



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

Fatal Attraction

*Comparing Sexualities in Dracula, The Vampire Chronicles,
and The Twilight Saga*

B.A. Essay

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January 2013

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Abstract

The vampire myth has prevailed for centuries inspiring awe in the human race. Consequently, the myth was eventually adapted into literature in the mid-eighteenth century, and has since become a prominent figure in popular culture. Essentially, the vampire originally embodied human fear and continues to do so in literature in the form of sexual taboos. This essay analyses and compares the sexualities in three leading works of vampire fiction; Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Anne Rice's first two books of *The Vampire Chronicles*, and Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga*. All three works of fiction explore human sexuality through the vampire, portraying what is acceptable at each time in history (turn of the 20th century, late 20th century, and early 21st century) and in the eyes of the author. Thus Bram Stoker uses *Dracula* to express his closeted homosexuality without the danger of being exposed, which could certainly be dangerous considering the homophobia of the time. Anne Rice explores her own homoerotic fantasies in *The Vampire Chronicles* and Stephenie Meyer uses her *Twilight Saga* to encourage abstinence in her young readers.

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1. Introduction

The vampire is a mythical creature that has inspired awe in the human race for centuries. According to Theresa Bane's *Encyclopedia of Vampire Mythology* every society since the dawn of man has had a manifestation of the vampire, a being believed to be the cause of plagues and death (1). The earliest writing on vampires dates back to around 4000 B.C. and is a protection spell against the EKKIMOU, a type of vampire that scholars believe "that even then was considered an ancient evil" (Bane 7).

Perhaps not surprisingly, considering its complex and varied origins, there is no pre-existing, commonly accepted definition of the vampire (Bane 2). How then, do we define a vampire? Bane's answer is that vampires are defined by human fear. Therefore "the reason that there is no single definition of a vampire is because each culture of people, from their various time periods and from their various locations, has feared different things" (Bane 2-3). As man evolved, so did his fears, and thus the vampire (3).

Ironically, the rise of Christianity gave wings to the vampire myth, "for the Catholic Church found in the story of this fiend a most propitious analogy to describe the intricate workings of evil" (Twitchell 106). The Church presented the vampire as a manifestation of the devil, a husk of a human being that was possessed by the spirit of Satan. The devil would gain control of a sinner's body, trap the soul and seal it off from eternal rest. There were various ways to become a vampire in Christian worlds; if a sinner died un-baptized, was buried in unhallowed ground, had cut off from communion with the Church, committed suicide, or was the victim of a vampire (Twitchell 106).

The vampire has with the ages grown in popularity and eventually found its way into the field of arts. The vampire has become a prominent figure in popular culture, in large part because of how it has served to explain the dynamics of interfamilial social and sexual behavior (Twitchell 110). As Twitchell puts it:

He is no longer a figure of demonic terror; he has become an eidolon of sexual horror. How this transformation occurred is illustrative not only of the romantic imagination, but of the mythopoetic process in general, for it shows how certain myths continually re-magnetize themselves around the audience's changing lodestones. (110)

The vampire myth has reoccurred in a new form for centuries, and is always relevant to human society. The vampire adapts and adjusts itself to the demands of the ever changing audience.

This essay will compare sexuality in popular vampire fiction at three different times; Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Anne Rice's first two books of *The Vampire Chronicles* and Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga*. All three works of fiction explore human sexuality through the vampire, portraying what is acceptable at each time in history (turn of the 20th century, late 20th century, and early 21st century) and in the eyes of the author.

2. Vampires in Literature and the Byronic Hero

The vampire's entrance into literature is generally marked by Ossenfelder's poem *The Vampire* (1748) and Bürger's ballad *Lenore* (1773). It entered English literature at the peak of the Romantic Period in 1819 with John Polidori's novella *The Vampyre*. This first extended vampire story came indirectly from Lord Byron (Twitchell 113) who was the model that the Byronic Hero was based on, a character that has much in common with the literary vampire.

Lord Byron's work falls under gothic literature which was a side-genre produced by the Romantic Period. One of this genre's distinct elements was the gothic villain, whom Byron used in his work, adding to him new traits, creating what is now called the Byronic Hero (McGinley 72-3). McGinley describes the Byronic Hero as "a charming, seductive, aristocratic character with a diabolical narcissism and desire to control" (73). The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms further describes the Byronic hero as a "boldly defiant but bitterly self-tormenting outcast, proudly contemptuous of social norms but suffering from some unnamed sin" (Baldrick 44). Among the physical traits of the Byronic hero are pale skin and mesmeric eyes (McGinley 83-4) – traits that are also associated with the vampire. In addition, both the Byronic hero and the vampire are linked to the concepts of eternity and immortality (McGinley 85).

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) was the first full-length vampire novel and was to some extent inspired by the Byronic Hero, even adding to its development (McGinley 72, 74). Count Dracula was based on a Middle European Dracula, a Wallachian prince called Vlad the Impaler due to his excessive liking for staking his victims (Twitchell 125). Stoker's *Dracula* "is the

noble outlaw, a devilish aristocrat with an assertive desire to control, a passion for power and for life itself” (McGinley 74). He is evil, yet seductive, and feeds on the blood (life force) of his victims, in so doing either killing them or making them his eternal slaves as vampires. He wears all black and lives in a gloomy castle in Transylvania. All these features come together make up “a more modern and complex Byronic hero” (McGinley 74). Furthermore, Dracula became the prototype for the image of the vampire as we know it (McGinley 81).

The literary vampire did not develop much until along came Anne Rice with her *Vampire Chronicles*, written in the late twentieth century. Rice reinvents the vampire; although her central vampires are aristocratic, bloodthirsty and nocturnal, they have few other traits in common with their literary predecessors. Garlic, whitethorn and religious articles have no effect on them; they cast reflections in the mirror, and can sleep in any soil they wish. They chose victims regardless of gender, and fledgling vampires among the young and the beautiful. And that is just the tip of the iceberg of differences (Wood 61).

Another important difference to note is that Rice was the first to write from the vampire’s viewpoint, blurring the lines between the vampire and the reader. This narrative method helps the reader to identify with the vampire, thus suggesting that the real evil lies within us (Wood 67) – and that is precisely what Rice herself insists upon, her vampire characters are meant to represent the human condition, rather than the inhuman (Hoppenstand and Browne 3).

Some literary critics argue that the Byronic hero can be distinguished into two different types. Thus both Louis de Pointe du Lac and Lestat de Lioncourt, the central vampires of the first books of *The Vampire Chronicles*, can be

depicted as modern Byronic heroes. Lestat is the more traditional example (McGinley 82).

He is an eighteenth century French lord, the son of a marquis, made into a vampire because of his passion for life and his steadfast defiance. He is another noble outlaw, the aristocratic rebel, the one who craves power and independence. (McGinley 82)

Lestat is a rebel to the core, even before he became a vampire. He had already defied his father several times before running away to Paris for good to become an actor – a profession his father despised. When turned into a vampire against his will he finds out that it gives him the power and freedom he has always longed for, and does not take long to break every rule in the book.

Louis is the opposite of Lestat, the other side of the Byronic hero. Whereas Lestat is the noble outlaw along with Dracula, Louis falls under the Hero of Sensibility (Jump 71). He is the romantic that enjoys the beauty of nature and arts, is sentimental and has so much empathy with humans that he despises his thirst for blood. Indeed, he is the most human of Rice's vampires.

In recent years the vampire has gained more ground in literature as well as in other media. The newest trend in the genre of vampire fiction is paranormal romance marketed for young adults (mostly adolescent girls). Under this sub-genre fall such series as *Blue Bloods* by Melissa de la Cruz, *House of Night* by P.C. Cast and Kristin Cast, *Vampire Academy* by Richelle Mead, and most prominently, *The Twilight Saga* by Stephenie Meyer. In *The Twilight Saga* Meyer made some curious changes to the vampire. Her vampires avoid the sunlight like the traditional vampires, but not because it is fatal to them, rather because it makes them glitter. They do not need sleep and spend their eternity taking classes in high school. Meyer's central vampires, the Cullens, ironically

call themselves vegetarians, as they choose to feed on wild animals instead of humans. The Cullens are not the first vampires to feed on animals, but the traditional vampires never did so unless they had no choice. Rice's Louis is the exception, he, like the Cullens chose to feed on animals instead of humans for moral reasons, and although he eventually abandoned this poor diet, he never stopped detesting his deadly appetite. Each vampire gets his own superpower which depends upon the person's dominant personal trait. In addition, the only way to kill a Twilight vampire is to tear it to shreds and burn the pieces (Meyer, *Twilight* 398). The Twilight vampires have some Byronic traits; they are handsome with extraordinary eyes and pale skin like their predecessors. Furthermore, Edward Cullen has some qualities of the Hero of Sensibility mentioned above. He, like Louis before him, broods over his loss of humanity, fearing that his soul is damned. He is passionate and appreciates the beauty before him.

Whether or not *The Twilight Saga* will have lasting effect on the literary vampire, only time will tell, one thing is for sure though; the vampire will stalk the pages of literature for as long as its message is relevant to the human reader.

2.1 *Dracula*

Abraham (Bram) Stoker is best known today for his ever popular Gothic horror romance; *Dracula*, published in 1897. According to Henry Ludham the idea of the novel came to Stoker in a dream "of a vampire king rising from a tomb" (qtd. in Demetrakopoulos 108), which is interesting when applied to Carl Jung's theory that when we are dreaming, our subconscious is acting out our most

thoroughly repressed desires (67). Furthermore, some critics claim Bram Stoker was in fact a closeted homosexual and Talia Schaffer further argues that *Dracula* is the product of Stoker's anxiety transformed into text at the time of Oscar Wilde's trial (381). Oscar Wilde was tried for being a homosexual, which at the time was a felony. As Schaffer demonstrates, Bram Stoker and Oscar Wilde knew each other; moved in the same circles and were rivals in many ways (390-1); Stoker even married Wilde's former sweetheart (Hardaway 178). Thus, the trial was bound to have some effect on Stoker.

Oscar Wilde's trial demonstrated two desirable alternatives for homosexual observers like Stoker; "safe concealment, or tempting revelation" (Schaffer 381), yet at the same time it made it impossible to choose between the two (Schaffer 381). Similarly, the setting of *Dracula* is on the border "between the known and the unknown" (Schaffer 382). Jonathan Harker travels from a habitable town called Bisritz to the barren desolation of Castle Dracula; as Schaffer puts it: "the landscape marks his marginal status" (382) on the boundaries of three states. Later in the novel Dracula's victims constantly pass between concealing and exposing their condition. The novel mirrors the agonizing choice a closeted homosexual is faced with in a society unsympathetic to gays; the choice between repressed powerlessness and risky action (Schaffer 382).

Moreover, Wilde's trial fuelled Stoker's obsession with secrecy, especially when it came to writing about male love (Schaffer 384). Stoker transferred his sexual impulses into text so that "homosexuality was produced by the language that evaluated, disguised, and denounced it" (Schaffer 385). For example, in *Dracula* written text is a metaphor for something that is desired

and is throughout the novel “stolen, hidden, protected, copied, and transmitted from man to man” (Schaffer 387).

Homophobia followed the trial and the media distorted Wilde’s public persona into monstrosity which was to haunt gay men as it became the public image of homosexuality in the 1890’s. No wonder that Stoker identified with the anti-Wilde homophobia if that monstrosity was what he was to see in the mirror (Schaffer 388-9). Along those lines, Schaffer argues that Stoker modeled *Dracula* after the monstrous and distorted public image of Oscar Wilde, so as to work through it and convert it into a workable identity model (398). Schaffer further states that it was probably no coincidence that Stoker chose to portray Wilde as a vampire. The sexual inversion theory viewed homosexuals as the intermediate sex, neither male nor female, “inhabiting a no-man’s land like the Undead who were neither dead nor alive” (Schaffer 398). Many writers have connected homosexuality with decay and dirt, due to the association between homosexuality and the anal (398-9). Thus the vampire easily fits as a metaphor for homosexual love:

To homophobes, vampirism could function as a way of naming the homosexual as monstrous, dirty, threatening. To homosexuals, vampirism could be an elegy for the enforced interment of their desires. *Dracula*, however, functions as both accusation and elegy. (Schaffer 399)

As stated above, according to Schaffer’s theory Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* defines the author’s view of homosexuality; it is all at once, monstrous, dangerous, enthralling, corrupting, infectious, and indestructible (399). There are various clues in the novel that support the idea that *Dracula* is based on Oscar Wilde. When Harker breaks into *Dracula*’s resting place for the second time, the Count has started to look like Wilde; younger, with iron-gray hair and

bloated and exhausted after feasting too much (Stoker 43-4). Schaffer argues that in this scene Harker “experiences the climax of both Wilde-phobia and Wilde pity” (399). Furthermore, after Oscar Wilde’s trial 'Wilde’s desire' “became a euphemism for homosexuality” (Schaffer 399) and Stoker uses it several times in *Dracula*. The most relevant occurrence to this essay happens in the same scene, in his futile attempt to escape Harker states: "A wild desire took me to obtain that key at any risk" (Stoker 43). His Wildean desire causes him to handle the body of another man (Schaffer 399).

Furthermore, the first part of *Dracula* indicates that there is sexual tension between Dracula and Harker. As Christopher Craft argues, Dracula poses a sexual threat towards Harker, namely that he “will seduce, penetrate, drain” (110) him in a homoerotic embrace. The novel builds up this tension but never fully expresses it. Instead the evasive fulfillment of this desire is channeled through heterosexual displacement. In other words, through the three beautiful vampire women: Harker waits in “languid ecstasy” (Stoker 32) to be penetrated by them, which suggests homoerotic desire. At the brink of consummation Dracula bursts in claiming that Harker belongs to him and that they cannot have him until he is through with him. This interruption “suspends and disperses throughout the text the desire maximized at the brink of penetration, and it repeats the threat of a more direct libidinous embrace between Dracula and Harker” (Craft 110). This homoerotic embrace is never represented though and Harker does not document the implied final penetration by the vampire women.

In addition, René Girard argues in the book *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* that men, through their rivalry over a woman, can express their homoerotic

impulses (10). Florence Balcombe had been Oscar Wilde's near-fiancé for a long time when suddenly she got engaged to Bram Stoker. This came as much of a shock to Wilde and awoke in him a strong sense of rivalry with Stoker. He kept on sending Florence love letters which Schaffer argues that may have been a channel for the real erotic potency produced by Florence's marriage; his rivalry with Stoker. Wilde's love letters were curiously structured for the benefit of Stoker. Interestingly, Stoker and Wilde also rived over Henry Irving, their idol and Stoker's employer (385, 392). The triangle between Stoker, Florence, and Wilde is mirrored in *Dracula* where Dracula competes with Harker for Mina.

When looking aside from the author there are still plenty of sexualities on *Dracula* to analyze. The novel contains implications of incest, adulterous relationships, rape, and group sex.

Richard Astle applies Freudian/Lacanian analysis to *Dracula* in "Dracula as Totemic Monster: Lacan, Freud, Oedipus and History." In short he argues that Dracula is the wicked father hoarding all the available women and that the young men, the sons, must slay him under the leadership of the other, good father (Van Helsing), in order to be able to reproduce and take their place as the father. The presence of two fathers serves as a wish fulfillment, permitting the band of brothers to simultaneously obey the father and kill the father (98-9, 102). Dracula's death "is a metaphor of the castration (itself a metaphor) constitutive (for Freud and Lacan) of subjectivity in the Oedipal matrix" (Astle 100). The evil father is eliminated and the good father upgrades into a grandfather figure (Astle 102); one of the sons becomes a father himself. Mankind is saved – there will be another generation.

Moreover, Dracula's relationship with his victims is incestuous. "He is the father vampirizing a daughter" (Rickels 40) in both cases of Lucy and Mina (and for that matter also to the three vampire women at Castle Dracula at some point). The making of a vampire is incestuous; the image of Mina drinking Dracula's blood from his chest is clearly an image of a child suckling milk from its mother's bosom (Rickels 40). So in a way, Dracula is both the father and the mother. In addition, the vampire women feed primarily on children, which is a perversion of the mother-child relationship, suggesting incest.

In his book, *On the Nightmare*, Ernest Jones applies psychoanalysis to the vampire. He argues that "blood is commonly an equivalent for semen" (119) to the unconscious mind. This inevitably supports sexual implications of vampirism and *Dracula*. Dracula drains Lucy of her blood at night, leaving her weaker and weaker. Van Helsing's cure is to perform a transfusion of blood. Unfortunate series of events lead to her getting transfusions not once, but four times by four different men; her fiancé Arthur, her former suitors Dr. Seward and Quincey Morris, and good old Van Helsing. What these transfusions symbolize is answered by poor Arthur at Lucy's burial, when speaking about how his blood had been transferred to his beloved Lucy, oblivious to the other transfusions. Dr. Seward notes in his diary: "Arthur was saying that he felt since then as if they two had been really married and that she was his wife in the sight of God" (Stoker 149). This statement is followed by awkward silence by all the guilty parties, and later by Van Helsing's fit of hysterics. Going along with the blood-equals-semen theory, Arthur is spot on. The marriage is consummated by the male's semen entering the female – sexual intercourse. Unbeknownst to Arthur this ritual has been repeated by all his friends, making Lucy polyandrous and

the whole situation adulterous - not to mention that at the same time Dracula has been making Lucy his bride as well.

However, Lucy is unconscious in all these scenarios, which undeniably raises the question of rape. Another suggestion of rape in the novel is when Dracula forces Mina to drink his blood (semen): "With his left hand he held both Mrs. Harker's hands, keeping them away with her arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom" (Stoker 242). A few pages later it is revealed that Dracula was punishing her for playing her wits against him alongside the men. How dare she, a woman? This cannot go unpunished; Dracula must make her his slave in order to restore conservative sex roles. Mina further reacts as a rape victim declaring that she is unclean (244).

There are two other scenes in the novel where there are possible suggestions of rape; firstly when Harker is approached by the three vampire women in Castle Dracula, and secondly when Lucy is staked. But as Demetrakopoulos argues these can also be interpreted as suggestions of group sex (105). In the former scene sex roles of the time are reversed. Harker lies passive, peeking under his eyelashes "in an agony of delightful anticipation" (Stoker 32) as the three beautiful vampire women advance on him preparing to give him their vampire kisses. Harker does not know what to make of such sexual aggressiveness from women; it both thrills him and repulses him. In Victorian times ladies were not supposed to be "voluptuous" or to enjoy sex. This is so much out of the social norm of the time which in part counts for Harker's repulsion. It is also triggered by guilt, he is an engaged man and ideally honorable as well, yet the advances of the vampire women excite him,

revealing a secret male fantasy of the Victorian era (Demetrakopoulos 105-6). When Lucy becomes a vampire she also becomes voluptuous, and the scene where she is staked symbolizes her punishment for it, and as Freud would have it, the stake symbolizes the phallus. "All the men surround Arthur in a rather voyeuristic brotherhood as he pounds the stake into Lucy" (Demetrakopoulos 105). Arthur takes control and restores his power over Lucy as a male; she is being raped as punishment while a group of men watches. As a result Lucy is desexualized; she becomes again the passive (although quite dead) woman they all loved (Stoker 185-6).

2.2 The Vampire Chronicles

Anne Rice wrote the first book of *The Vampire Chronicles*, *Interview with the vampire* (1976) in a mourning process over her young daughter's death (Ramsland 19). The novel received exceptional popularity and so did the next two volumes in the series; *The Vampire Lestat* (1985) and *The Queen of the Damned* (1988). Terri R. Liberman ascribes a great deal of the series' popularity to its erotic appeal (109).

The nature of the vampire is erotic and in Rice's writing it becomes even more sensual than portrayed before. According to Ernest Jones's aforementioned blood-equals-semen theory the acts of killing and making a new vampire are sexual ones and thus a number of erotic combinations can be traced in the series; such as bestiality, homosexuality and incest (Liberman 109). Vampires are "not bound by mortal definitions of proscribed sexual conduct" (Hoppenstand and Browne 9). Anne Rice sees them as creatures above gender; "They have a polymorphous sexuality" (Diehl 60). Even so, the

mortal reader will attach the erotic combinations he is confronted with to concepts he knows. The most prominent erotic combination is that of homosexuality and can be traced back to Rice's early life when she thought "of herself as a gay man in a woman's body" (Ramsland 17). She identified with gay men and thus her fantasies were developed in that direction (Ramsland 17).

Along those lines, George E. Haggerty claims that it is no coincidence that the beginning of *Interview with the Vampire* is set in the gay district of San Francisco, and that the so called interview between the vampire Louis and the mortal interviewer "is a straightforward parody of a queer seduction" (5).

Moreover, in *The Vampire Chronicles*, the bloodsucking is always expressed in highly erotic terms (Lieberman 116) as is shown in the example below and more often than not it is between two males.

He was pressing the length of his body against me now, and I felt the hard strength of his sex beneath his clothes pressing against my leg. A wretched gasp escaped my lips, but he bent close, his lips on what must have been so cold, so lifeless for him; and I sank my teeth into his skin, my body rigid, that hard sex driving against me, and I lifted him in passion off the floor. Wave after wave of his beating heart passed into me as, weightless, I rocked with him, devouring him, his ecstasy, his conscious pleasure. (Rice, *Interview with the Vampire* 230)

This is Louis's description of his first time feasting on a willing mortal, Armand's boy, and it shows clearly the connection between the bloodsucking and sexual intercourse. Homosexuality is not only portrayed by the physical but also by various male-male love relationships. The first major homosexual relationship is encountered in *The Vampire Lestat*, Lestat's autobiography. In his memoirs Lestat reveals that even as a human he had bisexual tendencies.

Lestat has a few affairs with women but the major love affair of his mortal life is with Nicolas de Lenfent, Nicki. Nicki's personality is the opposite of Lestat's; he is conflicted with deep melancholy whereas Lestat is possessed with positivity and the undying belief in goodness. Nicki is darkness and Lestat the light. But as they say, opposites attract. In addition, they are both possessed by irrepressible passion, Nicki for the violin and Lestat for acting. Lestat describes how their passion for each other came about through what they called "our conversation." He even writes about the first night; "no matter how deadening was this sarcasm of his, a great energy poured out of him, an irrepressible passion. And this drew me to him. I think I loved him" (Rice, *The Vampire Lestat* 47). Lestat is mesmerized by Nicki, both by his beauty and by his passion, and the next morning he returns tossing pebbles up at Nicki's window (50), an image often used in romantic fiction. Later they run away together to Paris, defying their fathers to pursue their passions.

At one point Nicki defines their relationship: "Lestat, we are partners in sin . . . We've always been. We've both behaved badly, both been utterly disreputable. It's what binds us together" (Rice, *The Vampire Lestat* 52-3). Although this is said in relation to their passion for music and acting, this also implies his view on their homosexual relationship. And when Lestat is turned into a vampire and does not include Nicki in his vampire life Nicki looks at it as a betrayal - that he did not share this damnation with him. Being a vampire being the greatest sin, Lestat betrays his partner by not including him.

Eventually Lestat does change Nicki and the follow-up scene is filled with sexual tension. Lestat looks forward to spending eternity with his lover; "My Nicolas, my love. Eternity waits. All the great and splendid pleasures of being

dead” (Rice, *The Vampire Lestat* 236). More pressing though, as the fulfillment of his homoerotic desire draws near, is Nicki’s physical appearance, his tantalizing body, and Lestat’s newfound power over him entices him. His love for him only magnifies the sense of power and finally he takes him, and tainted in the ecstasy is the darkness that lies within Nicki. Turning Nicki into a vampire turns out to be a dreadful mistake, Nicki is turned mad by the turning, his love turned to hate, and Lestat can no longer stand the sight of him (Rice, *The Vampire Lestat* 238). They are lovers no more and thus Lestat refers to Nicki in *The Tale of the Body Thief* as his “mortal friend and lover” (Rice, 59), emphasis on mortal. Undeniably this brings to mind the scoundrel that has had his way with a maiden (or a man in this case) and wants nothing to do with her after it, and the scorned maiden cursing him for it.

Although it did not work out with Nicki, Lestat yearned for companionship and before long he fell “fatally in love with Louis . . . who seemed in his cynicism and self-destructiveness the very twin of Nicolas” (Rice, *The Vampire Lestat* 497). Louis believes that he deserves punishment for his brother’s death and is thus easy for Lestat to seduce. Only too late he realizes what is happening; as Lestat lies down beside him the intimacy reminds him of a lover – and he recoils (Rice, *Interview with the Vampire* 18). This suggests that at least in his mortal life Louis was heterosexual – or perhaps a closeted homosexual? However, Lestat’s power over him is too great, and as Louis experiences the vampire’s kiss he feels a sensation go through his body “that was not unlike the pleasure of passion” (19). He experiences pleasure as Lestat sucks his vital fluids. This first morning Lestat forgot to prepare a coffin for Louis, and he tells him to lie on top of him. Interestingly, Louis begs Lestat to let him stay in the closet instead, but

Lestat laughs “Don’t you know what you are?” (24). Indeed he does not. It is probably no coincidence that Anne Rice uses this phrasing, she is telling the reader that Louis is a closeted homosexual and wants to stay that way. To answer Lestat’s question, Louis is now a vampire whose nature, at the same time, transcends gender and is extremely sexual. Louis has much to come to terms with.

Louis’s dependence upon his maker only magnifies Lestat’s love for him and though this dependence ties Louis to Lestat, it also taints his love for him. The result is a kind of love/hate relationship. Eventually Louis wants to put an end to this relationship, which forces Lestat, in his desperation to keep him, to commit a vampire sin – to make a child vampire (Rice, *The Vampire Lestat* 498). Lestat, with Louis’s unwitting aid, vampirizes Claudia - an orphaned child, in what Edward J. Ingebretsen calls a “dark parody of reproductive politics as a substitute for male love” (98). Candace R. Benefiel argues that

the fangs of the vampire possess the penetrative function and power of the phallus, the life-giving fluid is received into the body through the vagina-like oral cavity. The vampire gives immortality through blood being sucked from it, an image paralleling maternal nursing. (268)

Typically, the maker of a new vampire serves both as the father and the mother. In this case however, Louis serves as the father, he penetrates the victim “with the phallic-substitute fangs” (Benefiel 262), and Lestat as the nurturing mother feeds the victim blood from his body (Benefiel 262-3).

When it comes to raising the vampire child though, these roles are reversed. Of the two vampire fathers Louis is the one gendered feminine “in his passivity and his reliance upon words and feelings” (Ingebretsen 97). Louis is the one who cares for the child, dresses her and brushes her hair and is her

educator and protector. Lestat plays a more masculine role, he dotes on Claudia and gives her lavish gifts, as well as teaches her to hunt, seduce, and kill (Rice, *Interview with the Vampire* 97, 99-101). As long as Claudia is a child, body and soul, Lestat's plan works; Louis is too busy taking care of her to think about leaving Lestat, and the three live together for 65 years in the vampire version of "domestic bliss" (Ingebretsen 98).

Later, when Louis and Claudia have escaped Lestat and gone to Paris they meet the vampire Armand. Louis is mesmerized by Armand and Armand wants him – and does everything in his power to have him.

There is also a mention of a homosexual relationship between Armand and Marius. The young Armand is forced to be a sex slave in a Venetian brothel until Marius buys him free and makes him his apprentice. The relationship is more complex than Master and apprentice though, it is also the relationship between Master and his young boy lover, between adult and child. "This child of darkness waits silently for the secret kiss of his master and burns with a quiet flame of love that is not merely desire" (Haggerty 15). Armand lives for this secret kiss; "Love and love and love in the vampire kiss. It bathed Armand, cleansed him" (Rice, *The Vampire Lestat* 292). To Armand, the vampire kiss, the love, cleanses away the taint of the sins he was forced to commit in the brothel. The love justifies the sex. And after several years of this secret kiss Marius deems Armand old enough to become a vampire. Armand was around seventeen years old when he became one with his master, and became a vampire (Rice, *The Vampire Armand* 4).

This relationship between adult and child, vampire and child, is mirrored in the relationship between Louis and Claudia. Both these relationships also

suggest incest. Admittedly, the making of a vampire always suggests incest, the maker is both a parent and a lover, but these implications are even more evident when the fledgling is a child. Is there a reason for these erotic implications with children? Perhaps; Anne Rice experienced strong erotic feelings at a young age and was told this was a sin (Ramsland 15). Perhaps Rice was trying to find the right place for these feelings and therefore created a vampire child.

Claudia was only five years old when she was made a vampire. Louis was ravaged with thirst when he came upon the orphaned child, and there was no going back. After Claudia is made a vampire she becomes Louis's companion, and more:

I had killed her, taken her life from her, had drunk all of her life's blood in that fatal embrace I had lavished on so many others . . . But she lived, she lived to put her arms around my neck and press her tiny cupid's brow to my lips and put her gleaming eye to my eye until our lashes touched and, laughing. We reeled about the room as if to the wildest waltz. Father and Daughter. Lover and Lover. (Rice, *Interview with the Vampire* 101)

She is his lover as well as his daughter from the beginning, but as her mind and soul began to age and develop she becomes ever more dissatisfied with her physical appearance. There is a reason why making a vampire child is a sin. They never grow up, and do never acquire the physical capacity to take care of themselves in the world. Claudia's connection with Louis is what gets her killed in the end. She stands in the way between Armand and Louis, so Armand arranges for her destruction. She does foresee her fate and tries to tell Louis, but he is too fascinated with Armand to take much heed. Because of her small and weak body, Claudia is powerless to defend herself. Her fate is sealed.

There is also an example of literal incest in *The Vampire Chronicles*; The first vampire Lestat makes is his dying mortal mother, Gabrielle. “And jetting up into the current came the thirst, not obliterating but heating every concept of her, until she was flesh and blood and mother and lover and all things beneath the cruel pressure of my fingers and my lips, everything I had ever desired” (Rice, *The Vampire Lestat* 157). As mortals Lestat and his mother had a special relationship. Although she was a distant personality she was the only one in the family that did relate to Lestat and his troubles, and she was the one who took care of him when the disappointments of life were too harsh for him to bear. She is special to Lestat, and it thrills him to get to know her on a new level; “she wasn’t really Gabrielle yet to me. She was simply *she*, the one I had needed all of my life with all of my being. The only woman I had ever loved” (Rice, *The Vampire Lestat* 168). At first the vampire pair lived together as companions and lovers, but eventually Gabrielle’s distant nature took over. She left civilization, and although Lestat was sorry to see her go, he was not ready to leave human society altogether and go with her.

Then there is Akasha, the vampire Queen, the mother of all vampires. In *The Vampire Lestat* Lestat manages to influence the statue-like mother so that she folds her arms around him and starts drinking his blood, and he starts drinking hers. Again Lestat has a sexual union with a Mother. As Gabrielle was his mortal mother, Akasha is his vampire Mother. Lestat seems to have a thing for his mothers, or alternately, strong women. At this, the king, Enkil is also moved to action and he would have killed Lestat if Akasha and Marius had not intervened.

In a Freudian reading, Lestat suffers from the Oedipus complex. According to Gleitman, Reisberg and Gross, the Oedipus complex is when the son has “intense, possessive sexual love” (G17) towards the mother, “which is soon followed by hatred for and fear of the father” (G17). Lestat desires both Gabrielle and Akasha, and indeed he did hate his mortal father. Furthermore, Enkil’s strength and determination to kill him causes Lestat to fear him and later to hate him, because he believes that he is holding Akasha prisoner (Rice, *The Vampire Lestat* 490).

In a Freudian/Lacanian reading, Enkil is the father defending his place, and Lestat is the son trying to take over as the top-man. In order to do so, he must get rid of the father, and then the available women will be his. Lestat cannot possess Akasha unless Enkil is out of the way.

The making of a vampire has always sexual implications, but the making of the vampire Lestat is doubly so. The vampire Magnus chooses Lestat as his heir and turns him into a vampire. Afterwards, Lestat has to crawl through a narrow dark tunnel to get to Magnus’s “inner room” (Rice, *The Vampire Lestat* 99). “This movement through a narrow passage into Magnus’s dark interior is sexually suggestive” (Haggerty 11). Moreover, in the castle Lestat finds a dungeon cell filled with corpses of his look-alikes. Magnus had chosen all of them as possible heirs, but none survived the cut except Lestat. Lestat is the only one who reached the inner chamber, thus Lestat’s look-alikes represent the sperms that did not reach the symbolical womb, and Lestat is the winning sperm.

As stated above, some critics argue that bestiality can be traced in *The Vampire Chronicles*, but I would argue against it. Vampires only feed on

animals in great need, when there is no human to have, or as in Louis's case, feed on them for moral reasons, so they do not have to feed on humans. Animal blood is never desired, there is no lust for the animal, no connection. As Louis puts it: "I knew peace only when I killed, only for that minute; and there was no question in my mind that the killing of anything less than a human being brought nothing but a vague longing" (Rice, *Interview with the Vampire* 87). Animal blood serves as nourishment and nothing else; it does not fulfill the sexual needs of the vampire.

The play Louis and Claudia watch at Théâtre des Vampires is in fact a gang rape, where a mortal woman is stripped naked and then drained of her blood by a group of vampires, in front of a hall full of audience.

Lastly, some say that the vampire represents human desires that are suppressed because they are rejected by society (Twitchell 110). The creation of the first vampires in *The Vampire Chronicles* was when a spirit which had always wanted a body, entered the dying bodies of Akasha and Enkil, through their mortal wounds, when they were at the point of death. The spirit possessed the blood, became the blood, and Akasha and Enkil became vampires (Rice, *The Vampire Lestat* 440). And thus this spirit represents the suppressed, perverse desires society has denied, and as it entered the bodies of Akasha and Enkil it finally gained a body, a vampire's body.

2.3 The Twilight Saga

Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga* is a paranormal romance series that made Meyer the second bestselling author of last decade, after J.K. Rowling (Liew). The series consist of four books; *Twilight* (2005), *New Moon* (2006), *Eclipse*

(2007) and *Breaking Dawn* (2008), as well as an unfinished manuscript of *Midnight Sun*, a retelling of *Twilight* from Edward Cullen's point of view.

Meyer was inspired to write by a dream she had on June 2nd 2003 about a girl and a sparkly vampire having a passionate conversation about the difficulties of falling in love with each other, considering that the vampire's blood thirst is extremely aroused by the scent of the girl's blood, and that he has to restrain himself from killing her (Meyer, "The Story behind *Twilight*"). This restraint and the sexual tension it creates is the silver lining throughout the first three volumes of the series (and *Midnight Sun*), and accounts for much of the series' popularity.

"At its heart, the *Twilight* saga is a story of yearning for intimate relationship, the working out of desire situated within a particular cosmology in which the supernatural and natural worlds intersect" (Mercer 272). Bella and Edward are extremely attracted to each other. Bella's blood smells phenomenally good to Edward and he has a hard time resisting sucking her blood, and on top of that Bella is a beautiful girl and Edward, as a man, notices that. Edward is so obsessed with Bella that he spends his nights as a peeping Tom outside her window. On the other hand, Edward is the perfect predator; everything about him invites Bella in; his voice, smell and face, everything about him is attractive (Meyer, *Twilight* 263-4, 267-8, 304). Thus interwoven in the text is the physical yearning they have for each other.

The vampires in *The Twilight Saga* have a twofold sexuality; the one typical for vampires, through their bloodsucking, as well as the more literal one, which is genital in nature. The erotic symbolism of the bloodsucking is extremely vivid in the series, as when the vampire penetrates the human

victim's skin with his phallic sharp teeth he squirts venom into the victim that will turn him/her into a vampire (Meyer, *Twilight* 414). The venom that comes from the teeth underlines the phallic metaphor as it is clearly an equivalent for semen. Furthermore, when the venom spreads through the victim's body, the victim experiences a burning sensation – a sensation often associated with sexually-transmitted diseases, which is food for thought. As for the genital sexuality, it is suggested that other vampires exercise it, but it is never portrayed. Therefore it does not find its fulfillment until after much prolonged pining and sexual desire, when Edward and Bella consummate their marriage in the last volume of the series. Edward's brothers reveal that genital sex is "a very great pleasure. Second only to drinking human blood" (Meyer, *Breaking Dawn* 93). Thus it can be concluded that the traditional vampire sexuality is their primary sexuality.

The central vampires are the Cullens, a family of seven vampires. Carlisle and Esme Cullen pose as the parents of the lot; Edward, Emmett and Alice Cullen as well as the supposedly adopted Rosalie and Jasper Hale. These vampires differ from most vampires in the Twilight world, as they choose to feed on animals instead of humans. Because of this choice they call themselves vegetarians as an inside joke. Edward Cullen compares feeding on animals with "living on tofu and soy milk" (Meyer, *Twilight* 188) despite the fact he has no idea how it tastes as he was turned into a vampire in the early twentieth century. He goes on to say that feeding on animals "doesn't completely satiate the . . . thirst. But it keeps us [the Cullens] strong enough to resist. Most of the time" (188). In other words, animal blood will do as sustenance but leaves something wanting. It does not completely satisfy their bloodlust; their lust.

The series promote abstinence before marriage; the Cullens are a family of couples – Carlisle and Esme, Emmett and Rosalie and Jasper and Alice – with Edward as the odd one. Despite having roamed among his kind and humans for almost a century Edward is still a virgin. He just never found the right one, until he met Bella Swan and suddenly experiences what he calls human desires (Meyer, *Twilight* 304). And even then Edward does not trust himself to have sex with the human Bella because he is afraid that he might accidentally hurt her or even kill her in the process (310). As Milone and Gabbard point out, this parallels the all too human struggle between the “desire to fulfill sexual urges” (412) and “the fear of consequences, such as contracting a deadly sexually-transmitted disease” (412).

There are a few suggestions of rape in *The Twilight Saga*, the first being when the vampire James has tracked Bella down. James is something called a tracker, a vampire that makes a sport out of tracking down victims. When he has cornered Bella he plays with her as cat with a mouse, and takes sadistic pleasure out of torturing her. Although he is stopped before he kills Bella he did manage to bite her. With all the sexual implications of the vampire’s bite, and the violence of it in this case, this is clearly a violation of Bella’s body. Edward then saves Bella from becoming a vampire by sucking the venom out of her, suggesting a reference to oral sex.

The other two instances are examples of gang rape. On a shopping trip with her friends Bella leaves them to go to a bookstore. On her way there she is harassed by a group of young men, led by a serial rapist and murderer (Meyer, *Midnight Sun* 171-2, 218). Fortunately, sparkly Prince Charming comes to the rescue before Bella comes to any harm, but the implications of what would have

happened to her are clear; she would have been gang raped and killed. Which is exactly what happened to Rosalie Hale; the night before her wedding she was gang raped and brutally beaten to the point of death by her intoxicated fiancé and his friends. As she lay dying Carlisle found her and changed her into a vampire (Meyer, *Eclipse* 153, 160-1).

In addition, the sex between Edward and the human Bella is worth reading into. Bella wants “the complete experience” (Meyer, *Breaking Dawn* 22) before she is turned into a vampire; get married, go on a honeymoon and have sex with her husband. After they finally have sex Bella wakes up “decorated with patches of blue and purple” (Meyer, *Breaking Dawn* 95) and the pillows have been torn to shreds. The second time Bella’s nightgown is in ruins and the bed frame has been ruined by their bedroom escapades. Edward has little to no control over his strength when passion takes over. Bella becomes pregnant with his baby, a half-vampire and half-human baby called a damphir, She has a very short and painful pregnancy that ends in a gruesome birth that would have killed her, if she had not turned into a vampire at the last minute. Sex is clearly dangerous, even when you are married.

As in any vampire fiction there are suggestions of incest in *The Twilight Saga*. Carlisle Cullen is the maker of all the family, so he has gone through the sexual ritual of inserting his phallic teeth into each and every one of them and has thus been lover to them all. As their maker he is their father, and that is exactly the role he plays in the family as stated above. Furthermore, he continues to be Esme’s lover, as she is his vampire wife. The other vampires in the family pose as each other’s siblings (and they are since Carlisle is their vampire father) and yet they are all dating each other.

In a Freudian reading of the series Bella has a serious case of the Electra complex. In short the Electra complex is a process all young girls go through according to Freud. Every young girl's first attachment is to her mother but as the girl discovers that she lacks a penis she develops penis envy. As the young girl discovers that her mother is also lacking in that department her desires shift towards the father whom "she believes can help her obtain a penis substitute – a child" (Gleitman, Reisberg and Gross 573). Then there are a few more stages not important to this reading, until lastly, the complex resolves finally when the girl identifies with the mother and represses the entire complex (Gleitman, Reisberg and Gross 572-3).

When Bella meets her mortal father after she has been turned into a vampire she experiences "a hot stabbing desire" (Meyer, *Breaking Dawn* 507) at the smell of his blood: "Charlie smelled more delicious than anything I'd ever imagined . . . But I wasn't hunting now. And this was my father" (Meyer, *Breaking Dawn* 507). As Anna Silver points out in "Twilight is not good for Maidens: Gender, Sexuality, and the Family in Stephenie Meyer's Twilight Series", this gives "a clue to Bella's attraction to Edward" (125). Silver argues that Edward's appeal is paternal and that he is the father figure that Bella did not have when growing up.

Edward is not just lover but father. Edward frequently refers to or treats Bella as a child. When he first met Bella, Edward tells her later, he considered her "an insignificant little girl" ([Meyer,] *Twilight* 271). Later he calls her "little coward" ([Meyer,] *Twilight* 279) and "Silly Bella" ([Meyer,] *Twilight* 281). These infantilizing endearments are underscored by the fact that he saves the perpetually clumsy and unlucky Bella again and again. (Silver 125)

When the vampire Bella smells her father's blood she feels a surge of sexual desire towards him. Likewise, Edward is both a lover and a father figure for her (Silver 125). It is also important to note that Edward is the one that turned Bella into a vampire. As she lay dying after giving birth to their daughter Renesmee Edward sank his teeth into her again and again, injecting his venom. At that moment he became her lover in yet another sense, as well as her vampire father. The vampire Bella is no longer the clumsy girl she used to be, she can take care of herself now, and more importantly, she finally got her penis substitute; a child. On top of that, she also now possesses the phallic vampire teeth.

The meeting the vampire Bella has with her father symbolizes the resolution of the Electra complex. Bella realizes that this desire towards Charlie is inappropriate and as a consequence she represses it; represses the complex.

In *New Moon* a love triangle forms between Edward, Bella and Jacob that continues through the series. Jacob is of another breed of supernatural beings, he is of a tribe that shape-shifts into wolves at will. These shape-shifters are mortal enemies of vampires, but Jacob's tribe formed a treaty with the Cullen's a long time ago. Both Edward and Jacob are besotted with Bella and are horrified of the thought of her with the other. Bella on the other hand seems not to know entirely what she wants although she chooses Edward in the end.

In a Freudian/Lacanian reading Edward is the almost century old primary father that wants the woman all to himself and Jacob is the son who wants to take over as the primary father, the top-man. Jacob however fails to eliminate the father and thus Edward keeps his place as the top-man and gets the girl. Even so the tension of the triangle does not disappear until the birth of Edward

and Bella's daughter, Renesmee, whom Jacob immediately imprints with,¹ and becomes thus bound to her for life. The emergence of a new generation disrupts the triangle.

Lastly, all the sexualities that can be traced in the series are heterosexual in nature, the only remote references to other sexualities is in the act of making a new vampire, and in the telepathic nature of the shape-shifters in wolf form, as one member of them is female and the rest male; every thought is shared, which leaves no privacy for sexual desires. However, the sexual desires are not projected to the others; they merely have the awkward pleasure of witnessing them.

3. Comparing Sexualities

In all three works the process of vampiric feeding and the making of a new vampire is a sexual one, the vampire teeth are phallic. Dracula chooses his fledglings among young women, and is their lover until they are turned and become merely his companions. The central vampires in *The Vampire Chronicles* usually are in love with the humans they choose to turn, or as when Lestat turns the child Claudia in order to tie Louis to him. Carlisle in *Twilight* only changes those that are already dying and only bonds with them after they are made. Only one of them becomes his vampire lover though. Likewise, Edward only changes Bella into a vampire when she is dying, although in their case they were already in love. The making of the half-vampire Renesmee however is

¹ Shape-shifters in the Twilight world imprint on their mate, making that person the most important person in their life.

through literal sex and pregnancy. The *Twilight* vampires are the only ones, featured here, that have genital sex.

The act also implies incest as has been shown. In addition all three works contain the Oedipus complex or the Electra complex in one form or another. The Oedipus complex is resolved in *Dracula* where the evil father is eliminated. It is arguable whether or not the complex is resolved in Lestat's case, both his mortal father and Enkil die, but Lestat still seems quite fascinated by Gabrielle and Akasha. The Electra complex resolves in *The Twilight Saga*, but in Claudia's case it does not; it merely ends with her death.

While *Dracula* implies homosexuality, the novel only shows the fulfillment of heterosexuality, and thus portrays closeted homosexuality. *The Vampire Chronicles* however revel in homosexuality, although the series does not restrict to that sexuality. The message of *The Twilight Saga* is that heterosexuality is the only sexuality, the one fated for everybody (in the series at least); Bella believes that she and Edward are fated for each other, the shape-shifters imprint on a person of the other sex, and have no say in the matter – it is up to fate.

Moreover, all the series present examples of rape, and gang rape in particular. These rapes are performed by humans and vampires alike, indicating that we can be no lesser monsters than the infamous vampires.

All the series also contain questionable relationships between adults and children; the vampire women in *Dracula* feed on children, Lestat and Louis make a vampire child that furthermore becomes Louis' lover, and Jacob imprints on a newborn baby.

Vampires originally embodied human fear, and still do in these three works, but in the form of sexual taboos. Dracula is the monstrous foreigner that comes to England to pervert all the women, turning them into voluptuous vampire women that starkly contrast the ideal woman of the time. Lestat is an eighteenth century gentleman that knows no bounds; vampirizes his own mother, his depressive friend, and even a child. Edward on the other hand is the embodiment of Prince Charming for adolescent girls, although the series make no secret out of how dangerous he and his kind can be, and how he barely restrains the danger of his thirst. Moreover, *The Twilight Saga* clearly shows the dangers of having sexual relations with a vampire, unless you are a vampire as well.

4. Conclusion

Vampires have always held a fascination for us mortals because they are not bound by our mortal laws and taboos. As Marius so eloquently puts it:

Mortals thrill at the possibility of immortality, at the possibility that a grand and beautiful being could be utterly evil, that he could feel and know all things yet choose willingly to feed his dark appetite. Maybe they wish they could be that lusciously evil creature. How simple it all seems. And it is the simplicity of it that they want. (Rice, *The Vampire Lestat* 466)

This dark appetite is the core of the vampire's sexuality, and more importantly, the vampire is "a metaphor for universal human sexuality" (McGinley 87). Thus Bram Stoker uses *Dracula* to express his closeted homosexuality without the danger of being exposed, which could certainly be dangerous considering the homophobia of the time. Anne Rice explores her own homoerotic fantasies in

The Vampire Chronicles and Stephenie Meyer uses her *Twilight Saga* to encourage abstinence in her young readers.

The vampire, disguised as fantasy, is still educating the young about their own sexuality and the expectations of society, and therefore it can be concluded that the literary vampire is as immortal as the legend tells us, unless there will be a drastic change in the human condition in the unseen future.

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