'China's anti-corruption campaign expands with new agency', <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-43453769>> [accessed 20 March 2018]; See also reports on sanctions against Russia for 'malign activity around the globe': 'US punishes key Putin allies over worldwide "malign activity"', <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-43672190>> [accessed 6 April 2018]

⁹ Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 5

uncertainties of terroristic activity through ingressive (del Toro and Hogan's *The Strain*) and eruptive (Cronin's *The Passage*) apocalypse. While America's downfall is predominantly blamed on the Master's invasive terror in *The Strain*, *The Passage* portrays the U.S. as hoist by its own petard, its Monsters manufactured within and broadcasting the downfall of this superpower. Romanticized vampire Dreams hide nightmarishness, reflecting the unfixed and unobtainable American Dream as an attempted negation of terrors, with Meyer's *Twilight* covertly and Harris's 'Sookie Stackhouse' openly assimilating the undead into American society as powerful beings gravitating towards a powerful nation. As undead middle children, they compete with older, more usually perceived as monstrous, generic dominants and younger, more discordant, questioning typologies, as the 'overcoming the monster' narratives of section one here become vampirically internalized. Vampire Discords incorporate disquiets within contemporary cultural patterning, here focusing on what is arguably the most fundamental blight on the collective American psyche: racial antagonism. Through the obese white male protagonist Jules, Fox's *Fat White Vampire Blues* sees vampirism reduced to individualized animosity, his antagonist Malice X portraying him as a 'Great White Hunter' in a racially-motivated justification for violence.¹⁰ And, through her amnesiac petite black female vampire, Butler's *Fledgling* again interrogates intra-vampiric racial hostility, employing courtroom drama into her narrative. Victimized victors, vampire Discords' subjection to intra-vampiric hostilities echoes persistent U.S. cultural conflicts.

Although Auerbach's suggestions that '[m]ore than our heroes or pundits, our Draculas tell us who we [are]' and 'the rapidity with which our Draculas become dated tells us only that every age embraces the vampire it needs' ring true, as this thesis has demonstrated, it is also the assimilation of Stoker's Count into the American vampire genre that sustains connections between each of the ever-increasing variations.¹¹ America's undead evolution incorporates narratives that all, in some way, weave aspects of 'Draculas' into vampire forms that befit the

¹⁰ Ulrich Adelt, 'Black, White, and Blue: Racial Politics in B.B. King's Music from the 1960s', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 44, 2 (2011), 195-216, p. 202; Fox (2003), p. 22

¹¹ Auerbach (1995), pp. 112, 145

needs of every age, reflecting contemporary fears and power dynamics while integrating and acknowledging generic antecedents. Each generation's vampire fictions engage with contemporary fears and desires, necessarily tracing through themes and issues which wax and wane in influence. Whether it is as Monsters causing apocalypse, Dreams assimilating themselves into American culture, or Discords drawing attention to those discomforting cultural strands that persist in the U.S., or even other vampiric sub-genres to come, the mutable primogeniture of Dracula, like the character itself, refuses to die.

Returning to the undead as media for the spectrum of fears, although Andreas Olsson et al. investigate the social transmission of fears from a neuroscientific perspective, their identification that 'indirectly attained fears may be as powerful as fears originating from direct experiences' holds true for the fantastic fictionality of vampire narratives.¹² As this thesis has sought to demonstrate, America's twenty-first century vampire fiction is directly reflective of contemporary fears in a post-9/11 environment where terror of terror underpins the everyday. Through situating vampires in recognizably American semiotic spaces, the novels discussed here remind readers that there is no place for complacency, that the beliefs that dominate, whatever form they take, should be questioned, but ultimately that fear – no matter how fantastic – is a part of human culture that cannot be closed like the pages of a book.¹³ Vampire fiction retains the capacity to mutate to reflect context but, ultimately, the undead come from violence and domination, coercion and force and, like the America they have made their home (for now), they cannot escape their history.

The opening years of the twenty-first century have seen a generic generation of new patterns of vampiric characterization in response to a post-9/11 terroristically dominated destabilization of American culture creating new issues and problems for this nation, but also (temporarily) uniting its citizens against a nebulous enemy.

¹² Andreas Olsson, Katherine I. Nearing, and Elizabeth A. Phelps, 'Learning fears by observing others: the neural systems of social fear transmission', *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience*, 2, 1 (2006), 3-11, p. 3

¹³ The greatest tacit fear for a superpower is, as already suggested in the apocalyptic narratives of section one above, that there is only one way to go when at the top of any power structure

However, America is not, and never has been, united – there have always been frictions between north and south, black and white, rich and poor, religion and secularity, and what U.S. twenty-first century vampire fiction shows is an understanding that there are myriad shades of grey between what appears to be them and us, good and bad, vampire and human. In reflecting on aspects that make up culture within this superpower, vampires show themselves and their hosts as possessors of unfixed identities. Whether vampire fiction migrates once again – with the help of new Renfields – as the global dynamic shifts remains to be seen but, for now, the undead are American citizens. These vampires, as near-humans, remain uncanny reflections of the hesitations and insecurities that exist around them. Uncanniness is itself a central part of an American culture that advocates freedoms but is built on slavery and segregation; advocates peace but has a population of gun owners; will send out forces to all points of the planet to protect its interests; and encourages its citizens to dream of attaining mythical capitalist nirvanas while tens of millions live in poverty.¹⁴

From this examination of a necessarily limited selection of key literary interpretations of vampires and vampirism, it is clear the undead continue to function in parallel to society and mutate to be part of the ‘shifting configuration in the moral and political consciousness’ of American cultural ideology.¹⁵ Ultimately, the disruptive force of vampires is a stage-managed fantasy: realities such as the threat of terror, consumerism, exploitation, and manipulation – all of which have been, and continue to be, attributed to fictional vampires – will remain actual uncanny forces within modern American culture. And as long as these continue to exist, the popularity of these Gothic beings, positioned ‘in the midst of [...] humanity’, sharing ‘its life, its change, its death’, will remain the most recognized and reiterated of Gothic mythical beings.¹⁶ As discussion of this selection of twenty-first century American vampire fiction illustrates, as

¹⁴ 46.7 million people (14.8 percent of the population) were officially recorded as below the poverty threshold in 2014: ‘Poverty Data’, <<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/data/incpovhlth/2014/figure4.pdf>> [accessed 21 January 2016]

¹⁵ Baudrillard, ed. by Lodge and Wood ([1988] 2000), p. 407

¹⁶ Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), p 2

frontrunners among Gothic creatures, they are forever evolving to meet the needs of cultural contexts, with fundamental aspects of generic vampiric mythology retained through both adherences and questioning. Thus, in vampires, America has its Monsters, its Dreams, and its Discords, manifestations of evil as atavistic flaunters of anti-social impulses, of occluded monstrosities as lovelorn and loving assimilations into modern human culture, and of ambivalences, ambiguities and incongruities within both genre and context. No matter how many times they have been staked or reduced to ashes, they return like perverse prodigals, reflecting of and upon the changes of modern America.

Through the diversification shown in modern American vampire fiction, the genre remains prime within the innovative wider field of Gothic creatures, leading where werewolves and zombies often only follow. The generic branching identified here is indicative of vampiric adaptation to retain relevance for a contemporary millennial generation. The three sub-genres discussed here may well give rise to further sub-divisions, as the genre continues to evolve, reflecting the fears and powerplays of future generations. Within a genre that houses a seemingly ever-expanding matrix, each sub-genre might be argued as already showing signs of further sub-division: Monsters being either incursive or home-grown, Dreams as idealized, or slightly sullied, and Discords as both paralleling and bridging cultural divisions. Through the undead, the fantastic incorporates cultural insecurities and animosities ranging from the fringes to the centre in continuing conceptual responses to context.

No matter how well vampires adopt and adapt to exist on dominant fears, desires, and powerplays within American culture, this is a genre housing narratives of parasitism and they do as all parasites do – use their host to further their own existence, before eventually moving on when that host is too weak to support them. In this instance, having moved from Europe to America, they have been recreated as dominants within a new global dominant. Like humans, vampires have a presence on every continent, but they dominate where we dominate which, for now, means America. Whether the fictional assimilation of vampires into American society is a precursor to another migration of power is open to

speculation, but the materiality they confront is to be heeded. What this thesis goes some way to showing is that there will never be a fixed interpretation of vampires, they will continue to mutate to reflect (upon) the key psychodynamics of power and fear in particular times and spaces. While this thesis has identified and examined a trifurcation of America's most recent vampire fiction, it is ever-changing, and what may be evident in early twenty-first century American undead fiction will continue developing, with each of the three sub-genres potentially becoming increasingly standalone in form and content (something that has arguably already begun with Paranormal Romance fiction) or morphing into something new as reflectors of fresh contextualities.

Where *Dracula* has been critically recognized as a threat denoting a fear of decline within the British Empire so, too, might the proliferation of these vampires mark the beginning of the end for America's global hierarchy. While firmly part of contemporary American culture (for now), the vampire genre houses an infinite adaptability that has already taken its undead from one empire to another as global hegemony shifted during the twentieth century, and there is no reason to believe that they will not move on once the dynamics between America and the global community at large shifts to bring about a new dominant. Whether they continue a westward trajectory that has taken them from Europe across the Atlantic Ocean to America or head in a different direction remains to be seen but, in whatever direction the undead turn, they will continue to parasitize human culture, turning it to their advantage and going 'where power is', prevailing as ever-evolving articulators of fears and power dynamics.¹⁷

Despite having made a case for the current direction of America's vampire fiction, with an examination of how and why these undead beings having fully assimilated into this global dominant in the opening long decade of the twenty-first century, parasitizing this rich source before moving on to another new host, discussion must end as it began in acknowledging that the undead remain preeminent amongst Gothic fictional characters precisely because of their ambiguity. As

¹⁷ Auerbach (1995), p. 6

Weinstock concludes in 'American Vampires', in (mostly) lacking their own reflections, those vampires discussed here show that, until they move on to the next globally dominant culture, vampires 'r' U.S., continuing to 'reflect back [...] the anxieties and desires of [their] cultural moment[s]'.¹⁸ They will continue to evolve to reflect prevailing cultural dynamics as distanced demonstrations of our fears and powerplays. As the examination of vampiric narrative diversity above reveals, they are not and never will be cookie cutter Gothic creatures. They are all unique entities, but also all connected. All recognizable forms, with recognizable narratives, despite variations. To borrow from Stoker, vampire fictions will always remain 'up-to-date with a vengeance' and, to paraphrase Stoker's Count, vampires 'have more' and will continue to expand what is understood of them: time, and human fascination, is forever on their side.¹⁹ Just as power shifts from one empire to another, so too do the undead, they will move on to create and exploit new fears and new power dynamics as part of a new hegemon.

¹⁸ Weinstock (2016), pp. 203, 219

¹⁹ Stoker, ed. by Auerbach and Skal (1997), pp. 40, 267

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Further Selected Modern American Undead Reading

Note: this is not an exhaustive list, but a selection to set the blood pumping...

- Bartlett, Gerry, *Real Vampires Have Curves* (New York: Berkley Sensation, [2007] 2008)
- Brite, Poppy Z., *Lost Souls* (London, New York: Penguin, [1992] 1994)
- Cast, P.C. and Kristin, 'House of Night' series
 - *Marked* (London: Atom, [2007] 2009)
 - *Betrayed* (London: Atom, [2007] 2009)
 - *Chosen* (London: Atom, [2008] 2009)
 - *Untamed* (London: Atom, [2008] 2009)
 - *Hunted* (London: Atom, 2009)
 - *Tempted* (London: Atom, 2009)
 - *Burned* (London: Atom, 2010)
 - *Awakened* (London: Atom, 2011)
 - *Destined* (London: Atom, 2011)
 - *Hidden* (London: Atom, 2012)
 - *Revealed* (London: Atom, 2013)
 - *Redeemed* (London: Atom, 2014)
- Grange, Amanda, *Mr Darcy, Vampyre* (Naperville, Ill.: Sourcebooks Landmark, 2009)
- Hallaway, Tate, 'Garnet Lacey' series
 - *Tall, Dark and Dead* (London: Headline review, [2006] 2007)
 - *Dead Sexy* (London: Headline Review, 2007)
 - *Romancing the Dead* (New York, London: Berkley Books, 2008)
 - *Dead If I Do* (New York, London: Berkley Books, 2009)
 - *Honeymoon of the Dead* (New York, London: Berkley Books, 2010)
- Hamilton, Laurell K., 'Anita Blake' series
 - *Guilty Pleasures* (London: Orbit, [1993] 2000)
 - *The Laughing Corpse* (London: Orbit, [1994] 2000)
 - *Circus of the Damned* (London: Orbit, [1995] 2000)
 - *The Lunatic Cafe* (London: Orbit, [1996] 2000)
 - *Bloody Bones* (London: Orbit, [1996] 2000)
 - *The Killing Dance* (London: Orbit, [1997] 2000)
 - *Burnt Offerings* (London: Orbit, [1998] 2000)
 - *Blue Moon* (London: Orbit, [1998] 2000)
 - *Obsidian Butterfly* (London: Orbit, [2000] 2001)
 - *Narcissus in Chains* (London: Orbit, 2002)
 - *Cerulean Sins* (London: Orbit, 2003)
 - *Incubus Dreams* (London: Orbit, 2004)
 - *Danse Macabre* (London: Orbit, 2006)
 - *The Harlequin* (London: Orbit, 2007)
 - *Blood Noir* (London: Orbit, 2008)
 - *Skin Trade* (London: Headline, 2009)
 - *Bullet* (London: Headline, 2010)
 - *Hit List* (London: Headline, 2011)
 - *Kiss the Dead* (London: Headline, 2012)

- *Affliction* (London: Headline, 2013)
- *Dead Ice* (London: Headline, 2015)
- Harvard Lampoon, The, *Nightlight a Parody* (London: Constable, 2009)
- Huston, Charlie, 'Joe Pitt' series
 - *Already Dead* (London: Orbit, [2005] 2008)
 - *No Dominion* (London: Orbit, [2006] 2007)
 - *Half the Blood of Brooklyn* (London: Orbit, 2008)
 - *Every Last Drop* (London: Orbit, 2008)
 - *My Dead Body* (London: Orbit, 2009)
- King, Stephen, *'Salem's Lot* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, [1975] 1977)
- Kostova, Elizabeth, *The Historian* (London: Time Warner Books, 2005)
- MacAlister, Katie, 'The Dark Ones' series
 - *A Girl's Guide to Vampires* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, [2003] 2007)
 - *Sex and the Single Vampire* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, [2004] 2009)
 - *Sex, Lies, and Vampires* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, [2005] 2008)
 - *Even Vampires Get the Blues* (New York: Signet, 2006)
 - *The Last of the Red Hot Vampires* (New York: Signet, 2007)
 - *Zen and the Art of Vampires* (New York: Signet, 2008)
 - *Crouching Vampire, Hidden Fang* (New York: Signet, 2009)
 - *In the Company of Vampires* (New York: Signet, 2010)
 - *Much Ado About Vampires* (New York: Signet, 2011)
 - *A Tale of Two Vampires* (New York: Signet, 2012)
- Martin, George R. R., *Fevre Dream* (London: Gollancz, [1982] 2004)
- Matheson, Richard, *I Am Legend* (London: Gollancz, [1954] 2001)
- McCammon, Robert R., *They Thirst* (New York, London: Pocket Books, [1981] 1988)
- McKee Charnas, Suzy, *The Vampire Tapestry* (London: The Women's Press [1980] 1992)
- Moore, Christopher, *You Suck* (London: Orbit, [2007] 2009)
- Niles, Steve and Templesmith, Ben, *30 Days of Night Omnibus* (San Diego, CA: IDW [2011] 2016)
- Rex, Adam, *Fat Vampire: A Never Coming of Age Story* (New York: Balzer + Bray, 2010)
- Rice, Anne, 'Vampire Chronicles' series
 - *Interview with the Vampire* (New York, London: Time Warner, [1976] 2006)
 - *The Vampire Lestat* (London: Sphere, [1985] 2007)
 - *The Queen of the Damned* (London: Warner Books, [1988] 1994)
 - *The Tale of the Body Thief* (New York: Alfred and Knopf, 1992)
 - *Memnoch the Devil* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995)
 - *The Vampire Armand* (London: Arrow Books, [1998] 1999)
 - *Merrick* (New York: Ballantine Books, [2000] 2001)
 - *Blood and Gold* (New York: Ballantine Books, [2001] 2002)
 - *Blackwood Farm* (London: Arrow Books, [2002] 2010)
 - *Blood Canticle* (London: Arrow Books, [2003] 2004)
 - *Prince Lestat* (London: Arrow Books, [2014] 2015)
 - *Prince Lestat and the Realms of Atlantis* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2016)
- Rowen, Michelle, *Lady and the Vamp* (New York and Boston: Forever, 2008)

- Russe, Savannah, 'The Darkwing Chronicles' series
 - *Beyond the Pale* (New York: Signet, 2005)
 - *Past Redemption* (New York: Penguin, 2006)
 - *Beneath the Skin* (New York: Penguin, 2007)
 - *In the Blood* (New York: Penguin, 2007)
- Saberhagen, Fred, *The Dracula Tape* (New York: Ace Science Fiction, [1975] 1985)
- Snyder, Scott, Albuquerque, Rafael, and King, Stephen, *American Vampire* (New York: DC Comics, 2010)
- Stoker, Dacre and Holt, Ian, *Dracula the Un-dead* (London: Harper, 2009)
- Wilson, Colin, *The Mind Parasites* (Rhinebeck, New York: Monkfish, [1967] 2005)
- Wilson, F. Paul, *The Keep* (Sevenoaks, Kent: New English Library, [1981] 1983)

Selected American Vampire Television and Filmography

Note: these are also not exhaustive lists, but a 'bloody' exciting adjunct to the novels...

Television

- *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, dir. by Whedon, Joss et al. (Mutant Enemy Productions et al, 1997-2002)
- *Addams Family*, dir. by Lanfield, Sidney et al. (Filmways Television, 1964-1966)
- *Angel*, dir. by Whedon, Joss and Greenwalt, David et al. (Mutant Enemy et al, 1999-2004)
- *Castlevania* dir. by Deats, Sam (Frederator Studios et al, 2017-present)
- *Dark shadows*, dir. by Swift, Lela et al. (Dan Curtis Productions et al, 1965-1971)
- *From Dusk till Dawn: The Series*, dir. by Rodriguez, Robert et al. (Factory Made Ventures, Miramax, Rodriguez International Pictures, 2014-2016)
- *Hemlock Grove*, dir. by Straiton, David, Sarafian, Dreaan et al. (Gaumont International Television, Mad Hatter Entertainment, ShineBox SMC, 2013-2015)
- *Originals, The*, dir. by Hastings, Matthew et al. (Bonanza Productions et al, 2013-present)
- *Munsters, The*, dir. by Stone, Ezra et al. (CBS et al, 1964-1966)
- *Salem's Lot*, dir. by Hooper, Tobe (Warner Bros. Television, 1979)
- *Strain, The*, dir. by Dale, J. Miles et al. (Mirada, 2014-2017)
- *True Blood*, dir. by Lehmann, Michael et al. (HBO, Your Face Goes Here Entertainment et al, 2008-2014)
- *Vampire Diaries, The*, dir. by Grismer, Chris et al. (Alloy entertainment et al, 2009-2017)
- *Van Helsing*, dir. by Nankin, Michael et al. (Echo Lake Entertainment et al, 2016-present)

Film

- *30 Days of Night*, dir. by Slade, David (Ghost House /Columbia, 2007)
- *Abbott and Costello meet Frankenstein*, dir. by Barton, Charles T. (Universal Studios, 1948)
- *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter*, dir. by Bekmambetov, Timur (Twentieth Century Fox, 2012)

- *Blacula*, dir. by Crain, William (American International Pictures, 1972)
- *Blade*, dir. by Norrington, Stephen (New Line, 1998)
- *Blade II*, dir. by del Toro, Guillermo (New Line, 2002)
- *Blade Trinity*, dir. by Goyer, David S. (New Line, 2004)
- *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, dir. by Coppola, Francis Ford (Productions, 2012)
- *Cirque du Freak: The Vampire's Assistant*, dir. by Weitz, Paul (Universal Pictures, 2010)
- *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, dir. by Kazui, Fran Rubel (Twentieth Century Fox, 1992)
- *Cronos*, dir. by del Toro, Guillermo (October Films, Productiones Films, and Ventana Films, 1993)
- *Daybreakers*, dir. by Spierig, Michael and Spierig, Peter (Lionsgate and Film Finance Corporation Australia, 2009)
- *Dracula 2001*, dir. by Lussier, Patrick (Dimension Films, 2001)
- *Dracula 3000*, dir. by Roodt, Darrell James (Apollopromedia, Fiction Film and Television, 2004)
- *Dracula Untold*, dir. by Shore, Gary (Universal Pictures, 2014)
- *Dracula*, dir. by Badham, John (Universal Studios, 1979)
- *Dracula*, dir. by Browning, Tod (Universal Studios, 1931)
- *Dracula's Daughter*, dir. by Hillyer, Lambert (Universal Studios, 1936)
- *Dracula: Dead and Loving It*, dir. by Brooks, Mel (Castle Rock Entertainment, 1995)
- *Fright Night*, dir. by Holland, Tom (Columbia Pictures, 1985)
- *Fright Night*, dir. by Gillespie, Craig (Dreamworks and Reliance Entertainment, 2011)
- *From Dusk till Dawn*, dir. by Rodrigues, Robert (Dimension Films et al, 1996)
- *House of Dracula*, dir. by Kenton, Erle C. (Universal Studios, 1945)
- *I Am Legend*, dir. by Lawrence, Francis (Warner Bros., 2007)
- *Interview with the Vampire*, dir. by Jordan, Neil (Geffen Pictures, 1994)
- *John Carpenter's Vampires*, dir. by Carpenter, John (Columbia Pictures Industries, 2008)
- *Let Me In*, dir. by Reeves, Matt (Overture Films et al, 2010)
- *Love at First Bite*, dir. by Dragoti, Stan (Orion Pictures and Melvin Simon, 1979)
- *Near Dark*, dir. by Bigelow, Kathryn (Feldman, Meeker Production, 1987)
- *Night of the Living Dead*, dir. by George A. Romero (Image Ten et al, 1968)
- *Queen of the Damned*, dir. by Rymer, Michael (Warner Bros., Village Roadshow et al, 2002)
- *Rise*, dir. by Gutierrez, Sebastian (Ghost House Pictures, Kingsgate, 2006)
- *Shadow of the Vampire*, dir. by Merhige, E. Elias (Saturn Films, Long Shot Films, BBC Films, Delux Productions, Luxembourg Film Fund, 2000)
- *Son of Dracula*, dir. by Siodmak, Robert (Universal Studios, 1943)
- *Southern Gothic*, dir. by Young, Mark (Strategic Entertainment, Kindred Media Group et al, 2007)
- *The Fearless Vampire Killers or: Pardon Me, But Your Teeth Are In My Neck*, dir. by Polanski, Roman (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1966)
- *The Hunger*, dir. by Scott, Tony (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1983)
- *The Last Man on Earth*, dir. by Salkow, Sidney (Orbit Media, 1964)
- *The Little Vampire*, dir. by Uli Edel (Avrora Media et al, 2000)
- *The Lost Boys*, dir. by Schumacher, Joel (Warner Brothers, 1987)
- *The Omega Man*, dir. by Sagal, Boris (Warner Bros., 1971)

- *Thirst*, dir. by Hardy, Rod (F. G. Film Productions et al, 1979)
- *Twilight*, dir. by Hardwicke, Catherine (Summit Entertainment, 2008)
- *Twilight Saga: New Moon*, dir. by Weitz, Chris (Summit Entertainment, 2009)
- *Twilight Saga: Eclipse*, dir. by Slade, David (Summit Entertainment, 2010)
- *Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 1*, dir. by Condon, Bill (Summit Entertainment, 2011)
- *Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 2*, dir. by Condon, Bill (Summit Entertainment, 2012)
- *Ultraviolet*, dir. by Wimmer, Kurt (Screen Gems, Ultravi Productions, 2006)
- *Underworld*, dir. by Wiseman, Len (Lakeshore Entertainment, 2003)
- *Underworld: Evolution*, Wiseman, Len (Lakeshore Entertainment, 2006)
- *Underworld: Rise of the Lycans*, Tatopoulos, Patrick (Screen Gems and Lakeshore Entertainment, 2009)
- *Underworld: Awakening*, dir. by Mårilind, Måns, and Stein, Björn (Screen Gems and Lakeshore Entertainment, 2012)
- *Vampire's Kiss*, dir. by Bierman, Robert (Magellan Pictures, 1988)
- *Vampyres: Daughters of Dracula*, dir. by Larraz, José Ramón (Essay Films, 1974)
- *Van Helsing*, dir. by Sommers, Stephen (Universal Studios, 2004)
- *Vlad*, dir. by Sellers, Michael D. (Basra Entertainment et al, 2003)