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Frohreich, Kimberly

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American Fantasies of Race

A Doctoral Dissertation presented

by

Kimberly Frohreich

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Directrice de Thèse:
Professor Deborah L. Madsen

Présidente du Jury:
Professor Guillemette Bolens

American Fantasies of Race

Abstract

This thesis examines contemporary American fantasy literature, film, television, and comic books which allegorize race and racial differences through the figure of the monster. Using the theoretical framework of Paul de Man's deconstructive allegory, Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, and Stuart Hall's "Race as a Floating Signifier," the project begins by analyzing the network of racial discourses which are allegorized in contemporary fantasy narratives. Part One of the thesis establishes a connection between nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientific and legal discourses, which define racial differences, and monstrous characters in fantasy narratives of the same period. A detailed analysis of the figurative language and rhetoric in each of these discursive ontologies reveals the fantastical construction of racial Otherness through monstrosity. Part Two examines contemporary texts that rewrite the monster to question previous stigmatizing configurations of the racial Other. Each chapter identifies a different way in which race is conceptualized in fantasy narratives through the use of allegory, exposing the way in which racial identity is (de)constructed through metaphor and metonymy. I argue that contemporary texts which use the traditional form of allegory and its reliance on metaphor reinforce the racial binary as "natural" and pre-discursive. In contrast, narratives that use deconstructive allegory expose the metaphorical constructions of race as metonymical and contingent on a network of signifiers, pointing to race as mere fantasy.

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Part One

One

Fantasizing Race, a Theoretical Introduction

My thesis examines the ways in which the figure of the monster is used to (de)construct the identity category of race in modern and contemporary American fantasy literature and media through the allegorization of scientific, legal, and social discourses and practices. Arguably, fantasy literature has long been a space where writers could safely explore their anxieties with regards to race, gender, and sexuality. Because of its supposed distance from “reality,” beyond that of the genre of realism, the fantasy genre appears to offer (imaginary) “worlds” in which an unlimited number of identity categories are possible and more flexible; “monstrous” beings thus appear to escape definition and any sense of categorization and identification. In this sense, fantasy writers are “free” to create subversive monstrous figures that allegorize Otherness and depict threats to the hegemonic order and the “fixed,” stable identity categories that it promotes. Despite the subversive qualities that these “monsters” might illustrate, fantasy narratives of the

nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries are nonetheless complicit with scientific and legal discourses that characterize racial Otherness as monstrous. These fantasy narratives draw from and contribute to a network of racially stigmatizing signifiers in the construction of their monsters as perverse, hypersexual, animalistic, degenerate, and/or diseased.

The contemporary surge of novels, films, television series, and comic books in which groups or communities of monstrous figures are depicted in narratives that thematize sensitive racial issues, such as miscegenation, passing, immigration, and segregation, demonstrates that the fantasy genre remains a site where questions regarding the construction of race continue to be played out. In addition, monstrous figures are portrayed in groups or communities, as a “race” in other words, and are re-characterized and rewritten in such a way as to reconfigure and/or question the relationship that monstrosity has maintained with racial Otherness. Thus, while fantasy narratives may continue to use the “monster” to allegorize racial difference, they do so in such a way as to point to the gap between signifier and signified, and to the illusion of a relationship between monstrosity and racial Otherness. I will focus on texts that rewrite, restyle, and reframe monstrosity in relation to racial Otherness, demonstrating that as these narratives subvert and/or deconstruct previous allegories of race, their own allegorical structure points to the inability of signifiers to refer to the racial Other. I will, therefore, argue that these texts illustrate the notion that the identity category of race is a mere fantasy, as much a fantasy as that of the monster.

The word “fantasies” in my title, thus, represents several aspects of my project. In its singular form, “fantasy” refers to the overall encompassing genre of the primary fictional texts that I will be analyzing, and “fantasies” to the multiple texts that my corpus includes and thereby to the different “fantasies of race” that these narratives (de)construct. The term “fantasy” points to the notion of illusion. In this context, the latter meaning points to one of the premises of my thesis: that race, as well as other identity categories, are constructs that are not

grounded in any physical ontology, but are a “fantasy.” In this respect, the language used in non-fictional texts, scientific and legal documents, political pamphlets, as well as newspaper articles, will be analyzed in order to consider how these discourses have been complicit with fantasy narratives, or, in other words, how these texts themselves promulgate “fantasies of race.”

I use the term “American” in more than one sense as well. It serves to encompass a large number of the texts that I will be analyzing, but not all. Indeed, the American notion of race did not develop entirely on its own and within the borders of the United States. American scientists, politicians, and journalists were influenced by several of their Western European counterparts. Similarly, American fantasy writers drew from (and continue to draw from) British fantasy writers in their creation of monstrous characters in conjunction with scientific discourses that stigmatized racial Otherness, particularly in the fantasy subgenre of the Gothic. As such, these texts are necessary elements of my corpus in considering the ways in which American fantasy writers have adapted and rewritten monstrosity in relation to an “American” context. Furthermore, I use of the quantifier “American” to highlight the notion that there may be a perception of the identity category of race that is particular to the United States, one that is inevitably tied up with the nation’s social and political history of European immigration, settler colonialism, manifest destiny – involving Native American genocide and forced migration – as well as Chinese exclusion, the enslavement and segregation of African-Americans, and contemporary attitudes towards Latino/a immigration. Aside from the legal discourses that have surrounded these social and political practices of exclusion, one must recall the federal One Drop Rule and state anti-miscegenation laws, which also contributed to the forging of an American identity as (pure) white and of Western European ancestry.¹

¹ This is a bit of a generalization that I allow myself to use at this point in the early part of the Introduction. Evidently, there were several categories of European immigrants that were also, if not legally, at least socially stigmatized through white supremacy.

I use the term of “race” then, not as a concept that I seek to reinforce, but quite the contrary – I intend to demonstrate that race is constructed in and operates through the language of scientific and legal discourses, social practices, as well as literature and media. Through these various mediums and discursive forms, the term “race,” along with the multitude of signifiers upon which it depends, function(s) as a transcendental signifier, that refers to a transcendental signified. For Jacques Derrida, the transcendental signified is:

the illusion of an ultimate referent at the heart of a signifying system which is portrayed as “absolute and irreducible,” stable, timeless, and transparent – as if it were independent of and prior to that system. He argued that dominant ideological discourse relies on this metaphysical foundation. All other signifieds within the signifying system are subordinate to this final meaning to which they point ... Without such a foundational term to provide closure for meaning, every signified functions as a signifier in an endless play of signification. (*Oxford Reference*, n. pag.)

The concept of race has been central to (or constitutive of) other transcendental signifieds in relation to identity, such as the “human.” Race and racial identities are assumed to be immutable, “natural,” grounded in the physical body in its pre-discursive form. Furthermore, the notion of race is inseparable from the notion of racial Otherness. In other words, race and the racial Other are concepts that have been used to define “people of color” in contrast to those who are white, or without “color.” As Whiteness Studies has shown, whiteness has (in the Western imagination) often been perceived as being without race or racial identity; whiteness is the point of comparison from which the racial Other is defined. Whiteness is then also a “fantasy” that depends on the identification and subsequent stigmatization of the racial Other in order to constitute itself. Such an illusion relies on the scientific and legal discourses that contributes to the appearance (and construction) of race and racial identity (Otherness) as natural, stable, and fixed.

Fantasy

Conversely, the fantasy genre offers other “worlds” in which an unlimited number of identity categories are possible and where the boundaries between these categories are more fluid. In some texts, the notion of identity is destabilized and loses meaning altogether. “Monstrous” beings that bear little resemblance to what is “normal” and “human,” appear to escape definition and any capacity for categorization and identification. “Sub-human” or “non-human” characters such as mutants, freaks, cyborgs, vampires, werewolves, aliens, zombies, and talking animals, question the limits of the body, the “human,” and hence, identity categories of gender, race, sexuality, class, (dis)ability, age, etc. Discussing Northrop Frye’s distinction between fantasy and realism, Brian Attebery writes: “In fantasy, characters can, as Frye says, do anything: fly, live forever, talk to animals, metamorphose into cockroaches or gods. In mimesis, by contrast, characters are limited; like everything else in the story they must conform to our sensory experience of the real world” (3). Because of its supposed distance from the reality of the author and reader, because of the notion that fantasy needs be less mimetic than literary realism, fantasy has often been thought of as a “safe space” in which writers could explore their desires and anxieties regarding the Other and/or depict subversive threats to the hegemonic order. In *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Tvetan Todorov writes that “the fantastic permits us to cross certain frontiers that are inaccessible so long as we have no recourse to it” (158). He continues by referring to the practice of censorship that exists at an institutional level as well as within the psyche of “the authors themselves”:

The penalization of certain acts by society provokes a penalization invoked in and by the individual himself, forbidding him to approach certain taboo themes. More than a simple pretext, the fantastic is a means of combat against this kind of censorship as well as the other: sexual excesses will be more readily accepted by any censor if they are attributed to the devil. (159)

Todorov then links the use or need of the fantastic to the writer's freedom to express anxieties and forbidden desires as well as to a subversive stance towards the hegemonic order.

While Todorov's 1970 study was the first to define fantasy (or the fantastic) as a genre or mode, there have since been many diverse attempts to situate fantasy fiction in relation (or opposition) to mimesis and its "reflection" of an extra-diegetical, ontological "reality." On the one hand, Todorov perceives fantasy as both a "safe space" and a "subversive threat" to hegemony, suggesting that there is a relationship, perhaps even a dialogue, between fantasy fiction and the extra-diegetical. On the other hand, Todorov also sides with theorists who argue in favor of the purity of fantasy, suggesting that fantastic texts bear no relation to the world in which we live. Indeed, in order for his definition of the fantastic to function, there must remain an ambiguity, a "hesitation" on the part of the homodiegetic narrator and the reader, with regards to what "world," and hence, genre, the narrative belongs:

In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know, a world without devils, sylphides, or vampires, there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination – and laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality – but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us ... The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event. (25)

Todorov thus suggests that the fantastic occurs in a sort of in-between state, a straddling of "our world" versus an imaginary world. As Lynette Hunter points out, the maintenance of "that moment of hesitation ... can only operate if it is isolated from reality." She continues by stating that "Todorov implies that the fantastic poses no problems because the representative activity of language is no longer accepted" (97). In stripping the fantastic of any link to our world, Todorov then strips the genre's potential to pose "problems," to subvert the status quo, and thereby relegates the fantastic to a "safe space." Ironically, however, even in relegating the fantastic to a "safe space," free from the dangers of censorship, Todorov contradicts himself,

as shown in the previous citation. For if “sexual excesses” are “attributed to the devil,” there can no longer be a hesitation on the part of the narrator, nor the reader. Furthermore, Todorov completely ignores the social (and historical) implications of equating sexual excess with the devil. For instance: what does the attribution of sexual excesses to the devil infer about those who are “guilty” of sexual excess? How are “sexual excesses” defined? And what other characterizations of the devil might work with his “sexual excesses”?

These questions and their possible answers are linked to the historical, social and political contexts in which the fantasy narrative was written, and pertain to the writer’s and readers’ notions of heteronormativity versus sexual “perversion” – notions that are part of a network of signifiers that defined the “normal human” in relation to the “abnormal” and “monstrous” Other. My point is that even if Todorov is correct in stating that fantasy writers are able to escape censorship because of the genre’s perceived distance from reality, fantasy narratives nonetheless maintain a strong relationship to other texts, whether fantastic, realistic, or non-fictional, as well as to the world of the author and reader – something that his structuralist approach denies. In her 1981 work, *Fantasy: the Literature of Subversion*, Rosemary Jackson seeks to correct what she sees as “some important omissions” (5) in Todorov’s study – primarily his insistence on the purity of the fantastic. His study “does not move outwards ... to relate the forms of literary texts to their cultural formation” (6). She situates her work in relation to his: “It is an attempt to suggest ways of remedying this that my study tries to extend Todorov’s investigation from being one limited to the *poetics* of the fantastic into one aware of the *politics* of its forms” (*idem*). Jackson’s definition of fantasy is important as she recognizes the way in which “literary fantasy is produced within, and determined by, its social context” (3). In other words, fantasy narratives are inseparable from and even shaped by the social context within which they are written. An analysis that is aware of these connections looks to understand why and how a fantasy narrative links “sexual

excesses” to a “monstrous” figure by examining the text’s historical context, and the (historical) documentation regarding sexual perversion of that period.

However, this does not seem to be the practice of analysis that Jackson practices. Rather, her definition of fantasy remains close to Todorov’s in her prioritization of the notion of ambiguity, which leads her to contradict herself. Indeed, Jackson sees those narratives that remain ambiguous, that “transgress, subvert, focus on the unknown and move toward endlessly unsatisfied desire” (Hunter 102) as superior to those that do not. Consequently, these are the narratives on which she focuses:

Although nearly all literary fantasies eventually re-cover desire, neutralizing their own impulses towards transgression, some move towards the extreme position ... and remain “open,” dissatisfied, endlessly desiring. Those texts which attempt that movement and that transgressive function have been given the most space in this book, for in them the fantastic is at its most uncompromising in its interrogation of the “nature” of the “real.” (9)

By texts that “desire,” Jackson refers to what she believes to be at the origin of fantasy narrative production, a compensation for “a lack resulting from cultural constraints” (3). This desire refers to a complex relationship between the self and the Other, which brings her to define two types of fantasy narratives: one which she classifies as “the Frankenstein type of myth” where the “source of otherness, of threat, is in the *self*” and the other as “the Dracula myth” where “fear originates in a source external to the subject” (58). According to Jackson, the latter “is far less easy to ‘contain,’ far more disturbing in its countercultural thrust. It is not confined to *one* individual; it tries to replace cultural life with a total, absolute Otherness, a completely alternative self-sustaining system” (60). Hence, Jackson devotes several pages in her analysis to Bram Stoker’s novel, and this is precisely where she contradicts herself because she is obliged to admit that, in the end, Stoker “reinforces social, class, racial and sexual prejudices” (121). She writes:

Stoker identifies the protean shadow of the “other” as evil. In the guise of its “unnameable” absolute otherness, social realities are deformed and dismissed. The shadow on the edges of bourgeois culture is variously identified, as black, mad,

primitive, criminal, socially deprived, deviant, crippled, or (when sexually assertive) female. (*idem*)

In Jackson's reasoning then, the "unnameable" becomes nameable, with a reference to all those that are "other" to "bourgeois culture." Jackson demonstrates that Dracula's characterization involves several signifiers that were simultaneously used to stigmatize those who were not white, heterosexual, able-bodied, and male. Jackson is thus obliged to admit that, while one of her primary examples of a subversive fantasy narrative temporarily exposes repressive ideologies and threatens the hegemonic order, it nonetheless reinforces and reproduces normative behavior and thinking.

Jackson's preference for what she considers to be subversive fantasy narratives also leads her to reject texts that might otherwise belong to the genre. Her definition of "fantasy" is sometimes obscured by her use of the term interchangeably with the "fantastic." Jackson uses Todorov's term of the "fantastic" to stand for "fantasy." While in French (the language in which Todorov wrote), the term "*fantaisie*" does not refer to a genre and "*la fantastique*" denotes both the adjective and the noun (fantastic and fantasy) in English, Jackson does not take into account the way in which the genre of fantasy can be generally used to englobe a wide variety of sub-genres, such as horror, the Gothic, science fiction, and the fairy tale. Like Todorov, she distinguishes between the fantastic and the marvelous – the marvelous referring to narratives that take place in a different world with supernatural elements, such as the fairy tale, and the fantastic referring to narratives that take place in a realistic setting and that include potentially supernatural elements. Thus, Jackson excludes from her definition of the fantasy genre several narratives that might otherwise be included. Referring to the works of Frank Baum, C.S. Lewis and J.R. Tolkien (among others), she writes: "Such marvelous narratives have a tangential relation to the 'real,' interrogating its values only retrospectively or allegorically" (43). She continues in relation to science fiction:

science fiction fantasies ... incorporat[e] different aspects of human culture, magnifying certain features and diminishing others. They build up *another* universe out of elements of this one ... Their other world, however new or strange, is linked to the real through an allegorical association, as an exemplification of a possibility to be avoided or embraced. (*idem*)

According to Jackson, because allegory refers directly to “the real” (somewhat similar to the Romantic notion of the symbol as a “transcendental signifier” – I will return to this below), it cannot serve to question “the real” but rather attempts to “arriv[e] at definitive meaning or absolute ‘reality’” (41). The presence of allegory in certain fantasy narratives or sub-genres then becomes the reason for her refusal to include them in the fantasy genre. Furthermore, Jackson’s classification of the above narratives and sub-genres suggests that all narratives which take place in a world different to ours, that depart from the “real,” are not part of the fantasy genre. Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland* should then be relegated to the domain of the marvelous, yet Jackson makes an exception here (without admitting it). While significant parallels exist between Baum’s *Wonderful Land of Oz* and Carroll’s *Alice* stories (both follow a little girl who leaves the “real” world for a marvelous or supernatural world), for Jackson, Carroll’s “nonsense utterances” and “language as signifying-nothing” render his narrative fantastic in opposition to Baum’s. As Lynette Hunter notes, Jackson sees such words and phrases as questioning the “referential by ‘pure signifiers’ ... [the fantastic] becomes a ‘discourse without an object’ ... Because [the fantastic] resists signification and insists upon the literal it is also held to be metonymic rather than metaphorical” (104). But, Hunter continues, “the problem here is that the whole question of the possibility of literal language in this sense, of ‘pure’ signifier, is not considered” (*idem*). Jackson claims that “pure signifiers” point to language’s inability to signify, and thus to a crisis of meaning that fantasy illustrates (I will return to this below). But the very notion of “pure signifiers,” as Hunter suggests, is problematic in that they do the opposite of what Jackson intends. They intimate by extension that fantasy can be a closed system, potentially denying what Jackson advocates for the fantasy

genre – its connection to a political and social context – as well as denying the way in which signifiers, even if they do not have a direct relationship to a signified, remain part of a network of signifiers.² These signifiers – these (descriptive) words or images – are precisely what allows Jackson to make the claim that Dracula is characterized through the signifieds of “black, mad, primitive, criminal, socially deprived, deviant, crippled, or (when sexually assertive) female” (151).

In considering fantasy as a safe space in which socially sensitive issues can be debated, my point is that the genre is not a closed system as Todorov would have it, nor as Jackson inadvertently promotes. To take Todorov’s argument: if writers use the fantasy genre as an escape from censorship, then the context in which they write is a direct cause of the writing of the narrative. Jackson’s “correction” of Todorov to include the political context of the narrative demonstrates this. Further, as the above example illustrates, the subversive nature of a fantasy narrative can reinforce the stigmatization of various categories of Otherness. Referring to Stoker’s novel, Jack Halberstam writes that the narrative is a “technology of monstrosity,” and like other Gothic monsters, Stoker’s vampire does not “produce monstrosity as ... unitary, but ... as an aggregate of race, class and gender” through the layering of several discourses:

[T]he nineteenth-century discourse of anti-Semitism and the myth of the vampire share a kind of Gothic economy in their ability to condense many monstrous traits into one body. In the context of this novel, Dracula is otherness itself, a distilled version of all others produced by and within fictional texts, sexual science, and psychopathology. (88)

Halberstam writes that Dracula’s “body” condenses “many monstrous traits.” Dracula’s body is written, and written on, in the same way that discourses surrounding gender identity write on the (sexed) body. As an allegory of Semitic Otherness, his categorization as monstrous relies

² Moreover, in her elevation of the “pure signifier,” Jackson verges on rendering the latter transcendental. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak writes in her preface to Jacques Derrida’s *Of Grammatology*, “Derrida cautions us that, when we teach ourselves to reject the notion of the primacy of the signified—of meaning over word—we should not satisfy our longing for transcendence by giving primacy to the signifier—word over meaning” (n. pag.).

on discourses that have been used in the “Othering” of several identity categories, such as sexual perversion, pathology, and conspicuous wealth; these are discourses that have been used to stigmatize the Jewish Other, and that are repeated in fictional and non-fictional texts.

The fantasy genre invokes a network of discourses where signifiers that construct the notion and figures of Otherness are exchanged, repeated, and potentially reinforced. As Michel Foucault writes in *The History of Sexuality* (1976):

[W]e must conceive discourse as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable. To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. (100)

Foucault’s comment demonstrates that discourses are not to be divided into a binary of “dominant” versus “dominated,” or hegemonic versus subversive, but exist as a “multiplicity” or network that produces its own subversion. Jacques Derrida emphasizes this inability to escape (hegemonic) discourse through critique. Referring to “the destruction of the history of metaphysics,” he argues: “We have no language – no syntax or lexicon – which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest” (1978, 280-1). He later claims that “language bears within itself the necessity of its own critique” (284). Foucault echoes Derrida’s remarks by underlining that power both wields and is produced by discourse; power also (unwittingly) produces the mechanisms with which to “contest” itself:

We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. In like manner, silence and secrecy are a shelter for power, anchoring its prohibitions; but they also loosen its holds and provide for relatively obscure areas of tolerance. (101)

Thus, “dominant” discourses that define Otherness also “produce” the (subversive) discourses that “undermine” and “expose” it. Yet these discourses are also part of the production of Otherness. Similarly, and by extension, fantasy fiction comes from and is comprised of the same hegemonic discourses it might “critique.”

Importantly, Jackson’s emphasis on the ambiguity of meaning in fantasy narratives, or their highlighting of “non-signification,” may in fact work with hegemonic texts, such as scientific and legal documentation, in the construction of Otherness. Jackson argues, for instance, that Stoker’s *Dracula* is an example of a fantastic text that “pushes towards an area of non-signification,” towards the “gap between the signifier and the signified,” thus “dramatiz[ing] the impossibility of arriving at definitive meaning, or absolute ‘reality’” (41). But Jackson’s championing of the text’s supposed push towards “non-signification” disregards the ways in which unintelligibility or the absence of meaning necessarily translates into a position of Otherness, one that is used to constitute the white, middle-class, heterosexual Anglo-Saxon man as normative. As Maisha Wester notes of both the British and the American Gothic, “(Un)readable bodies in gothic texts reference anxiety over the transgressive racial and sexual Other ... [Gothic] texts inevitably bring the (in)ability to visually identify and categorize bodies to bear upon the construction of being and identity” (23). As Jackson eventually acknowledges, the “unnameability” of Dracula that exists throughout most of the narrative is later clarified – the monster is named and identified and all mystery is solved. The subversive Otherness that Dracula embodies is ultimately used to stabilize normative identity categories, and the gap between signifier and signified is hidden, in part through the concepts that also defined the “racial and sexual Other” in scientific and legal discourses of the nineteenth-century. The fantasy of Otherness, along with the Other’s potentially subversive position, are not only produced through fantasy fiction, but also through scientific and legal discourses and the connection that these various texts and discourses have with each other.

The use of the plural form of fantasy in my title (“fantasies”) therefore, refers to the fantasy of racial Otherness that is propagated in what might not otherwise be considered as fantastic discursive texts – namely scientific and legal documentation – as well as to fantasy narratives. Unlike Todorov and Jackson, I employ a broad definition of the fantasy genre and situate it simply in relation to realism as a mimetic genre. While Todorov and Jackson emphasize the “hesitation” the reader may experience with regards to supernatural elements in the fantastic genre, and although this “hesitation” may accompany the ambiguity or the “unnameability” surrounding the characterization of the “monstrous” Other, what interests me are the mechanisms used to fix meaning and to construct and mark the body of the Other as monstrous. The narratives that are analyzed in this thesis have been selected based on their construction of monstrous creatures – such as the vampire, the werewolf, the zombie, and the alien – creatures that situate a text in the fantasy genre rather than in mimetic realism, a genre that purports to reflect the extra-diegetical “reality” in which it was produced. Writing about the opposition between these two genres, Brian Attebery offers the clearest and most encompassing definition of fantasy to which I adhere:

The essential content is the impossible, or, as I put it in *The Fantasy Tradition in American Literature*, “some violation of what the author clearly believes to be natural law” (17). Others define the impossible slightly differently – Kathryn Hume refers to “departure from consensus reality” (8), C.N. Manlove mentions the supernatural, Jane Mobley calls it magic – but there is general agreement that some such violation is essential to fantasy. The broader field of the fantastic may include the improbable, the implausible, the highly unlikely, and the as-yet-nonexistent. (14-15)

Attebery reiterates the points made by a multitude of theorists regarding the definition of the fantasy genre. Nonetheless, he makes clear that there is an overall “consensus” – fantasy involves elements that are “implausible” or “highly unlikely” in the ontology, or the reality, that writers and readers occupy. Such a definition allows me to include within the genre several fantasy sub-genres, such as science fiction, horror, the Gothic, and the fairy tale; or rather, any work of fiction that cannot be described as realistic and that contains elements, events, and

especially characters that are “alien” to the extra-diegetical “real” world – and, more importantly, where “monstrous” characters can be read or perceived as allegories of racial Otherness.

Allegory, Performativity and Race

A further problem with the definition of the fantasy genre proposed by Todorov and Jackson is their rejection of allegory. While Todorov rejects allegory because it supposedly does not allow for a “hesitation” between the “natural” and the “supernatural,” Jackson asserts that it removes an element that is an inherent part of the fantastic, that of “non-signification”:

The fantastic ... pushes towards an area of non-signification. It does this either by attempting to articulate “the unnameable,” the “nameless things” of horror fiction, attempting to visualize the unseen, or by establishing a disjunction of word and meaning through a play upon “thingless names.” In both cases, the gap between signifier and signified dramatizes the impossibility of arriving at definitive meaning, or absolute “reality.” As Todorov points out, the fantastic cannot be placed alongside allegory or poetry, for it resists the conceptualizations of the first and the metaphorical structures of the second. It tends towards the non-conceptual, or pre-conceptual ... When it is “naturalized” as allegory or symbolism, fantasy loses its proper non-signifying nature. Part of its subversive power lies in this resistance to allegory and metaphor. (41)

This definition of the fantastic in relation to allegory relies on an older definition of the literary technique that does not acknowledge the various ways that allegory has been interpreted, as “a trope, an interpretive method and a narrative genre” (Madsen, 1994, 29). Instead, Jackson clings to the idea of allegory as a trope that refers to one specific, easily identifiable “object,” where one thing is said but means “other.” As Deborah Madsen notes, the etymology of the term “allegory” is derived “from the Greek *allos* (other)”; “*allegoria* is, according to tradition, speaking (of the) other” (*idem*). Confusion then ensues between “speaking other,” a method that was traditionally aligned with the fable, versus the allegorical use of the figure, or ““speaking of the Other”” (30-31). In either case, Jackson (and Todorov) might argue that there is a direct relationship between the signifier (“speaking other”) and the signified (“the Other”)

and that, therefore, allegory is normative and cannot be used to express “unnameable” and non-normative fantastical elements.³ Jackson overlooks Paul de Man’s theorizing of allegory in his 1969 essay, “The Rhetoric of Temporality,” where de Man not only distinguishes the “naturalizing” tendencies of symbolism in contrast to allegory, but also outlines the deconstructive method of the latter in relation to language. What Jackson does not realize is that de Man’s definition of allegory is strikingly similar to her definition of the fantastic.

Like Jackson, de Man rejects allegory as it was previously defined by writers such as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and shows that it has been misinterpreted. Writing of the Romantic rejection of allegory in favor of symbolism, de Man states that allegory has been interpreted as “a sign that refers to one specific meaning and thus exhausts its suggestive potentialities once it has been deciphered” (188). He continues: “Allegory appears as dryly rational and dogmatic in its reference to a meaning that it does not itself constitute” (189). For de Man, it is the symbol’s “appeal to the infinity of a totality,” where the symbol could either be a part of the totality or the totality itself, which is problematic. Romantic preference for the symbol is based on its apparent ability to make “present” this “totality.” De Manian deconstruction, however, questions the idea of “presence”: “A key move in deconstructive criticism has been to show that the text, whatever it may seem to assert, is premised on *absence*, on a *lack* within the speaking subject, who therefore cannot claim to have the ‘presence’ that much Romantic poetry asserts” (emphasis added, Tambling, 128). Thus, Romanticism claims to make “present” a transcendental signified which can validate the subject, while deconstructive criticism shows the constructed nature of the signified through its contingency on a network of signifiers.

De Man and Jackson share the deconstructive approach; while the former focuses on the rhetorical device of allegory and the latter focuses on the fantasy genre, they both highlight

³ Madsen also highlights the traditional notion of allegory in relation to normativity: “The term has been used to name both the quest for normative meaning and that meaning that is posited as normative” (1994, 29).

the deconstruction of the relationship between the signifier and the signified. Jackson writes that “fantasy characteristically attempts to compensate for a *lack* resulting from cultural constraints: it is a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as *absence* and loss” (emphasis added, 3). Though not clearly expressed here, Jackson later suggests, in psychoanalytic terms, that this “lack” is precisely the separation of the subject from “reality,” or the “absence and loss” of the “real” that the subject experiences through language. In other words, we are meant to read “cultural constraints” as comprising both “the law,” or “dominant value systems” (4), and language itself, or the Lacanian “symbolic” (91). As she later points out, it is the fantastic (or fantasy) that highlights this “absence” of the “real,” and that actually “introduces” them (69). While “attempt[ing] to compensate” for absences, fantasy actually “pushes towards an area of non-signification,” towards the “gap between the signifier and the signified,” thus “dramatiz[ing] the impossibility of arriving at definitive meaning, or absolute ‘reality’” (41). Fantasy provides a means of representation for things that are difficult to express in language, such as race. Fantasy reveals the gaps in language, especially for things that are impossible to represent in forms other than fantasy itself. This is similar to the function of allegory, as Madsen notes:

Allegory assumes that it is dealing with the kinds of issues which resist expression in other forms and which resist simple statement or definition. The kinds of value explored in allegorical narratives are defined culturally as apprehensible but not definable, existing in terms of relationships and processes rather than as static entities. (1995, 123-124)

Like fantasy narratives dealing with race, allegorical narratives demonstrate that race is one such “issue” that “resist[s] expression” and “simple statement or definition.” They also demonstrate that race is “culturally” “apprehensible,” especially in relation to other “issues ... existing in terms of relationships and processes,” such as the self and the Other. I will return to this below.

Like Jackson's contention that fantasy highlights the separation between the subject and "reality," de Man attributes the same power to allegory which "suggests a disjunction between the way in which the world appears in reality and the way it appears in language" (191). More than "suggesting" this "disjunction," allegory highlights this separation between the world and language in that "the relationship between sign and meaning is discontinuous": "the sign points to something that differs from its literal meaning and has for its function the thematization of this difference" (209). In other words, allegory highlights the subject's incapacity to represent or refer to reality through language. "For de Man, allegory not only lacks a referent, but is generated out of a sense of the loss of a referent. The gulf that now opens up between word and object, language and the world, produces a split between statement and meaning; they do not refer to each other, even if it seems they do" (Tambling 129). For de Man, all language is allegorical in the sense that there is always a split between the signifier and the signified. Yet it is literary allegory that points to the illusion of the union between signifier and signified. Contrary to what Jackson maintains, fantasy is one such (literary) genre where allegory operates, introducing the "absence" between the signified and the signifier and calling it to our attention. Like Jackson's interpretation of the fantasy genre, de Man sees allegory as coming from a "lack": the incapacity to signify and, for the subject, to access reality through language. Like fantasy, allegory points to this lack, to "non-signification," to the "unnameable." This is not to say that allegory reinforces the problematic "unreadability" of the Other in Gothic texts such as Stoker's *Dracula* (nor that allegory suggests that the Other's body is problematic because it is "unreadable"), but rather allegory highlights the impossibility of fixed meanings and/or problematizes the imposition of fixed meanings. Allegory points to the illusion of the transcendental signifier, in particular as a means to define the subject in its opposition to the Other.

For de Man, allegory's performance of the separation between the "real" world and language means that the subject loses its fixed definition through time. Critiquing Rousseau and Wordsworth for their desire to achieve a sort of timeless universality of the subject and its connection to nature, de Man states that the subject is inevitably separated from the "natural" world: "the prevalence of allegory always corresponds to the unveiling of an authentically temporal destiny. This unveiling takes place in a subject that has sought refuge against the impact of time in a natural world to which, in truth, it bears no resemblance" (206). De Man further suggests that allegory's temporality posits a separation of the self from a previous version of the self:

Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference. In so doing, it prevents the self from an illusory identification with the non-self, which is now fully, though painfully, recognized as a non-self. (207)

De Man's use of the term "non-self" highlights the illusory meaning assigned to the "self," which is based on the assumption that the (identity of the) "self" remains stable in time rather than constructed through metonymy with the "non-self," or the Other. The Romantic interpretation of the symbol suggests that the signifier and the signified are the same, which allows the subject to feel connected to the natural world as if its "previous selves" and its current self are united in one coherent subject, one identity. Allegory, however, highlights the subject's disconnectedness from the "transcendental" notion of the natural world or "reality," as well as "painfully" illustrating the illusion of "identification" between the subject and its prior self or "origin." The idea of a unitary "identity" that is ontologically stable in time and in "reality" is not possible. As Tambling puts it: "allegory [has become] a way of thinking about resistance to identity" (86).

For de Man, the repetition of signs within a narrative does not reinforce but rather emphasizes the illusion of identity. De Man writes that the

relationship between signs necessarily contains a constitutive temporal element; it remains necessary, if there is to be allegory, that the allegorical sign refer to another sign that precedes it. The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can then consist only in the *repetition* ... of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority. (207)

There is then no “meaning constituted” by a single “allegorical sign.” Allegory must “consist” of several allegorical signs that follow each other in a sequence. And it is in this sequence that allegory highlights the artificiality of identity and the incapacity of language to refer to anything other than itself. Referring to de Man, Tambling writes:

If a narrative sequence, or “argument,” is carried by a series of tropes, no argument can be followed: for tropes, as separate figures, do not relate to each other, being non-coincident with each other, though they appear to follow continuously ... Where no connection can be made between successive tropes, there can be no thought of identity. (131)

In other words, allegory repeatedly displaces the capacity of language to signify, not only as each allegorical sign refers to a split between the signifier and the signified, but also because each sign is then displaced by the sign that precedes it and the sign that follows it.

De Man’s definition of “time as the originary constitutive category” is similar to Judith Butler’s work regarding gender identity, suggesting that allegory and Butler’s theory of performativity share a deconstructive approach to time in relation to identity. In her theory of gender performativity in *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler questions the identity category of gender not only through the gap between the signifier and signified, but through the performative power of language to create (or construct) the notion of gender. Butler takes issue with the idea that gender is “natural” and pre-discursive – existing prior to language. In Butler’s theory, performativity functions like allegory in that it refers both to the loss of a stable referent for gender identity – one that permanently exists in a core, interior self – and also loss of an original gendered identity based on biological sex. She writes:

Gender requires a performance that is *repeated*. This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation ... Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is

an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*. (191)

Gender identity, like allegory, can only be constructed through time, through the “repetition” of “acts” and “gestures” (185). While these acts and gestures “produce the effect of an internal core or substance,” they are in fact “signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause” (*idem*). Acts and gestures construct a gender, or a narrative of a gendered identity, because they are repeated. Yet it is also through this repetition that the possibility exists to destabilize gender identity, as Butler explains:

If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the spatial metaphor of a “ground” will be displaced and revealed as a stylized configuration, indeed, a gendered corporealization of time. The abiding gendered self will then be shown to be structured by repeated acts that seek to approximate the ideal of a substantial ground of identity, but which, in their occasional *discontinuity*, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this “ground.” The possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such acts. (192)

Butler suggests that if the “repetition of acts” is “continuous” and performed without “fault,” gender identity can appear “seamless” and hide “the organizing principle of identity.” Like allegory, these “acts” nonetheless maintain “arbitrary” relationships with one another. While allegory exposes as illusion the meaning that language supposedly creates, Butler argues that it is precisely because of the need for the “repetition” of acts or gestures in the constitution of a stable gender identity that the latter can be exposed as unstable and even non-existent.

De Man critiques the illusory conceptualization of a stable identity through the Romantic symbol as well as through the figure that traditionally defines allegory: metaphor. In his *Allegories of Reading* (1979), De Man analyzes Rousseau’s *Second Discourse* in which the philosopher imagines a “primitive” man’s first encounter with another man, where “fear” and lack of awareness of his own size lead him to name the other a “giant.” De Man writes:

By calling him a “giant,” one freezes hypothesis, or fiction, into fact and makes fear, itself a figural state of suspended meaning, into a definite, proper meaning devoid of alternatives. The metaphor “giant,” used to connote man, has indeed a proper meaning (fear), but this meaning is not really proper: it refers to a condition of permanent

suspense between a literal world in which appearance and nature coincide and a figural world in which this correspondence is no longer *a priori* posited. Metaphor is error because it believes or feigns to believe in its own referential meaning. (1979, 151)

De Man explains how “fear” as a response to “a condition of permanent suspense between a literal world ... and a figural world” is hidden and resolved through the fixing of meaning with metaphor and, further, shapes the man’s perception of the other (or Other). Because

[m]etaphor overlooks the fictional, textual element in the nature of the entity it connotes, ... the figure literalizes its referent and deprives it of its para-figural status. The figure dis-figures, that is, it makes fear, itself a para-figural fiction, into a reality that is as inescapable as the reality of the original encounter between the two men. (1979, 151)

The danger in this moment of interpretative “error” where the other (or Other) is named “giant” lies in the move to “literal acts,” perhaps of violence. But in Rousseau’s account, the initial mistake in perception is resolved through the comparison of one man’s body with the other’s, notably through the counting of body parts (limbs and fingers). This leads the man to an additional use of metaphor in order to define the “sameness” between the two and to name themselves “men”:

The concept of man is thus doubly metaphorical: it first consists of the blind moment of passionate error that leads to the word “giant,” then of the moment of deliberate error that uses number in order to tame the original wild metaphor into harmlessness ... The “second” metaphor, which Rousseau equates with the literary, deliberate and rhetorical use of the spontaneous figure is no longer innocent: the invention of the word man makes it possible for “men” to exist by establishing the equality within inequality, the sameness within difference of civil society, in which the suspended, potential truth of the original fear is domesticated by the illusion of identity. (154-5)

For de Man, Rousseau’s narrative illustrates how the identity of man is constructed through the relationship between metaphors. Here, the “fear” of difference in the other (or Other, as a “giant”) is “tamed” or “domesticated” through the second metaphor of identification as “man.” The relationship creating the identity of “man” thus operates through proximity, or metonymy, between the two metaphors, meaning that “man” is actually understood through allegory. De Man argues:

Actual language does not use the imaginary word “giant” but has invented the conceptual term “man” in its stead. Conceptualization is a double process: it is this complexity that allows for the successive narrative pattern of the allegory. It consists first of all of a wild, spontaneous metaphor which is, to some degree, aberrant ... The second level of aberration stems from the use of number as if it were a literal property of things that truly belongs to them, when it is, in fact, just one more conceptual metaphor devoid of objective validity and subject to the distortions that constitute all metaphors. (153)

Although the concept of “man” is created through allegory, and although allegory itself is constituted of a series of metaphors (which become allegorical signs through narrative time), metaphor “assumes a world in which intra- and extra-textual events, literal and figural forms of language, can be distinguished ... and, consequently exchanged and substituted for each other” (152). Unlike allegory, which highlights the “gap between the signifier and the signified” and the inability to fix meaning, “the blindness of metaphor ... literalizes its referential indetermination into a specific unit of meaning” (153). The concepts “man” and the “Other” – marked as such through the metaphor of “giant” – are produced through “blindness” to the metonymical relationship they share and the “successive narrative pattern of the allegory.” It is through metaphor that “the illusion of identity” operates.

Butler engages with the problematic implications of metaphor in perceiving gender as an “essence,” specifically in relation to metaphors of the body’s exterior versus interior. As Butler argues, gendered acts and gestures create the illusion of an interior self, a core identity, as an origin in which these signs are located. Referring to the process of the constitution of the self through abjection (to which I will return in more detail below), Butler writes:

Regardless of the compelling metaphors of the spatial distinctions of inner and outer, they remain linguistic terms that facilitate and articulate a set of fantasies, feared and desired. “Inner” and “outer” make sense only with reference to a mediating boundary that strives for stability ... Hence, “inner” and “outer” constitute a binary distinction that stabilizes and consolidates the coherent subject. When that subject is challenged, the meaning and necessity of the terms are subject to displacement. If the “inner world” no longer designates a topos, then the internal fixity of the self and, indeed, the internal locale of gender identity, become similarly suspect (182-183)

If gender is shown to be performative, constructed through a series of repetitive acts and gestures played out in time, then the signifiers constituting gender no longer function as straightforward metaphors for the “internal fixity of the self.” Likewise, signifiers of the “inner” self as metaphors for a gendered exterior “become similarly suspect.” Both de Man and Butler underline the subject’s lost “origin” or “unreachable anteriority” (222). For Butler, the origin of gendered identity might be biological sex, as well as an “unreachable,” “stable” interiority that can be seen as existing simultaneously with gender as the “cause” of gendered acts and gestures. Neither the “anteriority” that is supposedly at the origin of each (allegorical) sign nor the “stable” gendered identity exist. Both actually refer to what de Man would call the “non-self” (1969, 207).

I refer to Butler’s theory of performativity, not to suggest that it applies directly to the identity category of race, but to underline that, like gender, race is produced by social discourses that exceed the body, that are written on the body, which is fantasized as a racialized body through these discourses. In her 1999 preface to *Gender Trouble*, Butler cautions that “race and gender ought not to be treated as simple analogies” (xvi). But like gender, race has been hegemonically defined through biological essentialism. Similar to the way in which gender produces the illusion of a “true” and “stable” gendered interiority, visual physical differences are thought to reflect a racially distinct biological interior based on genetic difference. In an essentialist reading of the body, somatic signifiers of the body’s exterior are not understood as metaphors, but as factual “evidence” of the body’s “inner” self. In scholarly circles, both gender and race have only recently been acknowledged as social constructions. Even so, as Stuart Hall argues, certain somatic signifiers continue to be problematically “read” as signs of race. In his 1996 lecture at the University of Westminster, “Race, the Floating Signifier,” Hall refers to the way in which race has been defined through the specific physical differences of skin, bone, and hair:

Actually, these things which you can see are also signifiers. You are reading them as signs of a code which you can't see. You assume that it's genetic code that produces these gross differences of color, hair and bone. And only because of that, can you use that as a way of distinguishing between one group of people and another ... you can read the body as a text ... We are readers of race; we are readers of social difference ... The very obviousness of the visibility of race is what persuades me that it functions because it is signifying something; it is a text which we can read. (n. pag.)

Hall points out that race is given an ontological truth value because it is assumed to be manifested both within the body and on the body's surface, such that the exterior is believed to reflect the interior. Genetic difference is presumed to be reflected on the surface of the body, which is then "read" as racial difference. Hall shows that despite the general acceptance (in academia) that racial difference has no biological foundation, there is, nonetheless, a "biological trace" that persists in the interpretation of "racially distinct" physical signs. Because of this tendency to ignore the ways in which race is constructed through a diverse network of discourses and to position the body as some sort of "ultimate transcendental signifier," Hall argues that racial difference functions in a manner similar to sexual difference:

The trap in racism is precisely to allow what is manifestly there, what offers it to us as its symptom of appearance to stand in the place of what is in fact one of the most profound and deeply complex of the cultural systems which allow for us to make a distinction between inside and outside, between us and them, between who belongs and who doesn't belong, that apparently obvious simple and banal fact requires the invocation of territories of knowledge in order to produce it as a simple, obvious, visible fact. In this way ... racial difference is more like sexual difference than it is like the other systems of difference precisely because anatomy, physiology appears to wind the question up. And what we know about and have learned gradually about sexual difference, that is to say, the profundity of the depth that lies behind that distinction is what we need to begin to learn about the languages of race which we speak. (n. pag.)

Here, Hall suggests that race, like gender or sexual difference, is not only dangerously reduced to "simple" and "visible" biological "fact," but also that the two "systems of difference" are often reduced to binary oppositions when in fact they "require the invocation of territories of knowledge."

I do not wish to suggest that race can be relegated only to the realm of the discursive, disregarding the powerful effects and lived experiences that stem from – as well as reinforce –

racial identity categories and racism. Butler warns against the claim that gender is only a matter of language, arguing that the debate between constructivism and essentialism is itself problematic:

It is not enough to claim that human subjects are constructed, for the construction of the human is a differential operation that produces the more and the less “human,” the inhuman, the inhumanly unthinkable. These excluded sites come to bound the “human” as its constitutive outside, and to haunt those boundaries as the persistent possibility of their disruption and rearticulation ... The debate between constructivism and essentialism thus misses the point of deconstruction altogether, for the point has never been that “everything is discursively constructed”; that point, when and where it is made, belongs to a kind of discursive monism or linguisticism that refuses the constitutive force of exclusion, erasure, violent foreclosure, abjection and its disruptive return within the very terms of discursive legitimacy. (1993, 8)

The simple claim that racial identity is constructed does not address how the racial Other is produced in relation to a white hegemonic order through processes of “exclusion, erasure, violent foreclosure” and “abjection.” It does not acknowledge how the unintelligibility or the “unnameability” (to use Jackson’s term) that is used to constitute the racial Other in order to position whiteness as normative, is “both an instrument and an effect of power” (Foucault 101).⁴ Likewise, Hall argues that to claim race as merely a discursive construction, existing only within language, is to deny the powerful effects of racism. For Hall, there is no reason to deny difference in itself:

It’s only when these differences have been organized within language, within discourse, within systems of meaning, that the differences can be said to acquire meaning and become a factor in human culture and regulate conduct. That is the nature of what I’m calling the discursive concept of race, not that nothing exists of differences, but that what matters are the systems we use to make sense, to make human societies intelligible, the systems we bring to those differences, how we organize differences into systems of meaning with which as it were we can find the world intelligible. (n. pag.)

⁴ In his critique of Rousseau’s social contract, de Man also gestures towards the ways in which language influences “literal acts.” In the conclusion to his essay regarding the “error” of metaphor, he writes: “[The social contract] is a complex and purely defensive verbal strategy by means of which the literal world is given some of the consistency of fiction, an intricate set of feints and ruses by means of which the moment is temporarily delayed when fictional seductions will no longer be able to resist transformation into literal acts” (1979, 159). Read in relation to his analysis of the ways in which metaphor produces identity categories, his comment suggests that the “fictional seductions” of identity (differentiation) lead to “literal acts.”

Hall's "discursive concept of race" acknowledges that rather than physical differences between humans, the meanings given to or the "systems we bring to those differences" produce race.

Like Foucault's emphasis on a "multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies," Hall argues that race must be thought of as a product of a network of signifiers that work in and through each other, which are constantly shifting in relation to various contexts:

Signifiers refer to the systems and concepts of classification of a culture, to its making meaning practices. And those things gain their meaning, not because of what they contain in their essence, but in the shifting relations of difference that are established with other concepts and ideas in a signifying field. Their meaning, because it is relational and not essential, can never be finally fixed, but is subject to the constant process of redefinition and appropriation, to the losing of old meanings, and the appropriation and contracting of new ones, to the endless process of being constantly resignified, made to mean something different, in different cultures, in different historical formations, at different moments of time ... There is always a certain sliding of meaning, always a margin not yet encapsulated in language and meaning, always something about race left unsaid, always someone, a constitutive outside whose very existence the identity of race depends on and which is absolutely destined to return from its expelled and abjected position outside the signifying field to trouble the dreams of those who are comfortable inside. (*idem*)

As Hall argues, race is constructed in and through a "sliding" network of signifiers or "shifting relations of difference that are established with other concepts and ideas in a signifying field."

The title of Hall's lecture – "Race, the Floating Signifier" – indicates what he explains here: race is a "floating signifier." It is "subject to the constant process of redefinition and appropriation," to the "shifting relations of difference that are established with other concepts in a signifying field." Though essentialist metaphors create the illusion of the racialized body, racial signifiers are "relational," or metonymical, and "can never be finally fixed."

Hall's language regarding "a constitutive outside" on which "the identity of race" "depends" echoes Butler's regarding the "constitutive outside" of the "human." Both highlight the ways in which race and gender, as well as other identity categories, metonymically construct the "human." Racial and gendered Others "haunt" the "boundaries" and "trouble the dreams of those who are comfortable inside." Consequently, the category of race must also be

examined through the ways it intersects with gender, sexuality, class, age, and nationality, because the discourses that exclude and constitute the racial Other in relation to whiteness also rely on the processes of Othering through heteronormativity, classism, nationalism, etc. For Butler, “these identifications are invariably imbricated in one another: a gender identification can be made in order to repudiate or participate in a race identification; what counts as ‘ethnicity’ frames and eroticizes sexuality, or can itself be a sexual marking” (1993, 116). These “categories” or “positions” should not be considered separately, but at the point they intersect as “convergent signifiers” that work “in and through each other” (116-117). I intend to show the ways in which multiple and diverse “signifiers” of other identity categories participate in the construction and the exclusion of the racial Other and produce what Hall calls the “expelled and abjected position outside the signifying field” that can “trouble the dreams of those who are comfortable inside,” or what Butler calls the “‘unlivable’ and ‘uninhabitable’ zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject” (3).

However, this discursive “outside” – these excluded, erased and abjected “non-subjects” – is recuperated “discursively” and rendered “legitimate” in its unintelligibility, in part through the process of interpellation. Referring to Louis Althusser’s “notion of interpellation” which is exemplified by the individual’s response to a police officer addressing an individual with “Hey you!,” Butler notes that the “call is formative, if not *performative*, precisely because it initiates the individual into the subjected status of the subject” (1993, 121). The interpellation through law, embodied by the police officer’s call, “seeks to produce a lawful subject” and attributes “recognition” and “a certain order of social existence,” at the same time that the newly-constituted subject is subjected to the “power of punishment” (121-2). Importantly, Butler argues that “[t]he symbolic – that register of regulatory ideality – is also and always a racial industry, indeed, the reiterated practice of *racializing* interpellations” (18).

Scientific and legal discourses of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries interpellated, called into being, racialized subjects, while at the same time denying subject status to those marked as racially Other. Butler continues her discussion of interpellation by suggesting that interpellation unwittingly creates space for its own undermining. She writes that the “law might not only be refused, but it might also be ruptured, forced into a rearticulation that calls into question the monotheistic force of its unilateral operation” (122). Yet the space for contesting racialized interpellations may be more limited. After referring to “the reiterated practice of *racializing* interpellations,” Butler explains her understanding of “race”:

Rather than accept a model which understands racism as discrimination on the basis of a pre-given race, I follow those recent theories which have made the argument that “race” is partially produced as an effect of the history of racism, that its boundaries and meanings are constructed over time not only in the service of racism, but also in the service of the contestation of racism. (18)

As Butler suggests, in order to contest racism, the subject is obliged to recognize themselves as the interpellated object of racism, essentially adopting the position of a racialized subject in order to challenge the “power of punishment.” But just as she theorizes the use of parody and hyperbole in drag as means to highlight gender performativity, the process of interpellation can be destabilized through “the parodic inhabiting of conformity” and “a repetition of the law into hyperbole, a rearticulation of the law against the authority of the one who delivers it” (122). Allegories of race in fantasy fiction necessarily repeat racial metaphors. Contemporary fantasy narratives that allegorize race do so “in the service of the contestation of racism.” Yet, as I intend to demonstrate, those narratives that employ deconstructive allegory, those that highlight the differential operations used to produce racial meanings in relation to a network of discourses, effectively offer a space for the undermining of racialized interpellations.

Because race operates through and is constructed in language, it must be examined as “a temporal process,” a “reiteration of norms,” in which the “organizing principle of identity” can be hidden through a “series of feints and ruses” such as metaphors (Butler, 1993, 10; de

Man, 1979, 159). In acknowledging that race is constructed, one must consider the manner in which construction operates. Precisely, Butler writes: “Construction not only takes place *in* time, but is itself a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms” (1993, 10). Similarly, race can be revealed as illusory because this “reiteration of norms” displays an “occasional *discontinuity*,” thereby demonstrating “the temporal and contingent groundlessness” of racial identity as grounded in physical difference (Butler, 1990, 192). Hall points to this when he states that the meaning of (racial) signifiers, “because it is relational and not essential, can never be finally fixed” and “is subject to the constant process of redefinition and appropriation, to the losing of old meanings, and the appropriation and contracting of new ones, to the endless process of being constantly resignified” (n. pag.) In this way, Hall’s notion of race as a floating signifier works with de Man’s definition of allegory. Both Hall and de Man argue that signifiers (or allegorical signs) cannot mean anything on their own, but operate in relation to “neighboring” signifiers. Hall focuses more on the “vertical” movement of signifying relationships: a network of discourses outside the text is called upon to read signs of race, rather than a “horizontal” movement where signifiers are given meaning through their proximity within a text.⁵ However, the result is the same. In the constant (dis)placement of “racial” signifiers, race is revealed as illusory. In “The Allegorical Impulse,” Craig Owens writes that:

de Man recognizes allegory as the structural interference of two distinct levels or usages of language, literal and rhetorical (metaphoric), one of which denies precisely what the other affirms. In most allegories, a literal reading will “deconstruct” a metaphorical one ... Yet because literal language is itself rhetorical, the product of metaphoric substitutions and reversals ... the result is allegory. (63)

In the case of a “monstrous” figure that allegorizes racial Otherness in a fantasy narrative, the text draws on extra-diegetical racial signifiers in order to characterize the monster as a

⁵ As Deborah Madsen notes: “Allegorical narratives make a demand to be read both ‘vertically’ and ‘horizontally.’ That is, allegorical images require definition in terms of their place within the larger symbolic structure and with reference to their implied relations with cultural structures which exist outside the text” (1995, 123).

metaphorical vehicle for the racial Other. But this level of meaning competes or “interferes” with the literal reading of monstrosity within the text. Because literal monstrosity is itself “rhetorical” and, I would add, the product of repetition in narrative time, monstrosity is revealed to be nothing except in its relation to (racial) Otherness and identity. The monster is made, therefore, to represent (racial) Otherness at the same time that it shows this identification to be illusory. As “monstrous” signifiers in fantasy narratives are part of a larger network of (racially stigmatizing) discourses, since the relationship between monstrosity and racial Otherness – as well as the extra-diegetical discourses that constitute them – are metonymical rather than metaphorical, the figure of the monster highlights racial identity as illusory.

Of course, racial Otherness is contingent on the relationship between the self and the Other, a binary which both de Man and Butler continually put into question. One of de Man’s numerous critiques of the Romantic appreciation of the symbol is that symbolism “is based upon the assumption that it is possible to achieve an illusory identification of the self with the ‘Other’” (Madsen, 1995, 138). For de Man, just as the notion of a stable “identity” of the self as well as the Other are illusion, so too is the “identification of the self with the ‘Other’” (*idem*). Referring to discourses and social practices in general, Butler adds to this notion of illusory identification by pointing out that it is actually through the rejection of the Other that the self attempts to construct a stable notion of identity. She writes: “the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, ‘inside’ the subject as its own founding repudiation” (3). The Other is part of the self in that the self is dependent on the Other for its definition. Race is an identity category that can both stabilize and blur the distinction between the self and the Other. Like the notions of the self and the Other, race is, to use Madsen’s words, a category that “resist[s] expression” and a “simple statement or definition,” that “exist[s] in terms of relationships and processes rather than as static entit[y]” (1995, 123-124). When racial identity

is allegorized then, allegory highlights the ways in which the signifier of race has been used to construct Otherness in relation to the self. Allegory thus points to the illusion of the self's identification in contrast to the Other through race, as well as to the illusion of the construction of racial identity. Indeed, if allegory can be used to deconstruct the idea of the stable, unchangeable notion of the self, it can also be used to destabilize the way in which the self is constructed through the repulsion and erasure of the racial Other. As Hall suggests in his positioning of the racial Other that is reminiscent of the monster, there is "always someone, a constitutive outside whose very existence the identity of race depends on and which is absolutely destined to return from its expelled and abjected position outside the signifying field to trouble the dreams of those who are comfortable inside" (n. pag.).

It is this "expelled and abjected position," this "outside," that fantasy and allegory point to as "unnameable," as the "non-signification" of the self and the Other. Moreover, like Butler, Jackson sees the Other as part of the self and as that which is most threatening to the boundary of the self as well as to cultural stability:

By attempting to make visible that which is culturally invisible and which is written out as negation, ... the fantastic introduces absence. Hence the tendency towards non-signification. There can be no adequate representation of this "other," for it has no place in life, and it is this contradiction which gives rise to the disjunction between signifier and signified which is at the centre of the fantastic. Fantasy's re-placing of presence by absence attempts to introduce this non-signifying area ... The cultural, or counter-cultural, implications of this assertion are far-reaching, for it represents a dissolution of a culture's signifying practice, the very means by which it establishes meaning. (69)

While "culture" or social discourses assume that there is a "reality," or a "presence," in the difference between the Other and the self, fantasy demonstrates that the Other is in fact constructed through "negation" and through "absence." Through the figure of the monster, fantasy points to the "unnameability" or the unintelligibility of the Other; or, when the figure is (racially) "interpellated" (even as "unintelligible"), the genre demonstrates that these signifiers do not actually signify. Like allegory, the Other in fantasy demonstrates a "disjunction between signifier and signified," such that the "hesitation" to which Todorov

refers might be seen not only in relation to generic questions, but also in relation to the definition of the self / Other and the definition of racial difference / identity.

To reiterate, allegories of monstrosity in fantasy point to the “unnameable” and the “non-signification” of racial Otherness. This works in several ways. First, racial Otherness is shown to be positioned as outside understanding, which is both part of the stigmatization of non-white subjects and a process of their silencing, as much as it points to the way in which this “outside” is recuperated as part of the definition of the (white) self (as Butler suggests). The status of the “unintelligible” is in fact intelligible in its construction of Otherness. At the same time, allegory points to this crisis or disjunction in meaning. As much as the monster can be said to represent this “unintelligible outside” of racial Otherness, it simultaneously illustrates the inability of the monster to signify racial Otherness, and conversely, for racial Otherness to be equated with monstrosity. Allegory shows that these notions are, indeed, “unintelligible” because they do not signify as they intend. Furthermore, as Hall and Foucault demonstrate, (racial) Otherness cannot be reduced to and positioned in a simple binary opposition of the self versus the Other, or of the racially-identified (non)subject versus the white subject, because it is constructed through a network of signifiers and discourses. My project reveals the ways in which fantasy narratives use the allegory of the monster both to reinforce and threaten this imposition of a binary vision of race in its attempt to deny the network of signifiers that construct monstrosity and racial Otherness. As an allegory of race, the monster simultaneously signifies and fails to signify race, because race is itself a fantasy.

Monstrous Performativity of Race

The characterization of monstrosity is performative of race and racial formation – threatening categories and the boundaries between them, not only in their actions, but also in the composition of their bodies. Noel Carroll, for instance, suggests that there are two types of

monster, each of which threaten binary distinctions by yoking together at least two distinct categories. The first type is created by fusion:

On the simplest physical level, this often entails the construction of creatures that transgress categorical distinctions such as inside/outside, living/dead, insect/human, flesh/machine, and so on. Mummies, vampires, ghosts, zombies ... are fusion figures in this respect. Each, in different ways, blur the distinction between living and dead. Each, in some sense, is both living *and* dead. A fusion figure is a composite that unites attributes held to be categorically distinct and/or at odds in the cultural scheme of things in *unambiguously* one, spatio-temporally discrete entity. (43)

The second kind of monster is created through fission:

With fission, contradictory elements are, so to speak, distributed over *different*, though metaphysically related, identities ... Werewolves, for example, violate the categorical distinction between humans and wolves. In this case, the animal and the human inhabit the same body ... however, they do so at *different times* ... the two identities – and the opposed categories they represent – do not overlap temporally in the same body. (45-46)

Despite what Carroll implies regarding the homogeneity of the former versus the heterogeneity of the latter, both types of monster blend categories and blur binaries, underlining the difficulty in defining the monstrous Other. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen writes that the monster “is the harbinger of category crisis”:

[T]hey are disturbing hybrids whose externally incoherent bodies resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration. And so the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions ... A mixed category, the monster resists any classification built on hierarchy or merely binary opposition, demanding instead a “system” allowing polyphony, mixed response (difference in sameness, repulsion in attraction), and resistance to integration ... The monster is in this way the living embodiment of the phenomenon Derrida has famously labeled the “supplement” (*ce dangereux supplement*): it breaks apart bifurcating, “either/or” syllogistic logic with a kind of reasoning closer to “and/or,” introducing what Barbara Johnson has called “a revolution in the very logic of meaning.” (6-7)

As Cohen argues, regardless of whether or not the “monster is dangerous” to the human characters within a diegesis, the monster is “dangerous” precisely because the figure is a threat to the definition of the “human.” The monster embodies and risks exposing the differential operations on which the “human” is contingent for its constitution, the “difference in sameness,” or the “sameness within difference” as de Man illustrated in his deconstruction of

Rousseau's "man" (or "giant"). Cohen's citation of Barbara Johnson echoes Jackson and de Man: as a "revolution in the very logic of meaning," the monster points to "the gap between the signifier and the signified," the "thematization" of the difference between "sign and meaning."

The threat the monster poses to the "human" is also necessarily a threat to the binary on which the "human" is contingent: the self versus Other dichotomy. In this regard, such monstrous characterizations can often be described as uncanny. Wester has noted, for instance, that the concept "lies at the heart of [Gothic] literature's horror" (11). According to Freud, "the uncanny is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar" (Freud 124). Freud's term for the uncanny, *unheimlich*, can also be translated into English as "unhomely." The uncanny is thus produced not from the threat of something that may seem to be completely Other, but the realization that this Other is in fact "well known" and "familiar." Freud's definition points to the blurring of the boundary between what is considered to be Other – what is strange, foreign, or alien – and what is considered part of or close to the self. Freud includes among the uncanny racial or ethnic Otherness. He refers to "animism" and describes "the old *animistic* view of the universe" as a former stage in civilization when beliefs in the presence of "human spirits" and "magical powers" were still common. He continues:

It appears that we have all, in the course of our individual development, been through a phase corresponding to the animistic phase in the development of *primitive peoples*, that this phase did not pass without leaving behind in us residual traces that can still make themselves felt and that everything we now find "uncanny" meets the criterion that it is linked with these remnants of animistic mental activity and prompts them to express themselves (*sic*, emphasis added, 147).

Freud likens a stage in the "development" of the individual to that of "primitive peoples," thereby invoking a clear parallel between "our" ("us") childhood and the "primitive" or uncivilized ("them"). At the same time that he stigmatizes and creates a distinction between contemporary "civilized" and "primitive" populations, Freud highlights the sameness between

the two groups by suggesting that the uncanny is in part the result of having once partaken in these same beliefs. Ironically then, the uncanny is both the result of the separation of the self (or the “civilized,” adult self) from the Other (or the child-like, “primitive” Other) and the recognition that there may be no separation. As Wester writes, “[t]o confront the uncanny Other is to consequently confront that which is supposedly ‘foreign’ – but really just socially demonized – within the self” (12).

Like the uncanny, the abject threatens the definition of the self because it is “familiar,” and must be Othered as “not me” in order to stabilize the self (Wester 12, Kristeva 3). In *Powers of Horror: an Essay on Abjection*, Julia Kristeva defines the abject as that which threatens the boundaries of the body and, therefore, the distinction between self and Other. Bodily fluids that are ejected become the “not me” at the same time that they threaten this affirmation of “me” (3). Monstrous figures are often characterized as abject, as an embodiment of the process of abjection and/or as part of an abjected, expelled “outside” that was once “inside.” In her discussion of Gothic monsters, Wester remarks that “[a]bjection is that which is utterly denied within the self and projected onto an Other body. The abject monster, like the uncanny monster, is both horrible and somewhat familiar” (12). In this light, the “monster polices the borders of the possible” (Cohen 12). Similar to its etymological meaning as “that which reveals” and “that which warns,”

[t]he monster prevents mobility (intellectual, geographic, or sexual), delimiting the social spaces through which private bodies may move. To step outside this official geography is to risk attack by some monstrous border patrol or (worse) to become monstrous oneself ... The monster of prohibition exists to demarcate the bonds that hold together that system of relations we call culture, to call horrid attention to the borders that cannot – *must* not – be crossed. (Cohen, 4, 12-13)

Cohen’s remarks refer to both literal and figurative “borders,” such as national borders and the boundaries of the body. With regards to geographic borders, fantasy narratives that allegorize immigration, such as Stoker’s *Dracula*, use the monster to instantiate the danger that the foreign and ethnic Other figuratively represents to the national body. If the monster can pass

as “human,” crossing the border into normative “social spaces,” the distinction between the monster and the “human” is even more at risk of being exposed as illusory. The figurative boundaries to which Cohen refers are the non-normative actions that the monster performs in order to maintain the constitutive “outside” of the “human.”

Cohen exemplifies this use of the figure as a means to “warn” and punish those who might deviate from normative behavior through Foucault’s definition of the panopticon and the way “monstrous” sexuality works to create “docile bodies”:

The monster is a powerful ally of what Foucault calls “the society of the panopticon,” in which “polymorphous conducts [are] actually extracted from people’s bodies and from their pleasures ... [to be] drawn out, revealed, isolated, intensified, incorporated by multifarious power devices.” Susan Stewart has observed that “the monster’s sexuality takes on a separate life”; Foucault helps us to see why. The monster embodies those sexual practices that must not be committed, or that may be committed only through the body of the monster. (14)

As Cohen goes on to explain, one of those “sexual practices that must not be committed” is “interracial sexual mingling” (15). Through the yoking together of categories, the replacement of “‘either/or’ syllogistic logic” with “and/or,” the monster embodies as much as threatens miscegenation. In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientific and legal discourses, miscegenation is not only constructed as perverse, but also as contaminating. Wester notes that “[i]n order to function within the symbolic order, that is organized / ‘civil’ society, the individual must exorcise all that is deemed unclean, unlawful, or disorderly – all that is abject(ed)” (12). The performativity of the monster and that of the “human” go hand in hand – it is only by continually expelling the monstrous Other that the “human” self can continue to reinforce its position as normative, as “clean,” “lawful,” and “orderly.”

Accordingly, “the monster dwells at the gates of difference” (Cohen 7). Cohen remarks that “[a]ny kind of alterity can be inscribed across (constructed through) the monstrous body, but for the most part monstrous difference tends to be cultural, political, racial, economic,

sexual” (*idem*). Ultimately, the monster illustrates that these categories of difference are metonymically contingent on each other:

One kind of difference becomes another as the normative categories of gender, sexuality, national identity, and ethnicity slide together like imbricated circles of a Venn diagram, abjecting from the center that which becomes the monster. This violent foreclosure erects a self-validating, Hegelian master/slave dialectic that naturalizes the subjugation of one cultural body by another by writing the body excluded from personhood and agency as in every way different, monstrous. A polysemy is granted so that a greater threat can be encoded; multiplicity of meanings, paradoxically, iterates the same restricting, agitprop representations that narrowed signification performs. (11)

Cohen highlights here one of the strategies used to contain the threatening over-determination of the monster. While the figure is undoubtedly constructed through metonymy, which offers “possibilities of escape, resistance, [and] disruption” by highlighting the “gap between the signifier and the signified,” the monster’s “multiplicity of meanings” is reduced and “restrict[ed].” In its function as a figure, the monster’s signification is “narrowed.” The metonymical operations of the monster are fixed through metaphor in the same way that the racial and/or sexual Other is constructed through inner/outer bodily metaphors.

Fantasy narratives that allegorize monstrosity in relation to racial Otherness can expose attempts to fix Otherness as “outside,” “unnameable,” and “unintelligible” through the characterization of the monster. As the monster performs, reproduces, and/or reiterates (racial) Otherness, its uncanniness and abjection contribute to its monstrosity and also threaten identity categories in the same way that the uncanny and the abject destabilize the notions of the self and the Other. The monster performs the “outside threat” that Hall outlines, as it is “destined to return from its expelled and abjected position outside the signifying field” (1996, n. pag.). In this, all monsters are performative. Made to embody (racially) stigmatizing signifiers and to perform acts and gestures that point to racial and sexual Otherness, the monster is reminiscent of the way that drag parodies the sex/gender system. As Butler writes:

The performance of drag plays upon the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed. But we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender

identity, and gender performance ... the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender, and gender and performance. (1990, 187)

Butler points to the disjunction between body, socio-cultural identification, and performance. The monster's very being, its inability to fit into well-defined categories and one side or the other of a binary is a threat to the notion of identity itself. The displacement of racial signifiers onto the monster's body and its performance of monstrosity in the narrative, creates another disjunction between sign and meaning: between racial Otherness as a sign of monstrosity and between monstrosity as a sign for racial Otherness.

My primary focus in examining fantasy narratives that allegorize race in relation to monstrosity is the ways in which particular narratives and "monsters" operate in their repetition of monstrosity in conjunction with racial Otherness. Certain contemporary narratives, while continuing to allegorize race in relation to the monster, also rewrite, restyle, and reframe the figure, along with monstrosity, and consequently the ways in which the monster points to racial Otherness. While these narratives continue to participate in the exchange of signifiers that constructs the notion of race, they illustrate the "sliding of meaning" to which Hall refers. The monster is reframed in a rewriting of previous configurations of monstrosity, and the monster's capacity to signify racial Otherness is rendered all the more fragile. The disjunction between the monster and the racial Other becomes more flagrant as the figure points to the widening gap between the signifiers that have been used to characterize monstrosity and racial Otherness, such as disease, degeneracy, hypersexuality, perversion, and animality. The gap in meaning, or the "unnameability" and "unintelligibility" of the monster, become more evident as the boundary between "inside" and "outside" the "signifying field" is progressively blurred.

These restyled monsters are constructed by narratives that thematize legal discourses – such as those dealing with and defining (anti)immigration, (anti)miscegenation, segregation, and passing – that maintain racial distinctions. These narratives allegorize race and race

relations through the instantiation and repetition of the language and rhetorical maneuvers in these legal discourses, highlighting both the ways in which the law has contributed to the construction of race and also the illusion that they maintain in attempting to position and categorize the racial Other. In their rewriting, reframing, and restylization of the monster, contemporary fantasy narratives refer to prior allegories of monstrosity and racial Otherness as well as to scientific and legal discourses of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries. As Madsen notes, allegory is always intertextual: “The allegorical signifier alludes to an intertextual signified that inevitably becomes another signifier, and so on. To use a well-worn phrase: every decoding is another encoding, as the allegorical narrative alludes to an elusive meaning situated in a prior encoding” (1995, 165-166). These fantasy narratives illustrate the “encoding” of racially stigmatizing signifiers in prior configurations of the monster and in preceding scientific and legal discourses. The attempt to “decode” the connection between monstrosity and racial Otherness also “encodes” changing views of race and race relations while pointing to the fragility of identity categories and the blurring of the boundaries between them.

My treatment of these revisionary fantasy narratives focuses on the ways in which these texts use allegory: repeating discourses that have attempted to define and to fix the racial Other, whether they be antecedent fantasy narratives or scientific and legal discourses. The crisis in meaning that is depicted in prior narratives of race and monstrosity is repeated, pointing to a further loss of meaning through the encoding and decoding at work in rewritten portrayals of monsters. Although each narrative in the second part of this thesis rewrites the monster in relation to racial Otherness and uses allegory to do so, I show that some continue to use traditional allegory, where the relationship between sign and meaning is reinforced through metaphor. Such narratives displace the stigmatizing signifiers associated with racial Otherness, but nonetheless stabilize the notion of race as an extra-diegetical “reality.” Other contemporary

fantasy narratives use the deconstructive allegory theorized by de Man where the disjunction between sign and meaning is highlighted through metonymy and the continual deferral from one signifier to another, both within and outside the text. In their (reframed) repetition of “racial interpellations,” these narratives highlight the inability of racially-stigmatizing signifiers to naturalize race in relation to monstrosity. And in their own allegorical structure, these rewritings point to the illusion of the identity category of race, of the body as a transcendental signifier, and of the notions of the self and the Other. Furthermore, the restylization of the monster and its reframing, demonstrates the performativity of the monster in relation to race, highlighting the illusory connection between body, socio-cultural identification, and performance. The use of allegory and performativity in these texts points to monstrosity and race as a series of “signifying absences.” These fantasy narratives, as I will argue, are fantasies of the fantasy of race.

Figurative Language and the Definition of Race

Nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fantasy narratives construct the monster through racially stigmatizing discourses, discourses that exceed the fictional text and that are (re)produced in scientific, philosophical, political, and legal discourses, categorizing racial differences in “monstrous” linguistic terms. The nineteenth- and early twentieth- century monster, therefore, comprises a network of racializing discourses that include the scientific and legal, which will be discussed in the following chapters. Contemporary fantasy narratives that rewrite the monster and/or allegorize race draw from this network and displace the meanings that have been contingent on “monstrous” and “racial” signifiers. These narratives refer to the ways in which fantasy fiction of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries was complicit with scientific and legal discourses of the same period in their mutual construction of race and racial Otherness.

Earlier fantasy narratives, along with scientific discourses, naturalize race and racial differences and essentialize the racial Other as monstrous. This argument is based upon the contention that the distinction between a fictional, fantasy narrative and a work of non-fiction (e.g. a scientific document) is shaped by epistemological conventions that stem from issues such as publication, genre, authorship and readership. Regardless of the ways in which these diverse textual forms are classified, fantasy fiction and non-fiction mirror each other in their repetition of racially stigmatizing discourses and in their materialization of the racial Other as “monstrous.” Fantasy fiction has been conceptualized as a textual space in which the fantastical and the supernatural can occur, in opposition to our extra-diegetical “reality” where a “monstrous” being can only be referred to in a figurative sense. As Todorov has stated of fantastic literature, “[t]he supernatural often appears because we take a figurative sense literally” (76-7). Importantly, this statement relies on the understanding of an extra-diegetical ontology in which the distinction between the literal and the figurative are clear-cut. The nineteenth-century conceptions of race and racial difference, for instance, were taken to be literal – “real” referents to which scientific language referred. When a monstrous figure was constructed through race, the fantasy narrative rendered the literal racial Other as a figurative monster, a movement from the extra-diegetical to the diegesis and from the literal to the figurative, and vice versa. But Todorov’s statement complicates this by saying that figurative meanings in the extra-diegetical world are literalized within the diegesis. Todorov would argue that the monster is merely figurative in our ontological reality, while it can only be literal in the space of a fantasy text. But what if, like the monster, race and racial differences in extra-diegetical discourses are not literal but figurative and fantastical? Do fantasy texts that literalize the figurative then function to literalize the fantasy of race as well? Do they contribute to the extra-diegetical materialization of the “monstrous” racial Other?

Scientific discourse is conceived of as part of an external ontological “reality”: the things, the bodies, and the groups to which scientific discourse refers are assumed to exist in a literal sense (and to pre-exist their language). Their subjects are thus not intended to be interpreted figuratively.⁶ However, the New Historicist approach to “the historicity of texts” and “the textuality of history” is described as “the cultural specificity, the social embedment, of all modes of writing” (Montrose, 242). As Louis Montrose notes, “we can have no access to a full and authentic past, a lived material existence, unmediated by the surviving textual traces of the society in question” (*idem*). In other words, scientific discourse does not refer to an “authentic” and “material existence”; it is “mediated” through texts in “cultural[ly]” and “social[ly]” “specific” moments and should be analyzed in the same way as literary texts. Both fantasy fiction and scientific discourse conceptualize race and racial Otherness through figurative language and rhetorical strategies. Scientific discourse uses stylistic devices to such an extent that race and the racial Other are revealed to be fantastical constructions. It constructs racial differences through the dehumanization of the racial Other, shaping and marking the body of the Other as monstrous. The answer to which the above questions are leading then runs parallel to the racial discourses of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientific documents. These scientific texts (attempt to) literalize race and racial Otherness, ironically through the use of figurative language and rhetoric. Similar to a New Historicist approach, Sander Gilman writes of the relationship between nineteenth-century painting and medical discourse, noting that “the medical and the aesthetic” are subject to “overlapping and intertwined systems of conventions” and that the signifiers (or “icons”) that the two media wield and categorize are historically determined:

Medicine offers an especially interesting source of conventions since we do tend to give medical conventions special “scientific” status as opposed to the “subjective” status of the aesthetic conventions. But medical icons are no more “real” than “aesthetic” ones.

⁶ In her article, “Race and Gender: the Role of Analogy in Science,” Nancy Leys Stepan notes “the intellectually privileged status that science has traditionally enjoyed as the repository of nonmetaphorical, empirical, politically neutral, universal knowledge” (261).

Like aesthetic icons, medical icons may (or may not) be rooted in some observed reality. Like them, they are iconographic in that they represent these realities in a manner determined by the historical position of the observers, their relationship to their own time, and to the history of the conventions which they employ. Medicine uses its categories to structure an image of the diversity of mankind; it is as much at the mercy of the needs of any age to comprehend this infinite diversity as any other system which organizes our perception of the world. The power of medicine, at least in the nineteenth century, lies in the rise of the status of science. The conventions of medicine infiltrate other seemingly closed iconographic systems precisely because of this status. (1985, 205-6)

As Gilman suggests, the science of racial categorization, or the “structuring” of “an image of the diversity of mankind” is a “system” “at the mercy” of its age. As he might additionally argue, the icons that are used to categorize racial differences “are no more ‘real’” than those that are incorporated into and repeated in a fantasy text. It is the “power” and “status of science” in the nineteenth-century that not only allowed for the “infiltration” of its “conventions” into “seemingly closed (iconographic) systems,” such as fantasy fiction and legal discourse, but that also contributed to rendering race and racial categories a “reality,” turning a fantastical construction into something literal, an embodied and lived experience for those classified as racially Other.

While many racial theorists argue that race is a fantastical construction, race is still materialized through social practices and lived experiences. As Butler writes,

the construction of the human is a differential operation that produces the more and the less “human,” the inhuman, the inhumanly unthinkable. These excluded sites come to bound the “human” as its constitutive outside, ... [through] the constitutive force of exclusion, erasure, violent foreclosure, abjection and its disruptive return within the very terms of discursive legitimacy. (1993, 8)

The “human,” “the less ‘human,’ the inhuman,” and “the inhumanly unthinkable” can only be conceived of through figurative relationships of (dis)similitude between and among each other. These degrees of “monstrosity” and their supposed distance from the “human” are fantasized within the language of each text. Yet as Butler argues, the effect of their “constitution” is not merely discursive, but results in the “exclusion, erasure, violent foreclosure, abjection” of those deemed “less ‘human,’” as if to “legitimize” the figurative monster as a literal and “real”

manifestation. The movement from the text to the extra-diegetical does not occur only in one direction, but as Butler suggests, involves a circular movement where “the constitutive force” of such dehumanizing mechanisms “return(s) within the very terms of discursive legitimacy.” The “(un)readable bodies in gothic texts,” to which Wester refers, or the fantasized “‘unnameable’ absolute otherness” of Dracula to which Jackson alludes, are already a means of dehumanization (Wester 23; Jackson 121). Yet this “unreadab[ility]” or “unnameab[ility]” is recuperated and “legitim[ized]” within Gothic fiction and scientific discourse “as black, mad, primitive, criminal, socially deprived, deviant, crippled, or (when sexually assertive) female” (Jackson 121). To sum up, both kinds of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century texts – the fantasy narrative and the scientific discourse/document – construct the fantasy of race and racial Otherness as literal, natural, and material, and as “monstrous.”

One of the ways in which the relationship between fantasy narratives and scientific discourse can be exposed is by acknowledging that scientific discourse also involves narrative. While stressing that the work of scientists does not involve a mere description of a pre-discursive “external reality,” Philip Lewin argues that socio-historical narratives give rise to the scientific paradigms that take precedence at a given point in time: “Theoretical coherence arises not from the appropriation of an external reality as such, but from the reconstitution of that reality in terms of the specific narratives that enjoy currency at any given time in particular paradigm communities” (38). Lewin’s remark highlights the fact that nineteenth-century scientific racial categorization does not interpret an “external reality” of race and racial differences, but these differences and categories are a “reconstitution” of the “terms of specific narratives” (terms stemming from the political narratives of slavery versus abolition, the question of granting full citizenship status to freed men and women, white settler colonialism versus Native American sovereignty, Chinese immigration for railroad construction labor,

etc.).⁷ Scientific findings are produced through narrative, the process of which is often denied by the focus on the “truth-value” of these findings themselves:

Scientific findings are typically represented as complete, as information already archivally housed in textbooks, handbooks, journals, monographs, and so forth. Our typical way of thinking about the findings that science elicits is of independent, self-sustaining objects, disconnected from any human procedures through which they were produced ... [T]he lived-connection, the narratively engaged project through which knowledge and the object itself are generated, is lost ... [O]ne result of omitting modalities altogether is that a kind of transparency with respect to ‘reality’ is conferred upon [scientific facts]...As the marks that signal the production of phenomena are lost, phenomena seem to stand forth on their own authority, preexistent, awaiting recognition as present-at-hand. (Lewin 43-4)⁸

For many nineteenth-century anthropologists, phrenologists, philosophers, and politicians, the debate over racial categories was not whether they existed in a pre-discursive “external reality” – this was perceived as a given fact – but rather what factors (or data) to use in the distinction between racial categories. Racial categories often took the form of lists of physical, intellectual, and behavioral traits with little or no reflection on the (narrative) process through which the author “discovered” and/or determined these traits to be necessary to the definition of racial difference. While the diverging opinions over racial classification – as well as the number of “existing” racial categories – highlight one of the ways in which race was discursively constructed, the repetition of racial traits or signifiers from one scientific text to the next worked to reinforce the validity of these “factors” as pre-existing the process of racial categorization.

Scientific discourse share figurative constructions with fantasy narratives – constructions which are often overlooked (if not denied) in addition to the implications of narrative in scientific research and findings. Fantasy narratives are imbued with figurative language – language within the diegesis that can have both figurative and literal meanings, as well as language that can perform a figurative function by pointing to extra-diegetical referents.

⁷ As I will show in Chapter Three, there is a close connection between scientific and legal discourses.

⁸ Lewin defines “present-at-hand” as “the typical mode of scientific objectification, the mode in which the attempted characterization of the thing-in-itself, as it ‘really’ is, takes place” (43).

Likewise, the “systems we bring to ... differences,” not physical differences themselves, produce race and racial difference, so scientific texts must rely on figurative relationships of (dis)similitude, drawing from multiple discursive fields, in order to construct the distinction between – and the meanings associated with – white versus non-white (Hall, 1996, n. pag.). As Lewin notes of scientific categorization: “Categorization is one of a number of epistemic strategies that are broadly grounded in relations of perceived similarity, such as analogy, metaphor, models, schemas, and scripts” (44). Racial categorization is no different since it borrows language from and refers to multiple discursive fields in order to ground race and racial difference. Nancy Leys Stepan notes that this relationship works in the opposite direction as well:

By analogy with the so-called lower races, women, the sexually deviate, the criminal, the urban poor, and the insane were in one way or another constructed as biological “races apart” whose differences from the white male, and likenesses to each other, “explained” their different and lower position in the social hierarchy. (264)

Here, Stepan points out that race functions as the ground on which to fix various kinds of Otherness rather than the other way around. Her statement highlights what Stuart Hall argues about race as a “floating signifier”: race and other identity categories “gain their meaning, not because of what they contain in their essence, but in the shifting relations of difference that are established with other concepts and ideas in a signifying field” and they can, therefore, “never be finally fixed” since “there is always a certain sliding of meaning” (n. pag.).

Since figurative language is often used when literal terms fail to express an intended meaning, its use in scientific and legal discourse highlights the inability of literal language to signify race and racial difference due to a lack of “real” referents available for signification. For instance, the animalization of the racial Other in nineteenth-century scientific discourse necessarily draws from the discursive field of the animal (where a clear-cut distinction between the human and the animal is paramount) and relies on analogy (often simile and metaphor) in order to fantasize and fabricate a position between the human and the animal in which the racial

Other is then placed. Another example is the way in which the body's surface is made to signify or equate to its "interior." Butler notes how this process occurs in relation to the "soul": "the compelling metaphors of the spatial distinctions of inner and outer ... remain linguistic terms that facilitate and articulate a set of fantasies, feared and desired. 'Inner' and 'outer' make sense only with reference to a mediating boundary that strives for stability" (1990, 182). Yet this "mediating boundary that strives for stability" can be covered over or rendered invisible through certain figurative relationships.

Some figurative relationships are more problematic in the reinforcement of racial differences and the idea of a literal, "natural" referent of race, whereas others point to their figurativeness by highlighting their relationship to a literal referent as a construction. As de Man might argue, the rhetorical function of metaphor can be particularly problematic in relation to race. In *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, Chris Baldick states that a metaphor "suggests some common quality shared by" (n. pag.) the vehicle and the tenor. So for instance, if Dracula is to be interpreted as a metaphor for the racial Other, the relationship insinuates that the vampire shares physical and behavioral traits with the racial Other. Moreover, metaphor has been theorized as having the capacity to make present a signified absence, as Butler's example of the "soul" suggests.⁹ In a sense then, the monster metaphor, the "'unnameable' absolute [Other]," assumes the extra-diegetical existence of the racial Other, and makes this fantasy "present" to the (Victorian) reader of Stoker's novel (Jackson 121). Likewise, in scientific discourses, metaphors of inside/outside reflect an essential relationship between the body's surface and its "interior," where the "interior" is variably defined depending on the type of discursive text (such as the soul in religious discourse, the intellect in philosophical discourse, anatomical organs in anthropology, and blood in medical discourse).¹⁰

⁹ Metaphor shares this feature with the Romantic understanding of the symbol.

¹⁰ As these examples suggest, I use the term "scientific discourse" somewhat loosely to refer to and encompass anthropological, medical, theological, and philosophical texts that participated in the processes of racial categorization.

These texts often use the body's exterior metaphorically to make present the signified absences of the "interior," and to naturalize these correspondences.

Metaphor has been opposed to metonymy based on the capacity of the latter to emphasize its contingent relationship to a referent. Metonymy is "a figure of speech that replaces the name of one thing with the name of something closely associated with it" (Baldick, n. pag.). Theoretically, metonymy can work to highlight the process of "replacement" and the constructed nature of the "association" between the trope and the referent. Baldick continues:

Modern literary theory has often used metonymy in a wider sense, to designate the process of association by which metonymies are produced and understood: this involves establishing relationships of contiguity between two things, whereas metaphor establishes relationships of similarity between them. (n. pag.)

Rather than assuming the unity between a signifier and a signified, metonymy highlights the artificiality of the connection since it operates through association and/or proximity. In a way, metonymy functions in a similar manner as allegory. Like metonymy, allegory operates through relationships of contiguity (established through temporality). Like allegory, metonymy points to a (previous) sign to which it bears little resemblance. Ironically, metonymy shapes the process of racial construction. For instance, metaphors of inside/outside are in fact based on metonymical relationships in that the "perceived similarity" between the body's exterior and the interior are mere fantasy and function through proximity. Similarly, in the example of Dracula, the character can only operate as a metaphor for the racial Other through contiguous associations between vampirism and blood contamination, fangs and animality, etc. – concepts that were also associated with the racial Other. The way in which these metonymical relationships are shaped as metaphorical, essential, and/or natural will be central to the analyses in the following chapters.

Synecdoche has sometimes been interpreted as a kind of metonymy. However, when it comes to racial discourses, synecdoche maintains a much more problematic relationship between the signifier and the referent than metonymy. Understood as a part that stands for a

whole, a racially identified signifier can be used to stand for the entire body of the racial Other, and/or one racialized figure for an entire racial group (or category). Interestingly, Lewin suggests that metonymy is definitive of the process of scientific categorization, but his explanation appears to involve synecdoche more than metonymy:

If we turn our attention to the process of scientific redescription itself, we see that a series of relations is assumed to hold between the phenomenon, the phenomenon as instance of a category, and the scientific variable. Briefly stated, the process through which a variable is abstracted and operationalized *assumes* that that variable stands in a *metonymic relation* to the category of which the phenomenon is one instance. *It is assumed that the behavior of that variable can be taken to signify the behavior of the phenomenon, and the category it instantiates, as a whole.* That is, the behavior of the variable is prototypical. (emphasis added, 49)

Although Lewin refers to scientific practices and terminology that are more contemporary than those of nineteenth-century racial categorization, his point is also relevant here. Lewin describes a synecdochal (rather than a metonymical) relationship between a “variable” and its category in that the “variable” is taken to stand for the category “as a whole.” As Lewin highlights, this relationship between a “variable” – which we might understand as a somatic signifier in the realm of racial categorization – is “assumed” to represent “a whole,” to stand for the entire identity category of the racial Other. In fantasy texts that were contemporaneous with racial categorization, one monstrous character often functioned as a synecdochal figure for “its” group. In other words, the way in which the single monster is characterized then characterizes all other monstrous characters within the diegesis. More than this, when the monster is constructed through racially stigmatizing discourses, “it” bears the synecdochal function of referring to and stigmatizing an entire racial group.

Simile holds a more complex relationship to racial construction and the question of whether or not it points to its own figurativeness. Baldick defines simile as “an *explicit* comparison between two things” (emphasis added, n. pag.). This explicitness appears in the syntax of the trope with the terms “like” or “as,” where the referent is named alongside the figurative element to which it is compared. In this way, simile draws attention to its figurative

constructiveness. Yet racial categorization is full of simile, particularly with regards to the animalization of the racial Other. While this kind of language highlights the illusory relationship between the trope and its referent, more relevant is the use of simile in these cases to highlight one of the primary functions of figurative language, namely that it is often used when so-called literal language fails to express an intended meaning. Quite frequently, scientific racism does not seek to express that the racial Other IS an animal, but that the racial Other is LIKE an animal, or closer to the animal than the white “human.” This position – somewhere between the human and the animal – does not have a name and therefore cannot be expressed except through animalizing language, often involving simile.

Chapter Outlines

In order to fully comprehend the relationship between the figure of the monster and the racial Other and to examine the repetition (and displacement) of racially stigmatizing signifiers that occurs in contemporary fantasy narratives, the project begins with an analysis of fantasy narratives of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, along with the scientific and legal discourses that constructed the racial categories that inform these narratives. In Chapter Two, “Racial Signs in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-century Fantasy Fiction and Scientific Discourse,” I examine the language of scientific documentation (such as medical, pseudo-scientific, and philosophical essays) as well as fantasy narratives of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries in order to reveal the ways in which these discourses mirror each other in their repetition of “racial” signs that construct the racial Other as “monstrous.” I particularly attend to the function of figurative language in these historical documents to literalize racial differences through signifiers that construct the concepts of animality, sexual deviancy, disease, and degeneration in relation to racial Otherness. I then map the repetition of these racially-stigmatizing signifiers and concepts on to the characterization of the monstrous figures

in Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*, Tod Browning's 1931 film *Dracula*, and Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack's 1933 film *King Kong*.

Chapter Three, "Racial Signs in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth Century Fantasy Fiction and Legal Discourse," continues the cross-referencing of figurative language in early fantasy narratives and legal documentation (such as statutes, court decisions, and political pamphlets), examining the rhetorical strategies that materialized racial differences and positioned them as pre-discursive. While the previous chapter engages with European as well as American discourses, I move more specifically to the U.S. context to analyze the ways in which the legal discourses of (anti)immigration, (anti)miscegenation, segregation, and (anti)passing worked to fabricate the national body as white and of (northern) European origin. I analyze how these concepts are thematized, staged, and repeated in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Tod Browning's adaptation, Victor Halperin's 1932 film *White Zombie*, and Charles Brabin's 1932 film *The Mask of Fu Manchu*. These early fantasy narratives are allegorical – they use traditional allegory and consequently stabilize the tenor of the racial Other and the ontological distinction between fantasy and reality through the metaphorical vehicle of the monster. Though de Man argues that all language is allegorical, and though it is possible to engage in a deconstructive reading of both early fantasy narratives and scientific and legal discourses, each text attempts to reinforce race as pre-discursive and to circumscribe the "human" as a transcendental signifier in the exclusion of the racial Other. Because fantasy narratives rely on the supposed disjunction between the literal and the figurative, providing (it has been argued) a diegetical context in which the figurative is literalized, these two kinds of narrative ultimately participate in the extra-diegetical materialization and dehumanization of the racial Other through the repetition of rhetorical strategies and language that comprise a network of racially stigmatizing discourses. I thus argue that these early fantasy narratives

engage in the processes of naturalizing race and racial differences and of essentializing the racial Other as monstrous.

Part Two of the thesis moves to contemporary fantasy narratives, and each chapter focuses on one of a range of ways in which the figure of the monster is used to allegorize race. As the title of Chapter Four, “Humanizing the Monster, Naturalizing Race,” suggests, the narratives discussed in this chapter continue to perform race and racial differences as essential and biologically indivisible. My corpus here includes the *Twilight* films (2008-2012), the *Blade* comic books and Stephen Norrington’s 1998 film, and Len Wiseman’s 2003 film *Underworld*. All three (groups of) texts offer a counter-narrative to the ways in which the monster was stigmatized through miscegenation in early fantasy narratives. The *Twilight* films foreground a love story between a human and a vampire, and Wiseman’s *Underworld* promotes inter-species (or interracial) mixing between a vampire and a werewolf. The character of Blade repositions the threatening miscegenating monster (a vampire) as white and the human victim as Black. But while these texts characterize the figure of the monster as “human,” they continue to naturalize race through traditional allegory, much like the early fantasy narratives analyzed in the two preceding chapters. Though *Blade* and *Underworld* use narrative strategies that perform racial discourses, they propagate stigmatizing racial stereotypes like the *Twilight* films, in part through an emphasis on biological essentialism. In this chapter, I look at how the body is constructed through signifying practices, such as tropes that reinforce the inside/outside dichotomy (vis-à-vis the body and the self versus the Other). I show how these narratives construct the racial Other through metaphor that creates the illusion of an essential relationship between the inside and outside of the body, in addition to embodying and reinforcing extra-diegetical discourses of racial difference and of race as pre- and extra-discursive. Despite a more liberal approach to miscegenation, these texts exhibit racial anxiety surrounding the

definition of the national body. I thus argue that these narratives humanize the monster through the reinforcement of the racial binary and the definition of the “human” as white.

“Monstrous Redemptions,” Chapter Five, follows from the preceding chapter in that it examines narratives that simultaneously humanize the monster and explicitly characterize the figure through racially Other signifiers. Rather than reinforce the racial binary through the human/monster dichotomy, these narratives re-signify monstrosity and racial Otherness by empowering the figure of the monster to expose and question the ways in which race is contingent on gender, sexuality, and class. William Crain’s 1972 film *Blacula*, Octavia Butler’s 2005 novel *Fledgling*, and Jewelle Gomez’s 1991 novel *The Gilda Stories* stage the ways in which the monster is made both literally and figuratively through white supremacy, and each “monstrous” character uses their power to challenge white heteronormative hegemony. Each narrative gives subject status to a Black vampire and highlights Blackness as performative through the displacement and resignification of “monstrous” signifiers, and by illustrating the ways in which these signifying practices make up other identity categories. In this way, the narratives use deconstructive allegory, questioning the metaphorical association between monstrosity and racial Otherness, and highlighting the construction of race through metonymy. While these texts underline non-normative performances of Blackness, they all rely on the somatic signifier of dark skin color in conjunction with Black historical and communal experience in contrast to whiteness. So while they illustrate Hall’s contention that race is a “floating signifier,” through their allegorization of earlier vampire narratives, they nonetheless fix race as an extra-diegetical “reality” that is based on skin color. As counter-narratives to the racially stigmatizing fantasy narratives of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, these texts model race as “partially produced as an effect of the history of racism, ... its boundaries and meanings are constructed over time not only in the service of racism, but also in the service of the contestation of racism” (Butler, 1993, 18). These texts show that the affirmation of

Blackness reinforces race. Thus, I argue that these narratives rewrite the identity category of Blackness and its relation to monstrosity, but ultimately engage in traditional allegory in their stabilization of the racial binary.

In Chapter Six, “Performing Race through Racial Discourses,” I move to other monstrous figures: the mutant in *X-Men* comic books and films (the 2000 *X-Men*, the 2003 *X-2*, the 2006 *X-Men: The Last Stand*, and the 2011 *X-Men: First Class*), the zombie in Andrew Currie’s 2006 film *Fido*, and the cyborg in Ridley Scott’s 1982 film *Blade Runner* and the novel on which it was based, Philip K. Dick’s 1966 *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. This chapter follows from the preceding chapter in that it examines monster narratives that point to the performativity of race, without relying on specific racial (somatic) signifiers that are supposedly grounded in the “real” world. Rather, these narratives stage the ways in which racial discourses (specifically, the legal discourses of segregation, passing, and anti-miscegenation) are performative through their repetition and displacement into the context of a fantasy narrative with monstrous figures, involving arbitrary somatic signifiers. Like the narratives discussed in the previous chapter, those analyzed in this chapter use deconstructive allegory in their self-conscious performance of race, exposing race as a signifying practice that is contingent on other identity categories. However, while they do not rely on a shared (somatic) signifier and while race is de-essentialized on a figurative level within the diegesis, their use of arbitrary signifiers as metaphors for racial signs suggests that these narratives also rely on a supposed literal extra-diegetical referent of race. So while the trope of the monster as the racial Other works to undo the literal/extra-diegetical equation of the racial Other to the monstrous, the monster remains figurative and the racial Other is fixed as literal. Ultimately, I argue that while these narratives illustrate that race is performative, their staging of racial discourses does not involve a process of de-signification. Rather, they involve the more

traditional notion of allegory in which the link between “monstrous” somatic signifiers in the fictional world is maintained with racial signifiers outside of the texts.

In the final chapter, Chapter Seven, “Fantasies of Race,” I move to monster narratives that use fantasy and the figure of the monster as a means to expose the illusion of race. I analyze the first season of HBO’s *True Blood* (2008) and Octavia Butler’s trilogy of novels *Lilith’s Brood* (1987-1989) to show how they use deconstructive allegory by making parallels between species difference and racial difference, integrating a series of metaphors that position the vampire and the alien as a figure for the racial Other, but then point to the ways in which these metaphors are illusory. Not only do these texts highlight the fantastical construction of the racial Other through “monstrosity” but, in so doing, they also show the ways in which the racial Other has been fantasized and fabricated. Race remains discursive rather than grounded in a pre- or extra-discursive, literal “reality.” While *True Blood* and *Lilith’s Brood* do not necessarily illustrate a way to escape the racial binary, each narrative plays with the notions of miscegenation and passing, and their potential reinforcement of racial categories by emphasizing the ways in which these discourses are (incorrectly) imposed on bodies, both “monstrous” and human. These narratives challenge the construction of race through the staging of racial discourses, while continually disrupting the processes of signification and the attribution or fixing of meaning with regards to conceptions of identity, and in particular racial identity. The repetition and displacement of racial signifiers not only promote processes of re-signification, but also put into question the very practice of signification. These texts “thematiz[e]” the “difference” “between sign and meaning,” making interpretation a theme and destabilizing the reading of the diegesis in relation to any intertextual or extra-diegetical allusions (de Man, 1969, 209). I examine how each narrative encompasses contradictions that disrupt signifying practices occurring within the diegesis as well as between the narrative and the extra-diegetical, and how each foregrounds the metonymical contingencies of racial

signifiers on a network of discourses. I argue that these narratives then work to expose race, not as literal, material, or natural, but as figurative and discursive fantasy.

Two

Racial Signs in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-century Fantasy Fiction and Scientific Discourses

Contemporary fantasy narratives characterize their “monstrous” figures through (and/or against) the notions of race, racial difference, and racial Otherness. To achieve this, fantastical monstrous characters are racialized, or rather constructed through racially stigmatizing discourses. In this way, the “monstrous” continues to shape American fantasies of the racial Other. If contemporary fantasy narratives can be said to allegorize race and racial difference – if they can be said to destabilize or deconstruct race – through the figure of the monster, the following questions arise: to what narratives do these allegories refer, fictional or otherwise? What inherited understanding(s) of race and of the monster do contemporary narratives put into question? Moreover, how can the contemporary trend to humanize the monster be seen as an attempt to trouble an inherited equation of monstrosity with racial Otherness? As will be shown in the analyses in this chapter, the definition of the “human” is contingent upon its perceived opposition to the Other, and in fantasy narratives of the late nineteenth- and early

twentieth-centuries, human characters are often constructed and implicitly characterized as “human” through their juxtaposition with the monstrous, racial Other.

This chapter traces the narrative and rhetorical strategies and the figurative language and functions involved in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century racial categorization in scientific discourse. My analyses of these historical documents will be cross-referenced with readings of fantasy texts from the same period, such as Bram Stoker’s 1897 novel *Dracula*, Tod Browning’s 1931 film *Dracula*, and Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack’s 1933 *King Kong*. These two kinds of narrative ultimately participate in the extra-diegetical materialization and dehumanization of the racial Other through the repetition and instantiation of rhetorical strategies and language that comprise a powerful network of racially stigmatizing discourses.

The definition of the term “race” and its application to human differences, and whether or not “race” was equivalent to “species,” were highly contentious points in nineteenth-century scientific discourse. However, other terms that were used to construct race – such as the “human,” “family,” “nature,” and “civilization” – were held as stable, unitary concepts on which racial differences could be straightforwardly (but metonymically) based. These concepts operate as transcendental signifieds in that their construction through *différance* is denied. To take the example of the “human”: “he” cannot be conceptualized except through difference – through a process of “metaphorical ‘othering’, outward projection and recursive re-projection back onto the (supposed) unitary human figure” (Carver 151) – as well as through deferral, which functions through metonymical relationships between the “human” and (its opposition to) the “animal,” and through conceptual associations with other binaries, such as nature versus civilization.¹

¹ I use “he” to follow and concur with Terrell Carver’s point that the “unitary human figure...[is] the already masculinized character of the ‘man’ in the *human*, the *humane* and the *humanitarian*” (151).

This “metaphorical ‘other’” is produced by the metonymies of inner and outer which parade as metaphors, and which are arguably the same as those used to distinguish between the inside and the outside of the self’s body. Discussing Iris Young’s use of Kristeva’s theory of abjection “to understand sexism, homophobia, and racism,” Butler writes:

[T]he repudiation of bodies for their sex, sexuality and/or color is an “expulsion” followed by a “repulsion” that founds and consolidates hegemonic identities along sex/race/sexuality axes of differentiation. Young’s appropriation of Kristeva shows how the operation of repulsion can consolidate “identities” founded on the instituting of the “Other” or a set of Others through exclusion and domination ... The boundary between the inner and outer is confounded by those excremental passages in which the inner effectively becomes outer, and this excreting function becomes, as it were, the model by which other forms of identity-differentiation are accomplished. In effect, this is the mode by which Others become shit. For inner and outer worlds to remain utterly distinct, the entire surface of the body would have to achieve an impossible impermeability. This sealing of its surfaces would constitute the seamless boundary of the subject; but this enclosure would invariably be exploded by precisely the excremental filth that it fears. (1990, 182)

Indeed, the same “compelling metaphors of the spatial distinctions of inner and outer,” the same “linguistic terms that facilitate and articulate a set of fantasies, feared and desired,” (182) are employed in the fabrication of the racial (as well as the sexual and gendered) Other in opposition to the self, which can only be constituted through this act of repudiation. Paul de Man’s critique of metaphor through Rousseau’s philosophical notion of man’s initial conception of the self further highlights the irony at the heart of the construction of the self in relation to a supposed Other.² De Man’s example of the so-called “giant” underlines the means through which metaphors applied to the relation between the self and the Other are a “fantasy,” produced through “fear” (and “desire”). To return to Butler’s example, metaphors of inner and outer, of the self versus the Other, which “consolidate ‘identities,’” allow for the disavowal of this “suspense” and of the threat that the “enclosure” (the clear-cut boundary between inner and outer, as well as the clear-cut distinction between the literal and the figurative) can “be exploded by precisely the excremental filth that it fears.” As De Man states, “Metaphor is error

² See my discussion of this in Chapter One.

because it believes or feigns to believe in its own referential meaning” (1979, 151). In the same way that the fantasy of the “giant” is denied, the metaphor of the racial Other is literalized through the disavowal of the process of expulsion and through the “belief” in a concrete boundary between the inner and the outer, and between the self and the Other.

The (racial) Other is “constituted” through additional metonymical associations, such as the animal, which is also founded upon abjection from the “human” self. In his discussion of contemporary political language, Terrell Carver points out that the distinction between the human and the animal is (and has been) far from concrete:

Because the human is both at one with the animal (i.e. we are both decisively animal and decisively different, so we like to think), the conceptual inside/outside is already problematic because we are a living contradiction (both animal and not-animal) and also unsure exactly where the supposed boundary (between the not-animal human and the “mere” animals) is supposed to be. (sic, 152)

In his essay, “The Animal that Therefore I Am,” Derrida makes a similar point by juxtaposing his “gaze” with that of his cat:³

As with every bottomless gaze, as with the eyes of the other, the gaze called animal offers to my sight the abyssal limit of the human: the inhuman or the ahuman, the ends of man, that is to say the bordercrossing from which the vantage man dares to announce himself by the name he believes to give himself. (2002, 381)

As Derrida and Carver argue, the “boundary” or “border” between the “human” and the “animal” is “unsure,” an “abyssal limit,” that can only be pronounced through “the vantage” that “man dares to announce himself.” The abjection of the animalized racial Other highlights the contradictions at the heart of animalizing language, where the Other may be conceived as “purely animal” or humanized through an imagined “gaze,” where the Other is “human” but somehow more “animal” than the self, and/or where it is acceptable to acknowledge that the “human” self is also part “animal.” Whether contingent upon the dividing line as “excremental

³ Of course, there are distinctions to be made with regard to the kinds of animals involved in the process of Othering, as Carver highlights: “Moreover, we have complex ways of ranking or grading animals from various perspectives (higher/lower, food-if at all/non-food, domesticated/wild, specially protected species/objects of sport or hunting, etc.)” (151). It is worth noting that these distinctions are also discursively constructed and reinforced through social practices.

passage,” the animal’s “gaze,” or the distinction between the literal and the figurative, animalizing rhetoric attempts to hide these contradictions, but fails to do so. Carver shows how animal metaphors need to be distinguished from other kinds of metaphors. On the one hand, “[s]he’s a real star’...transfers meaning (both ways, as metaphors do: stars are beautiful and special and so is she; she is special and beautiful and so are stars). But the star is safely outside the human (on usual conceptions) despite their discursive overlap” (sic, Carver 152). On the other hand, “[a]nimal metaphors are ... particularly telling, because they are already both ‘within’ and ‘without,’ and so the ‘outside’ is also ‘inside’ in a productively ambiguous way” (Carver 152). The same point can be made about animal similes, despite the explicit phrasing of the trope. For instance, “He is like a storm” does not have the same discursive impact as “He is like a beast” because the storm is also conceptually “outside the human”; for instance, the storm can bear no physical likeness to the human. However, the likening of a human to a “beast” points to the “ambiguous” distinction between the human and the animal and – rather than highlighting this conceptual ambiguity – can animalize the human through both behavioral and physical traits.

The position from which the Other is expelled, as well as from which certain concepts are made to function as transcendental signifieds, is reinforced through the narrative authority at work in a text. In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientific documents, this “authority” was always shaped by the hegemonic discourses of race, gender, and sexuality as white, male, and heterosexual. As Carver notes,

[A] concept of unitary masculinity, unsullied with a significant gendered other, animates the civilization/barbarism distinction, through which various gradations of “otherness” and (supposed) inferiority become visible. The “internal” projections from which these “others” arise are in that way banished metaphorically from the being that contains the unitary masculine myth, which then does not invite examination. Rather the “others” do, because they have been made problematic. (161)⁴

⁴ It is worth noting here that Robert Young cites this “civilization/barbarism” (or primitivism or savagery) as central to nineteenth-century racial categorization (CD 94). I will return to this below.

While the white race was also examined and categorized, the majority of each document was devoted to the racial Other and to the question of whether or not s/he belonged to the same species or “family” as the white man. Moreover, the narrative authority – that each writer executed through subjective (and aesthetic) claims regarding racial differences – did “not invite examination.” This narrative authority situated and reinforced the notion of a “higher authority” that could be called upon to “prove” hypotheses – often a repetition of Biblical rhetoric and its shaping of transcendental signifieds, such as the “human.”

The “Human” in Racial Categorization

In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientific discourse, the concepts of animality, sexual deviancy, disease, and degeneration (the topics of the following sections in this chapter) circumscribe the transcendental signified of the “human” in opposition to the racial Other, while simultaneously, the meaning of the “human” is consistently deferred onto other concepts that are shaped as transcendental signifieds. In a lengthy introduction to Count Gobineau’s 1856 essay, “The Moral and Intellectual Diversity of Races,” the American translator, Henry Hotz, bases his definition of race and racial differences on a metonymical relationship between the concepts of the “human family” and “history.” Hotz writes:

By the word *race* we mean, both here and in the body of the work, such branches of the human family as are distinguished in the aggregate by certain well-defined physical or mental peculiarities, independent of the question whether they be of identical or diverse origin. For the sake of simplicity, these races are arranged in several principal classes, according to their relative affinities and resemblances. (60-61)

While “race” is understood as a term that is in need of definition, the “human family” is not. This term is given a central position in conjunction with the image of the “family tree” with race constituting its “branches.” Though the image of the tree might be an obvious metaphor here, Hotz’s use of the “human family” in which he grounds his definition of race is not configured figuratively – it is precisely intended to be the “ground” on which race can be

metonymically based. The notion of the “family” inevitably points to “God-the-Father,” suggesting that Biblical language and Christian ideology permeate Hotz’s construction of race. By founding “race” – a term in need of definition – on this transcendental signified, Hotz thereby appears to give race a transcendent truth-value, which cannot be put into question. Moreover, while the image of the tree and of race as its “branches” appears to unite the “diverse” groups under the category of the “human family,” Hotz’s aim is to argue that certain groups are farther from (to continue with the tree metaphor) the “trunk” than others:

It must be borne in mind that the races comprised under these divisions, are by no means to be considered equal among themselves. We should lay it down as a general truth, that while the entire groups differ principally in *degree* of intellectual capacity, the races comprised in each differ among themselves rather in kind. Thus, we assert upon the testimony of history, that the white races are superior to the yellow; and these, in turn, to the black. But the Lithuanian and the Anglo-Saxon both belong to the same group of races, and yet, history shows that they differ; so do the Samoyede and the Chinese, the negro of Lower Guinea, and the Fellah. (62-63)

As this statement shows, Hotz extends racial categorization to categories within the same “principal classes.”⁵ It is here that “history” is called upon as a higher authority – an entity that can “show” and “testify” to the “truth” of the hierarchies inherent in racial categorization. Like the “human family,” “history” is framed here as a transcendental signified – it functions as both the “origin” and the ultimate point of reference for racial differences. As Robert Young points out, Gobineau provides an interpretation of history, as “exist[ing] only through the activities of the white race” (99).⁶ Gobineau equates history with the creation of “civilizations,” the “origin” of which is the “white race” (c.f. note below), which Hotz then uses to provide “testimony” for the inequality of races. Essentially what Hotz and Gobineau do is to substitute “history” with

⁵ This is partly because one of his additional aims is to equate “race” with “nation” and to argue that prolific racial mixing can lead to the downfall of a “civilization,” an idea that was repeated in anti-immigration and anti-miscegenation discourse.

⁶ Young continues: “all civilizations of the world, including (via some ingenious arguments) those of Egypt, India and China, have been initiated by Aryans, but for the most part by contracting a ‘fertile marriage’ (*hymen fécond*) with other races. Black people left on their own, by contrast, have remained ‘immersed in a profound inertia’” (*idem*). Gobineau thus argues that some racial mixing is (or rather was) positive in that the attributes of the white race helped to elevate those of the “inferior” groups and thereby to develop “proper” “civilizations.”

the white race on which racially Other categories can then be metonymically based. In a sense, Gobineau and his translator position the white race as the “trunk” of the “human family” tree rather than as one of its “branches.” Significantly, this positioning works to exemplify the Genesis narrative with Adam – the original white male – as the original prototypical “human.”

Regardless of how Gobineau’s and Hotz’s work compliment each other, Hotz put the narrative authority of Gobineau’s text into question and shaped the Count’s essay for the American reader through his “Analytical Introduction” and several notes added throughout the text. Hotz’s contention with Gobineau’s essay lies specifically with “the question” of “whether [races are] of identical or diverse origin” (61). As Young states, the “major dispute” for nineteenth-century racial theorists “lay between monogenesis and polygenesis” (100).⁷ “Gobineau, whom by temperament one might have expected to be a strong proponent of polygenesis” (101), was a monogenist, while Hotz was a polygenist. Thus, before Gobineau’s essay begins, Hotz offers his own definition of race:

The term “race” is of relative meaning, and, though often erroneously used synonymously with *species*, by no means signifies the same. The most strenuous advocates of sameness of species, use it to designate well-defined groups, as the white and black. If we consider ourselves warranted by the language of the Bible, to believe in separate origins of the human family, then, indeed, it may be considered as similar in meaning to species; otherwise, it must signify but subdivisions of one. We may therefore speak of ten or a hundred races of man, without impugning their being descended from the same stock. All that is here contended for is, that the distinctive features of such races, in whatever manner they may have originated, are now persistent. (60)

Evidently, Hotz’s comment is full of contradictions. He argues that “race” and “species” do not “signif[y] the same” thing, but then suggests that for a polygeneticist, they “may be

⁷ Young writes: “The monogenetic argument was that the different human races were descended from a single source, as is suggested in the Biblical account, in which case racial difference was explained through the thesis of degeneration. This meant that the pure origin of man was the white male – that universal mean and measure of all things – and that all other forms were a deterioration from this ideal, as a result of gender or geography, or both. The polygenetic argument, on the other hand, that the different races were in fact different species, and had been different all along, allowed the argument that they would and should continue to be so. Not surprisingly...this was the idea cherished by those who wanted to uphold the most extreme forms of racial differentiation, and was popular with apologists for slavery in the American South” (101).

considered as similar in meaning.”⁸ While he states at the end of the note that “all that is here contended for” are that “the distinctive features of such races” “are now persistent” (which is an indirect comment on Gobineau’s belief in monogenesis), Hotz underlines that the definition of race is contingent on either a monogenetic or a polygenetic origin. Hotz makes his adherence to polygenesis apparent by calling on “the language of the Bible” to “warrant” his viewpoint of “the separate origins of the human family.” Ironically, “the language of the Bible” was often used to uphold the monogenetic argument. Hotz’s reliance on this “language” here, with no reference to the content of this language, highlights the extent to which Biblical language (or the “word” of “God-the-Father”) is made to function as a transcendental signified, regardless of the discourse that it is believed to prove.

The contingency of the definition of race on the question of a unitary or diverse origin of “man,” or whether or not races were (once) part of the same “human family” or distinct like “species” within the animal kingdom, was also metonymically based on the issue of reproduction and on the “Othering” of the racial Other through botanical and animal metaphors. While many racial theorists freely interpreted the Bible in order to justify their argument, others sought to found their hypotheses regarding reproduction between distinct “species” on the metonymical realm of the animal. Hotz continues in his critique of Gobineau:

Our author leans strongly towards a belief in the *original diversity* of races, but has evidently been much embarrassed in arriving at conclusions by religious scruples and by the want of accurate knowledge in that part of natural history which treats of the designation of *species*, and the laws of *hybridity*; he has been taught to believe that two distinct species cannot produce perfectly prolific offspring, and therefore concludes that all races of men *must* be of one origin, because they are prolific *inter se*. My appendix will therefore be devoted mainly to this question of species. (original emphasis, 464)

⁸ In this first sentence, Hotz infers that a monogenetic argument equates “race” with “species” in order to unify the distinct “groups.” He thereby claims that the monogenetic contention that all races belong to the same “species” implies that they actually belong to the same “race,” which was far from the case. But this allows him then to argue that it is only by acknowledging the distinct origin of races that “race” can be equated with “species.”

I will return to the notion of hybridity in more detail below. For now, it is important to highlight how race was metonymically shaped by “species” and that the nineteenth-century understanding of “species” was contingent on “hybridity.”⁹ In the same way that “species” often functioned as a metaphor for race, “hybridity” – a term adopted from the botanical realm – served as a metaphor for interracial reproduction (although neither term was intended as figurative). In his “Sketch of the Natural Provinces of the Animal World and their Relation to the Different Types of Man,” Louis Agassiz (whom Stephen Jay Gould cites as “America’s theorist of polygeny” (n. pag.)) uses the “natural” world and animal species as the foundation for his claim that the “races of men” are distinct “species.” The title alone attests to Agassiz’s aim of naturalizing “the different types of man” as “natural” as the “natural provinces of the animal world.” He argues:

Species are thus distinct organic forms of life, the origin of which is lost in the primitive establishment of the state of things now existing, and varieties are such modifications of the species as may return to the typical form, under temporary influences. Accepting this definition with the qualifications just mentioned respecting hybridity, I am prepared to show that the differences existing between the races of men are of the same kind as the differences observed between the different families, genera, and species of monkeys or other animals; and that these different species of animals differ in the same degree one from the other as the races of men—nay, the differences between distinct races are often greater than those distinguishing species of animals one from the other. (lxxiv - lxxv)

Much like Gobineau’s fear of the decay of civilization through profuse interracial mixing (or “hybridity”), Agassiz defines “the state of things now existing,” or the “varieties” resulting from “hybridity,” as “primitive.” The “natural” “origin” of man lies in “distinct organic forms of life,” or “species.” Agassiz thus insinuates that racial purity is both more “civilized” and

⁹ Hotz later concludes: “(T)he races of men depicted on the monuments of Egypt, five thousand years ago, and which have maintained their types through all time and all climates since, are *distinct species*” (478), his point being that despite interracial reproduction, certain distinctive “racial traits” have persisted, so that these “types” remain “distinct species.” Again, this illustrates the extent to which the question of race as “species” necessitated recourse to the issue of “hybridity.” It is also worth noting that Hotz dispels Gobineau’s monogenetic point of view as influenced by “religious scruples” – the same “scruples” that “warranted” the polygenetic view in his previous comment. Here, he calls instead upon “natural history” to “warrant” the “laws of hybridity.”

closer to an “original” state of “nature,” while racial mixing is “primitive” in the sense that it is “unnatural.” Agassiz’s emphasis on difference is exemplified by the number of times he repeats “difference,” “distinct,” and/or “distinguishing” throughout his argument. Yet Agassiz obviously felt the need to determine that the boundaries “distinguishing” animal species were not “distinct” enough to divide those of racial groups. While most polygenists were satisfied with equating “race” to “species,” Agassiz can offer no more than a comparative structure to claim that “races” are more “distinctive” than “species.”¹⁰ These manipulations of language illustrate the extent to which words were lacking for nineteenth-century scientific racial categorization. Indeed, the metaphorical production of the racial Other necessitated the institutionalization, naturalization, and literalization of other metaphors – both plant and animal – and metonymical relationships with transcendental signifieds which could be wielded in diverse ways to “warrant” racial differences.¹¹

While Gobineau, his outspoken translator Hotz, and Agassiz looked to “history” and “nature” for definitions of race and racial differences, anthropologists such as Samuel Morton provided phrenological readings of race in which somatic signifiers functioned as synecdoches for each “race,” and corresponded (metonymically) to connotations of civilization versus nature. As the title of Morton’s 1839 text indicates, *Crania Americana; or, a comparative view of the skulls of various aboriginal nations of north and south America: to which is prefixed an essay on the varieties of the human species*, his primary objects of study were skulls of the Native American “race,” but it is prefaced with an “essay” on racial categories. He also “prefaced” this essay with the comment: “I am free to acknowledge that there is a singular harmony between the mental character of the Indian, and his cranial developments as explained

¹⁰ Significantly, Gould notes of Agassiz that “he never generated any data for polygeny. His conversion followed an immediate visceral judgment and some persistent persuasion by friends. His later support rested on nothing deeper in the realm of biological knowledge” (pg.).

¹¹ The coining of new terms was also deemed necessary, as we shall see with the word “miscegenation” in the following chapter.

by Phrenology” (i). Morton’s aim was thus apparent – to validate the phrenological association and the essentialized relationship between facial traits and mental/emotional characteristics vis-à-vis race. Although Morton did not take it upon himself to examine the skulls of other races (in this text, at least), he insinuated that this “singular harmony” could be found among all racial groups.¹² His classification of the five primary “races” attests to this notion by focusing on the physical traits of the head alone. Here are his summaries of the “first” race and the “last”:¹³

I. THE CAUCASIAN RACE.

The Caucasian Race is characterised by a naturally fair skin, susceptible of every tint; hair fine, long and curling, and of various colors. The skull is large and oval, and its anterior portion full and elevated. The face is small in proportion to the head, of an oval form, with well-proportioned features. The nasal bones are arched, the chin full, and the teeth vertical. This race is distinguished for the facility with which it attains the highest intellectual endowments ...

V. THE ETHIOPIAN RACE

Characterised by a black complexion, and black, woolly hair; the eyes are large and prominent, the nose broad and flat, the lips thick, and the mouth wide: the head is long and narrow, the forehead low, the cheek-bones prominent, the jaws projecting, and the chin small. In disposition the negro is joyous, flexible, and indolent; while the many nations which compose this race present a singular diversity of intellectual character, of which the far extreme is the lowest grade of humanity. (5-7)

For each “race,” Morton begins with skin color and hair, followed by the shape of the head and its facial features, and finishes with intellect and character. In this way, Morton provides an order through which physical characteristics should be “read” to define belonging to a

¹² Gould notes that Morton’s *Crania Americana* and his 1844 *Crania Aegyptiaca* “represent the major contribution of American polygeny to debates about racial ranking ... Needless, to say, [his ‘hard’ data on the mental worth of human races] matched every good Yankee’s prejudice—whites on top, Indians in the middle, and blacks on the bottom; and, among whites, Teutons and Anglo-Saxons on top, Jews in the middle, and Hindus on the bottom” (1996). Admittedly, Morton was one of the few racial theorists to provide the narrative of his research and findings. Gould notes that he could “detect no sign of fraud or conscious manipulation,” except for “an a priori conviction about racial ranking so powerful that it directed his tabulations along preestablished lines. Yet Morton was widely hailed as the objectivist of his age, the man who would rescue American science from the mire of unsupported speculation” (*idem*). In a sense then, Morton’s “authority” provided the “support” that allowed other racial theorists to be free to “speculate.”

¹³ Obviously, his ordering of these “races” is not insignificant. For Morton, the first group cited is the “superior” race, while the last is the most “inferior.”

particular racial category. Thus, these somatic signifiers are made to bear a direct correlation to the intellect and “disposition.” Arched nasal bones, full chins, and vertical teeth are made to function as metaphors for a “superior” intellect, while a low forehead and a projecting jaw might signify “indolence.” In the same way, these somatic signifiers operate as synecdoches for the body (both “inside” and “outside”) as a whole, as well as for the entire “race.” Moreover, Morton’s rating of racial intellects bears a metonymical association with civilization as definitive of the “human.” By claiming that the Caucasian race “attains the highest intellectual endowments” in contrast to the Ethiopian race “of which the far extreme is the lowest grade of humanity,” Morton equates intellectual achievement with civilization as well as “humanity,” the “humane,” and/or the “human.”

While Morton did not employ as many animalizing tropes as his contemporaries in his construction of the racial Other as less “human,” he did make aesthetic judgments of beauty, which further serve to position the (white) “human” as a transcendental signified and metonymically demarcate the Other. For instance, “the physical aspect” of “the Fuegian branch” of “the American family” is “all together repulsive,” (65) and the face of “the Australian family” is “ugly in the extreme” (92), whereas “the Caucasian family” (the most “superior” “family” of the “superior” “Caucasian race,” which is accordingly given the same name) is described as follows:

The men are distinguished by the elegance of their shape ... athletic and muscular without being corpulent. The women ... in exquisite beauty of form and gracefulness of manner; they surpass all other people ... Their profile approaches nearest *the Grecian model*, and falls little short of the *beau-ideal of classic sculpture*” (emphasis added, 8).

Gobineau made similar aesthetic judgments. For him, “the inhabitants of Europe, and of South and West Asia” are “more beautiful than the rest of mankind, which is ... a pestilent congregation of ugliness ... [T]hey had the glory of giving the world such admirable types as a Venus, an Apollo, a Farnese Hercules” (1853, p. 107-8). Gobineau and Morton liken “white”

somatic signifiers to a transcendent “ideal,” statues of Greek gods, goddesses, and demi-gods, thereby implying that the “Caucasian family” approaches the “divine.” Although the insinuation does not equate Greek mythology with Biblical mythology, this reverence for “classical sculpture” points to Antiquity as the earliest historical moment in which fantasized models of the “civilized” “human” could be given form. These associations were thus also “divine” in a historical sense – they were closer to the “origin” of man, to God’s “divine” creation of Adam and of the “ideal” “human.”

Animality

In constructing racial categories, other anthropologists, philosophers, and/or pseudo-scientists of the nineteenth-century engaged in rhetoric that likened or equated the racial Other to the non-human animal. For instance, extending Morton’s work, his followers, Josiah Nott and George Gliddon, continued to equate whiteness with classical sculpture, and expanded upon the inferiority of non-white races through animalizing rhetoric. As Figure 1 illustrates (see Appendix), Nott and Gliddon create metonymical relationships between skulls and their supposed owners, while their intention was undoubtedly for these comparisons to appear “natural” rather than constructed. Significantly, it is a bust of Apollo that is made to bear a synechdochal connection to the white man, rather than a representational sketch of a white man’s head. In addition to the Caucasian skull next to Apollo, these images are meant to give the white man the metonymical connotations of “civilized” and “divine,” highlighting the fantastical extent of Nott and Gliddon’s taxonomies. A hierarchy is once again created through the ordering of these images, with Apollo on top and the chimpanzee on the bottom. Nevertheless, the shading and facial features of the “negro” and the chimpanzee, along with the shape of the two skulls, suggest a closer relationship, based on similitude rather than difference. These similarities are reinforced by the images on the following page. Just in case

the reader could not guess at Nott and Gliddon's aim of likening the racial Other to various species of ape, sketches of the latter are placed next to those of Black women. (And of course, the Caffer woman's pipe creates an even stronger resemblance to the protruding jaw of the ape to which she is compared.) In addition to the animalization of the racial Other through images, animalizing language is heavily used in Nott and Gliddon's text. One example could easily serve as a caption for one of the images in Figure 1:

Cape Colony: it is here that we find the lowest and most beastly specimens of mankind: viz., the *Hottentot* and the *Bushman*. The latter, in particular, are but little removed, both in moral and physical characteristics, from the orang-outan. They are not black, but of a yellowish-brown (*tallow-colored*, as the French term them), with woolly heads, diminutive statures, small ill-shapen crania, very projecting mouths, prognathous faces, and badly formed bodies; in short, they are described by travellers as bearing a strong resemblance to the monkey tribe. (182)

While Nott and Gliddon's ultimate aim is to claim that these "specimens of mankind" "are but little removed, both in moral and physical characteristics, from the orang-outan," they can do little more than rely on rhetoric that is similar to the function of simile. Notice for instance that their listing of somatic signifiers needs to be labeled by the summarizing phrase in which the "resemblance to the monkey tribe" is made clear. In another instance, the naturalists stigmatize Native Americans: "To one who has lived among American Indians, it is in vain to talk of civilizing them. You might as well attempt to change the nature of a buffalo" (69). Here, Nott and Gliddon's statement also functions like a simile, essentially arguing that American Indians are as "uncivilized" as the buffalo. Moreover, the metonymical concept of "civilization" (or "civilized" versus "uncivilized"), which forms the basis for the comparison, operates in these examples through the subjective perspectives of "travellers" (or "the one who has lived among American Indians") who are given as much authority as the naturalists themselves. It goes without saying that these "travellers" are "civilized," white men.¹⁴

¹⁴ It seems to have been common practice for nineteenth-century racial theorists to refer to travel writing as a reliable secondary source. Sander Gilman notes, for instance, that even the eighteenth-century theorist Buffon did just this. Writing of the "lascivious, apelike sexual appetite of the black," Buffon "introduce[ed] a commonplace of early travel literature into a 'scientific context'" (1985, 212).

The metonymical relationship between race and “species,” as well as between race and Biblical language, laid the groundwork for some of the most radical racist discourse in the nineteenth-century, which was by far the most extreme in its use of animalistic metaphors, that were, once again, not intended as figurative. For polygenetic theologians, the implication that races were different “species” could be “proven” by the book of Genesis in which only two groups of living beings were created: man and “beasts.” For these theorists, since Adam – the man created in “God’s image” – was necessarily white, non-white races could only come from the “beast.” In his 1858 “The Negro: What is His Ethnological Status?”, Bruckner Payne, writing under the pseudonym of Ariel, argues “that we now have existing on earth, two races of men, the *white* and the *black*” (4). Like Morton, Payne begins his treatise with synecdochal descriptions of the two races, which he then uses metonymically to stand for their distinct origins as “beast” versus “man”:

The white race have long, straight hair, high foreheads, high noses, thin lips, and white skins: the olive and sunburnt color, where the other characteristics are found, belong equally to the white race.

The negro or black race, are woolly or kinky-headed, low foreheads, flat noses, thick-lipped, and have a black skin.

This description of the two races is (though not all their differences), full enough for the fair discussion of their respective stations in God’s order of creation, and will be admitted to be just and true, as far as it goes, by all candid and learned men...

In God’s nomenclature of the creation, his order stands thus: 1. Birds...5. Beasts; 6. Adam and Eve. (4)

With little more than an appeal to common sense (a strategy that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three), Payne employs “Black” somatic signifiers as synecdoches for all non-white racial groups. Payne’s attempt to naturalize the racial binary illustrates the extent to which the body of the Other could be fantasized and marked with fanciful somatic signifiers, such as “woolly or kinky-headed.” He thereby constructs a set of oppositional physical traits which can then be used metonymically to position the racial Other as a “beast” through Biblical language. Having argued against the monogenetic thesis that the “black race” descended from Noah’s son, Ham, Payne continues:

Then, Ham, not being the father of the negro, the negro must have come out of the ark with the beasts, and *as one*, for he was *not one of Noah's family* that entered it. This is inevitable, and can not be shaken by all the reasonings of men on earth to the contrary. Now, unless it can be shown that, from Noah back to Adam and Eve, that in some way this kinky-headed and black-skinned negro is the progeny of Adam and Eve, and which we know can not be done, then *again* it follows, indubitably, that the negro is not a *human* being—not being of Adam's race ... (H)e entered the ark as a *beast*, and *only* as a beast. (original emphasis, 21)

Payne did not need to describe the bodies of Adam and Eve. As an “ideal,” the “human” based on the fantasized image of God, the Other is produced: the “beast” and the “kinky-headed and black-skinned negro.”

Payne's rhetoric leaves no room for contradiction. Proving the contrary “can not be done”; his treatise explains what every “candid and learned” man already knows to be “just and true” – and Charles Carroll employs similar rhetorical strategies in his 1900 pamphlet, “The Negro a Beast.” While Payne clearly states that “the negro is not a *human* being,” what is unclear is whether or not he sees the “black race” presently as “beasts” or whether they are only descended from the “beast.” Carroll seems to have answered this ambiguity in the title of his text. The pamphlet is full of drawings, captioned with rhetorical questions, providing visual in addition to linguistic signifiers in order to cement the division between the white “human” and the Black “beast.” As Figure 2 illustrates (see Appendix), the answer to Carroll's question lies in the visual image he provides. In case the light shining down from “Heaven” is not obvious in itself, the linguistic insertion of “Direct line of kinship with God” emphasizes the relationship between God-the-Father and his children, Adam and Eve. A faded but threatening image of the “beast” looms in the background, evidently with no light shining down on it from heaven. If there could be any doubt as to what “the image of God” or what Christ looked like, Figure 3 clears this up (see Appendix). Not only does Carroll tell us that “Man was created in the image of God,” he also infers that the (white) man bears a striking resemblance to a clean-shaven Christ. These images testify to the ways in which the white man was used metonymically to whiten Christ in the same manner that God/Christ was used to construct the

white man as the “divine” “ideal” “human,” as well as the non-white as “beast” rather than “human.” Reversing the animalizing similes that filled scientific discourse in the years preceding Carroll’s text, he appears to humanize the black “beast” with the simile “man-like ape” (87) (rather than the animalization of the Black human through a simile, such as “ape-like man”).

Indeed, simile, along with other rhetorical strategies, was more frequently used, to claim not that the racial Other was an animal, but to position this Other in between the animal and the human – a position that was difficult to express in other terms or through other means. Even Charles Darwin – whose theory of evolution threatened the authority of polygenecists and monogenecists alike – engaged in animalizing the racial Other through rhetoric that appeared to lend scientific authority to animal similes. On the one hand, Darwin challenges the statements of his precursors by arguing that all humans have “evolved” from apes, as well as by stating that transcendental signifieds that stem from Christian theology cannot be employed to claim that races are separate species. He writes: “[I]t is a hopeless endeavour to decide this point on sound grounds, until some definition of the term ‘species’ is generally accepted; and the definition must not include an element which cannot possibly be ascertained, such as an act of creation” (228). His insistence on a stark separation between the animal and the human might have angered polygenecists who asserted a much closer relationship between apes and the “lowest and mostly beastly specimens of mankind.” For instance, he notes:

We have seen in the last chapter that man bears in his bodily structure clear traces of his descent from some *lower form*; but it may be urged that, as man differs so greatly in his mental power from all other animals, there must be some error in this conclusion. No doubt the difference in this respect is enormous, even if we compare the mind of *one of the lowest savages*, who has no words to express any number higher than four, and who uses no abstract terms for the commonest objects or affections, with that of the most highly organised ape. (emphasis added, 34)

On the other hand, even here, Darwin’s language continues to reinforce a hierarchy of being which is metonymically based on the notion of civilization. Darwin’s classification of beings,

of “lower forms” and “the lowest savages,” is understood as pre-discursive, as “natural” or, in Darwinian terms, as part of “natural selection.” But, as Lewin might argue, “natural selection” is also an “epistemic strategy” that is ironically permeated with the concept of civilization and is, indeed, far from “natural.” Interestingly, while he does not use simile strictly speaking, Darwin’s rhetoric continues to naturalize the animal similes of his predecessors, specifically by suggesting that this in-between state is “unnatural”:

At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes, as Professor Schaaffhausen has remarked, will no doubt be exterminated. The break will then be rendered wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilised state, as we may hope, than the Caucasian, and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as at present between the negro or Australian and the gorilla. (201)

For Darwin, “natural selection” will ensure that those that are situated in between (whether “anthropomorphous apes” or “the savage races”) are erased. “Natural selection” ultimately operates as the naturalization of the human/animal binary in which the “civilized” man is “natural” and the “unnatural” “savage” man will no longer exist.

If Victorians could take comfort in the idea that the “unnatural” “savage” racial Other might one day be “exterminated,” fantasy narratives of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries played on fears of threatening animal-like beings, such as vampires, who (or which) were often characterized in ways that echoed racially-stigmatizing discourses. For example, with the vampire Dracula in Bram Stoker’s novel of the same name, fantasies of the animalistic racial Other were repeated and, thereby, reinforced. Consider, for instance, Charles Caldwell’s remarks on “African” teeth in the 1830 *Thoughts on the Original Unity of the Human Race*:

Corresponding with the direction of [the African’s] maxillary bones, his teeth point obliquely outward, while those of the Caucasian are nearly perpendicular ... They are larger, stronger, sharper, further apart, and covered with a thicker and firmer enamel. *The cuspidati are more truly canine*, and the projections from the grinding surfaces of the molares bolder and more pointed. In fine, they *resemble much more the teeth of the ape*, and are better fitted for cutting and tearing. (emphasis added, 79-80)

While it can be said that all humans possess canine teeth, Caldwell makes clear the association with the animal sense of the word “canine” by conditioning the adjective with “more truly,” and of course by highlighting the “resemblance” to “the teeth of the ape.” Significantly, when the first homodiegetic narrator of Stoker’s novel, Jonathan Harker, meets Dracula, he notes: “The Count smiled, and as his lips ran back over his gums, the long, sharp, canine teeth showed out strangely” (18). Here, the “canine teeth” are additionally shaped by the adjectives “long and sharp,” calling forth connotations of the animal through metonymy. This follows his initial observation of the Count’s “peculiarly sharp white teeth” which “protruded over the lips” (15). Indeed, Jonathan frequently “notic[es] his ... sharp, canine teeth lying over the red under-lip” (27). Importantly, Darwin emphasizes the relation of “projecting” canine teeth and the animal:

The occasional appearance at the present day of canine teeth which project above the others, with traces of diastema or open space for the reception of the opposite canines, is in all probability a case of reversion to a former state, when the progenitors of man were provided with these weapons, like so many existing male *Quadrumanas*. (324)

The “strange” “showing out,” or the “protruding” of Dracula’s teeth thus mimics Darwin’s image of the degenerative racial Other, who is also animalized through the simile that aligns the figure with “existing male *Quadrumanas*.”¹⁵ Regardless of whether or not these examples are understood as animalizing rhetoric, one does not need to look outside the novel to comprehend the way in which the narrative uses teeth to characterize the vampire as animalistic. Indeed, the gesture of “champing of teeth” is repeated throughout the text, performed by both wolves and vampires. Jonathan notes that the wolves in Transylvania have “red jaws, with champing teeth,” and that Dracula’s wives’ “white teeth” are “champing with rage” at one point (42, 32). Encountering Dracula after he has fed, Dr. Seward draws his readers’ attention to “the white sharp teeth, behind the full lips of the blood-dripping mouth,”

¹⁵ The discourse of degeneration is also heavily present in Stoker’s novel (more on this later). It is also important to note Darwin’s attribution of projecting canine teeth to the *male* *Quadrumanas* alone, as if to suggest that the presence of this characteristic on women would render them more masculine. To be sure, such a characterization corresponds to the depiction of female vampires in Stoker’s novel.

which “champed together like those of a wild beast” (242). In the latter instance, the use of simile makes the vampire’s alignment with the predatory animal explicit. Yet the comparison is hardly needed given that the gesture (along with the occasional presence of blood) is repeated to such an extent that it can be said to function as a metaphor for animality alone. It is, of course, significant that these “protruding” canine teeth are both symbolic of the vampire’s animality in addition to being the means through which the vampire threatens the identity and the integrity of the human body, or more specifically in the case of Stoker’s novel, the racially pure, white English body. Through the nineteenth-century discourse of degeneration, the vampire’s fangs are both a sign of degeneration and the means through which degeneration is “inflicted” upon the English body. I will return to these issues below.

In much the same way that nineteenth-century racial taxonomies positioned the racial Other in between the “human” and the “animal,” Stoker’s novel makes use of animal similes to characterize the vampire. To Jonathan’s mind, Dracula descends his castle wall “just *as a lizard* moves along a wall” (emphasis added, 29). Dr. Seward later remarks that “[t]here was something so *panther-like* in [one of his] movement[s]—something so unhuman” (emphasis added, 262). One of Dracula’s “wives” “lick[s] her lips *like an animal*” (emphasis added, 32). And we are told that Lucy, once a vampire, also acts *like an animal*: “With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched strenuously to her breast, growling over it *as a dog growls over a bone*” (emphasis added, 181). Even Renfield, who is not a vampire but who is characterized as one of Dracula’s servants, is depicted as reproducing animalistic behavior: “He was lying on his belly on the floor licking up, *like a dog*, the blood which had fallen from my wounded wrist” (emphasis added, 121). Like most nineteenth-century scientific racism, Stoker’s novel does not use animal similes to make these comparisons explicit, nor to characterize the vampire as a “mere” animal, but rather to position the figure as somewhere between the animal and the human characters. Ultimately

then, these instances function as a repetition of the rhetorical strategies used in nineteenth-century scientific racial discourse to animalize the racial Other.

Although Tod Browning's 1932 film adaptation *Dracula*, which made Stoker's novel famous to American readers, never depicts the vampire's fangs, it provides an instance of animalizing rhetoric through other techniques.¹⁶ As in the novel, human characters frequently use animal similes to refer to vampires. For instance, when Dracula is visibly angered by Van Helsing holding a mirror to his face, Jonathan exclaims: "Did you see the look on his face? Like a wild animal!" (43:00).¹⁷ After turning into a vampire, Lucy is described by Mina as looking "like a hungry animal, like a wolf" (49:00). Yet the film's most powerful means of aligning the vampire with the animal is through camera work and its focus on specific images. In the first appearance of Dracula and his "wives," the camera provides close-ups on their hands emerging from their coffins, with their fingers shaped and moving like claws (I am obliged to use a simile here), which parallel the scene's use of cross-cutting to close-ups on insects and rodents. The construction of the vampire as animalistic is, in this instance, metonymical – camera work and editing (as well as spatial proximity) establish a relationship of contiguity between these animals and the vampires. Nevertheless, this metonymical shaping of Dracula clearly functions as metaphor. In other words, Dracula and his claw-like hands (which also operate as a synecdoche for the body of the vampire as a whole) clearly share attributes with the insects and rodents that surround him. More than this, the connotations that this relationship creates are also conditioned through the additional metonymical links that these signifiers bear with the concepts of disease and contamination. To be clear, Dracula and

¹⁶ The lack of fangs on screen was most likely due to the Hollywood Production Code, although I have been unable to find any confirmation of this.

¹⁷ After Jonathan's comment, Mina's father adds that his face was "more like a madman's," reflecting the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century connections between criminal pathology, animality, and racial Otherness. (See Sander Gilman's 1985 *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness*.) It is also worth noting that the lack of a reflection in a mirror as a means to identify a vampire did not appear in Stoker's novel and may have become a vampire convention with Browning's film.

his hands are diseased and contaminated through their proximity to insects and rodents, which in turn signify disease and contamination. This characterization of Dracula shapes the way in which Dracula's actions are read throughout the narrative, just as the repeated image and gesturing of his claw-like hands when attacking his victims serves to remind the spectator that the "contaminated" can also be "contaminating." Of course, somatic signifiers pointing to contamination were also metonymically linked to sexual deviancy.

Sexual Deviancy

According to H. L. Malchow, metonymical leaps linking animality, contamination / disease, and sexual deviancy to racial Otherness were quite commonplace in the Victorian period. Introducing his discussion of Stoker's novel and of "the vampire as racial other," Malchow writes:

Late-Victorian homophobia and racism, of course, come to share much under the surface. The racial fiend is often a sexual threat and the sexual "pervert," a racial (that is, eugenic) menace. In the first place, both the racial outsider, black, Asian, or Jew, and the homosexual are by tradition highly sexed. They are in theory mastered by their lubricious and bestial natures. Moreover, the fear of race-mixing, of "miscegenation," which allows racial others to pass for whites and continue secretly to infect their blood, resonates with that of the disguised homosexual, who threatens a secret moral pollution damaging to both the fecundity and the vigor of the race. (148)

As Malchow argues, "racial discourse" of the late nineteenth-century marked "the racial outsider" as "sexual threat," "sexual 'pervert,'" and "highly sexed," in part through the contingency of race and sexuality on the human/animal binary (the Other's "bestial nature"), as well as on contamination or "infect[ion]." Though Malchow does not demonstrate the role that scientific discourse played in reinforcing (if not creating) these associations, he does suggest that eugenics operated as a substitute for the concept of race at the time. I will return to the topics of disease / contamination and eugenics below. For now, Malchow's comment underlines the ways in which racial Otherness was constructed through a network of discourses that included the stigmatization of and through non-normative sexuality. To return to Dracula's

“claw-like” hands, Browning’s film thus drew from, repeated, and reinforced the metonymical links between the “racial fiend” and the “sexual ‘pervert,’” partly through somatic signifiers that operated as metaphors of animality and contamination.

The figurative construction of Dracula’s claw-like hands as a signifier for racial Otherness in conjunction with the afore-mentioned stigmatizing concepts instantiates a method of nineteenth-century medical discourse. Indeed, synecdoches of body parts functioned as metaphors for character traits and behavior. In the case of the racial Other, a body part could in turn stand for the entire body as well as for the group as a whole, in addition to representing animal-like characteristics, hypersexuality and/or sexual perversion. Perhaps no figure better exemplifies this phenomenon than the “Hottentot Venus.”¹⁸ Georges Cuvier, one of the doctors who studied Sara “Saartjie” Baartman’s body, wrote the following in his anatomical report:

“She had a way of pouting her lips exactly like that we have observed in the Orang-Outang. Her movements had something abrupt and fantastical about them, reminding one of those of the ape. Her lips were monstrously large; her ear was like that of many apes, being small, the tragus weak and the external border almost obliterated behind. These are animal characters. Again, I have never seen a human head more like an ape than that of this woman.” Referring to the “fatty protuberances” of the haunches, he says: “They offer a striking resemblance to those which exists in the females of the mandrills, the papions, etc., and which assume, at certain epochs of their life, an enlargement truly monstrous.” (quoted in Carroll, 111).¹⁹

Cuvier’s report is full of animal similes as well as language that operates in the manner of simile. In addition to animalizing Baartman and Hottentot women, Baartman’s body fragments – her lips, buttocks, and labia – are interpreted (metonymically) as signs of Black female sexuality. According to Sander Gilman, one of Cuvier’s contemporaries, the anthropologist Julien-Joseph Virey, saw Baartman’s anatomy – as described in Cuvier’s study – as evidence

¹⁸ I should specify that she was a Khoikhoi person named Sara Baartman by English colonists and later renamed with the diminutive “Saartjie” by Dutch colonists. She was transformed, first by her owners and later by scientific racists like Cuvier into a representative figure for all Hottentot women, as well as all Black women.

¹⁹ While Cuvier was French, his work bears links to (if it did not in fact influence) nineteenth-century American science as well as social practices. Indeed, the “Hottentot Venus” was a figure who was displayed in freak shows in London and Paris – rendered “monstrous,” freakish through language as well as the social function of the freak show.

of an animalistic, hypersexual, as well as sexually perverse Black (female) sexuality. Gilman notes that in Virey's 1819 essay, "*Dictionnaire des sciences médicales* [*Dictionary of medical sciences*]," Black female "'voluptuousness' is 'developed to a degree of lascivity unknown in our climate, for their sexual organs are much more developed than those of whites'" (1985, 212-13). Gilman continues:

Elsewhere, Virey cites the Hottentot woman as the epitome of this sexual lasciviousness ... His central proof is a discussion of the unique structure of the Hottentot female's sexual parts, the description of which he takes from the anatomical studies published by his contemporary, Georges Cuvier ... In the nineteenth century, the black female was widely perceived as possessing not only a "primitive" sexual appetite but also the external signs of this temperament – "primitive" genitalia. (213)

Evidently, Virey's use of the term "developed" in this case does not mean "advanced," but rather points to Cuvier's characterization of Baartman's larger buttocks (and labia) as "monstrous" since these organs provide an essentialist link with "lascivity." Gilman further notes that Baartman's labia additionally become a sign of (hetero)sexual deviance:

By 1877 it was a commonplace that the Hottentot's anomalous sexual form was similar to other errors in the development of the labia. [Theodor Billroth's standard handbook of gynecology] links this malformation with the overdevelopment of the clitoris, which he sees as leading to those "excesses" which "are called 'lesbian love.'" The concupiscence of the black is thus associated also with the sexuality of the lesbian. (1985, 218)

In these ways, Baartman's bodily fragments and her body as a whole were made to operate as signs for Black (female) sexual deviancy. The fact that Baartman's genitalia were separated from her body and put on display in the Paris *Musée de l'homme* (until 1974) bears witness to this synecdochal and essentialist linking. As Gilman notes:

When a specimen was to be preserved for an anatomical museum, more often than not the specimen was seen as a pathological summary of the entire individual ... Sarah Bartmann's genitalia and buttocks summarized her essence for the nineteenth-century observer, or, indeed, for the twentieth-century one, as they are still on display at the Musée de l'homme in Paris. (1985, 216)²⁰

²⁰ Baartman's remains were still on display when Gilman published his article in 1985. Nelson Mandela requested their repatriation to South Africa in 1994. The French government finally agreed in 2002. (Parkinson, n. pag.).

Clearly, these moves from the synecdoche of a body part or a body as standing for all Black women (and arguably, for Black difference in general), in addition to the metonymical leap that these racial theorists made between Baartman's labia, for instance, and non-normative sexuality, are ignored due to a supposed pre-discursive and essentialist relationship between body and behavior (or body and mind).

It is not surprising then that nineteenth-century fantasy texts, such as *Dracula*, also portray essentialist relationships between the body and sexual deviancy. Indeed, Stoker's vampires are not merely discursively animalized in the same way as the racial Other, but they are also marked by extension as sexually perverse. For instance, once Lucy is a vampire, she not only "growl[s]" like a "dog," but she also displays "wantonness." Her hypersexual desire seems to be paired with the "voluptuousness" of her appearance, as well as with her fangs, as Dr. Seward notes her "pointed teeth" along with her "bloodstained, voluptuous mouth" (183). The relationship between Lucy's overt display of sexual desire and her body were previously signaled, even before she is fully transformed. Seward writes of one of his final visits with the human Lucy, noting her strangely elongated and sharper "canine teeth" (136) and the "soft, voluptuous voice, such as [he] had never heard from her lips" (138), which she uses to request a kiss from Arthur. The same essentialist link characterizes Dracula's "wives" for Jonathan when one of them attempts to "seduce" him: "There was a deliberate voluptuousness which was both thrilling and repulsive, and as she arched her neck she actually licked her lips like an animal, till I could see in the moonlight the moisture shining on the scarlet lips and on the red tongue as it lapped the sharp teeth" (32).²¹ Here, the animal simile simultaneously functions as a means of sexualizing the female vampire. The relationship between the somatic signifiers of "sharp teeth" and "voluptuousness" and the concepts of animality and hypersexuality are

²¹ Jonathan's use of the terms "thrilling and repulsive" are reminiscent of the same ideas expressed in Gobineau and Agassiz, as Young notes of the two writers: "Once again ... we find an ambivalent driving desire at the heart of racialism: a compulsive libidinal attraction disavowed by an equal insistence on repulsion" (149).

further reinforced by the character's actions – her “voluptuousness” is not mere appearance but is also “deliberate,” in part through the licking of her lips “like an animal.” It is, of course, noteworthy that the novel's staging of hypersexuality in conjunction with animality is most apparent through female characters, while it only remains part of the subtext as far as Dracula is concerned. By this I mean that Dracula is rarely (if ever) overtly characterized as hypersexual, but is implicitly characterized as such through his multiple female partners/victims. In this sense, the female body operates as a signifier for Dracula's sexuality – each bears his mark through the somatic signifiers of fang marks and subsequently, fangs themselves. In other words, fangs and fang marks, as well as the body of the female vampire, operate as synecdoches for vampirism, animality, and – through further metonymical leaps – hypersexuality.

Yet interestingly, Browning's film reverses this gender dynamic, and also instantiates synecdochal links between “deviant” bodies and animalistic sexual perversion.²² While Lucy – like Dracula's “wives” – is merely a brief passing figure in her vampire state, and even Mina's desire for (or attempt to kiss) Jonathan occurs outside of the camera frame, Dracula's animalistic desire is overtly staged in Lucy's and Mina's bedrooms. As previously suggested, his claw-like hands – a sign of his animality – accompany his move to bite (or rape) each of the passive women in their beds. The signifiers of Dracula's hands and gestures, his foreignness (as signified through his clothing and accent), along with the sleeping female in white, encourage the viewer to read these scenes as symbolic rapes of the pure, white female by the sexually aggressive and predatory racial Other. It is worth noting here that Dracula's symbolic rapes are not limited to female characters alone. He is also shown bending down over Renfield

²² I can only speculate as to why these changes were made. Perhaps Browning (or the Hays Code) may have considered that depicting a monstrous white female on screen would be too threatening for viewers. Traditional gender roles are thus maintained, to a certain extent, as the female characters remain visually passive in their vampiric state. Accordingly, sexual aggressivity is displaced (from the novel to the film) onto Dracula's body alone. And, of course, this characterization works to reinforce the link between Dracula's Otherness and the (sexual) threat he poses to racial purity. More on this later.

in the Transylvania part of the film. Critics have noted of the novel that Dracula's repudiation of his wives and his claiming of Jonathan as his own characterize Dracula as a queer figure.²³ The same can be said of the film. In this sense, Dracula's creeping hands and implied fangs operate as synecdoches for diverse associations of sexual deviancy, just as the labia of "Hottentot Venus" did. To be sure, fantasy fiction allowed for a staging of racially Other sexual deviancy that could otherwise only be fantasized in scientific discourse (or as Cuvier states, "something fantastical," and "monstrous").

Animal figures such as King Kong instantiated and reinforced some of the more extreme animalizing rhetoric (such as that of Bruckner Payne and Charles Carroll) in which the racial Other is equated to the animal and accordingly defined as hypersexual. Merian Cooper and Ernest Schoedsack's 1933 film *King Kong* portrays a giant gorilla with human-like characteristics that is, by the same token, racialized and marked as Black. In other words, King Kong does not instantiate scientific discourses that animalized the racial Other, but rather, like Payne's and Carroll's texts inverts this rhetorical strategy by racializing the animal Other. As Carl Denham tells his traveling companions of the legend of Kong, he is "neither beast, nor man" (17:33), a negation that implies he is also both "beast" and "man" through the animal/human binary. The "humanization" of the beast is accomplished by characterizing the monster through stereotypes of the racial Other. Alan Rice notes, for instance, that Kong's "human characteristics" "are mediated through" what he calls "a minstrel symbolic" (191). And while, arguably, there may be nothing inherently sexual about the minstrel grin alone, its contextualization in the film suggests otherwise. Indeed, Kong's "grin" is directed towards the helpless (and wailing) white woman, Ann Darrow, who he later "plays with" by tickling and peeling off her clothing. In addition, as Rice points out, viewers in 1933 would have learned to read "the minstrel stereotype" as bestial in conjunction with the trope of the predatory Black

²³ See, for instance, Malchow's *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (140).

male rapist from D.W. Griffith's 1915 film *Birth of a Nation*. The repetition of the minstrel grin on the face of a giant gorilla marks Kong as Black, as he in turn animalizes the extradiegetical racial Other. Of course, the relationship between the (minstrel) grin, Blackness, and hypersexuality is metonymical; they only bear a relationship to each other through proximity and the repetition of previous signs. Yet the grin is made to function, through these connotations, as a metaphor: the vehicle for the tenor of Black male hypersexuality. In this respect, the two distinct spaces of the film – Skull Island and New York City – along with the Black and white actors that appear within these spaces, work to emphasize the racial binary that is played out through Kong and his pursuit of Ann Darrow.²⁴ Despite the fact that the equation of racial Otherness with animality and hypersexuality operates through the body of a gorilla (rather than through an animalized humanoid figure), the effect is the same in that the film also reinforces these associations. It is by no means coincidental that Kong enacts (or repeats) the same rape-like scenario as Dracula. In a scene that bears many parallels with a passage in Stoker's novel, Kong kidnaps the helpless white Ann Darrow from her bed while her fiancé lies passed out on the floor.²⁵ In other words, Kong's hypersexuality is not framed as a "bestial" quality in order to characterize the animal, but to stigmatize the racial Other as animalistic and accordingly, hypersexual, sexually insatiable, and/or sexually aggressive.²⁶

²⁴ Rice notes that at the time of the film's making and release, New York had a significant African-American population that remains absent from the New York City scenes: "To have shown African-Americans in these scenes would have interpellated them as citizens who experience fear and horror too, thus destroying the binary illusion of white civilization/black savagery the film so carefully constructs" (195).

²⁵ In Stoker's novel, Jonathan lays passed out on the floor while Dracula exchanges blood with his wife Mina on their bed. Evidently, these scenes play into the fear of miscegenation, which will be discussed in further detail in the following chapter.

²⁶ It is also worth noting here that the humanization and racialization of Kong instantiates another trope of the foreign Black, that of cannibalism. Indeed, it is only because Kong is called "part man" and can be read as such that his consumption of humans can be equated with cannibalism. Yet cannibalism is also a means through which Kong is marked as Black. As Rice notes: "His Blackness is also defined ... by acts which define savagery such as cannibalism. Not content with killing those who try to capture him on the island, he consumes many of the native warriors, while later in New York he engages in another rampaging cannibalistic orgy" (193). Rice's choice of the words "cannibalistic orgy" are not merely figurative, considering that cannibalism and sexual depravity may have been metonymically linked through racial Otherness in scientific discourse as well. Note how Caldwell writes of cannibalism, for instance: "Cannibalism appears to belong exclusively to the African and Oceanian negroes, the Hottentots, and the Boschesemen. To these the Caribs may possibly be added. We do not know that the individuals of any other race have ever exhibited the revolting spectacle of

Disease, Contamination, and Degeneration

In the same way that hypersexuality, sexual immorality and/or perversion were metonymically linked to animality, racial Otherness was also shaped by the notion of disease or contamination which was (and has been) contiguously defined through promiscuous sexual activity and/or animalistic sexual desire. Nineteenth-century racial theorists used disease as another means to reinforce essentialist differences between races (or “species”). As James H. Jones notes, “[a]dvocates of racial medicine argued that the differences in natural immunity, degree of susceptibility, and relative severity of reaction to various diseases often separated the races” (17). He continues by stating that, during the pre-abolition era, it was assumed that Blacks suffered less from malaria than whites, hence the “humane rationale” that they could work in rice and cane fields while whites could not (18). Later, “[it] was also assumed that American blacks had a greater immunity to syphilis because of the ‘African’ origin of the disease, leading to the horrors of the Tuskegee syphilis experiment, in which blacks infected with the disease were observed, without any medical intervention, until their deaths” (Gilman, 1987, 100). As Gilman argues in “AIDS and Syphilis: the Iconography of Disease”:

Icons of disease appear to have an existence independent of the reality of any given disease. This “free-floating” iconography of disease attaches itself to various illnesses (real or imagined) in different societies and at different moments in history. Disease is thus restricted to a specific set of images, thereby forming a visual boundary, a limit to the idea (or fear) of disease. (1987, 88)

gorging themselves, of choice, with human flesh. We are convinced that no instance can be adduced, in which the Caucasians have done it. All representations to that effect are fabulous. Nor can we refer to any community of that race in which the promiscuous intercourse of the sexes has been publicly countenanced. We believe that none such has existed. But among Africans, and some of the Oceanian hordes, the case is different. Their intercourse is as loose as that of apes and monkeys” (141). Caldwell slides all too easily from cannibalism to sexual promiscuity within the same paragraph, thereby suggesting that the two concepts are inherently linked. Furthermore, his assertion that cannibalism among Caucasians belongs merely to the realm of fantasy functions to claim the opposite as well. In this sense, while King Kong is a fantastical monster, his “representation” of racial Otherness in conjunction with animality, hypersexuality, and cannibalism may have borne a kind of truth-value in the minds of the early twentieth-century white spectator. Kong’s “intercourse” is “loose” because he is made to stand for both the “ape” and the Black man.

Gilman points out that fear of disease can be “controlled” by “isolating” the concept in relation to a “specific set of images.” As he subsequently demonstrates, these images involve the stylization of certain gendered and racialized bodies. While Gilman’s work focuses on visual representations, nineteenth-century scientific discourse contributed to the repetition of these “images” of a diseased racial Other. In other words, a body marked as racially Other could then function alone as an “image” or a signifier of disease.

While disease was another concept through which racial difference was essentialized, and while disease could be fixed to and “isolated” with the racial Other, fear of the spread of disease was simultaneously played upon to warn against contamination that could occur from interracial intercourse. In this sense, the body of the racial Other could operate both as a carrier of diseases that could not affect whites due to physical differences, and as a sign of potential contamination for whites who might be affected more severely, as Gilman notes of the Tuskegee syphilis experiment. However, what is striking in nineteenth-century scientific (or pseudo-scientific) and medical documents on racial differences is that the diseased white body remains absent. Rather, racial theorists stressed that racial mixing provoked degeneration of the white race (as well as of other races). Of course, this logic continued to allow the “restriction” of disease to the body of the racial Other, while the racially pure white body could maintain its configuration as transcendent. Note for instance the way in which Gobineau refers to the effects of racial mixing on the white race:

Those who are most akin to us come nearest to beauty; such are the degenerate Aryan stocks of India and Persia, and the Semitic peoples who are least *infected* by contact with the black race. As these races recede from the white type, their features and limbs become *incorrect in form*; they acquire *defects of proportion* which, in the races that are completely foreign to us, end by producing an extreme ugliness. (emphasis added, 1853, 151)

What Gobineau implies here is not only that the white race is perfect while the Black race is not, but also that the latter is “infected” and capable of “infecting” the white race’s perfection. Degeneration will be discussed in more detail shortly. What is important to highlight here is

that interracial sex, and more specifically, the so-called hypersexuality of the racial Other, were wielded as tools to frame the racial Other as diseased and as a threat to racial purity that would cause degeneration for the white race.

Indeed, while Gobineau seems to suggest that mere proximity between races was enough to provoke racial mixing, other racial theorists consistently blamed the “licentiousness” of the racial Other for interracial sex. For instance, in the 1868 monograph, “The Adamic Race. Reply to ‘Ariel,’ Drs. Young and Blackie, on the Negro,” the anonymous author “M.S.” states:

All physiologists and physicians are acquainted with the fact that unbridled, licentious, and indiscriminate sexual intercourse between the Caucasian or Adamic species, produces the common disease known through all ages as gonorrhoea—a disease which is not fatal; but the same indiscriminate intercourse between the white and negro, or Indian, is known to generate *syphilis*, one of the most loathsome and destructive diseases known to man, and which is said to have carried off millions of Indians within half a century after the discovery of America by Columbus, and over *one million* negroes by the army in our last civil war. The number of negresses who perished from their unbridled licentiousness was frightful.

This is certainly another very characteristic difference between the negro, Indian and white, and *stamps* them as *different species*. (25)

Even though M.S. appears to argue that interracial sex produces gonorrhea and syphilis, and thereby, does not characterize the racial Other as initially diseased (nor is the white race configured as the initial carrier), “their unbridled licentiousness” (particularly that of Black women in parallel with the way in which Hottentot women were characterized) is the cause of their death.²⁷ Licentiousness seems to be so inherently linked to these diseases that it is not entirely clear whether the “very characteristic difference” in the second paragraph – which “stamps” the “negro, Indian, and white” “as different species” – refers to disease or to

²⁷ It is worth noting here that gender and its conjunction with racial difference was also a factor in determining a race’s susceptibility to a disease. In this respect, the feminized “Chinese race” was framed as less likely to suffer from syphilis. Chester North Frazier and Li Hung-Chiung write in their 1948 *Racial Variations in Immunity to Syphilis: A Study of the Disease in the Chinese, White, and Negro Races*: “There is ample evidence in the three races that syphilis in the female was a substantially less serious disease than it was in the male. Inasmuch as the disease in the Chinese people, whether male or female, approached in severity the disease characterizing the general female pattern, it is reasonable to assume that some inherent factor of race was responsible for this difference. In the Chinese there are certain qualities of bodily form and mental aptitude which indicate a strong feminine component in the bisexual amalgam of this race” (95).

“licentiousness.” This logic continued well into the twentieth century. Dr. D’Orsay Hecht writes in his 1903 essay, “Tabes in the Negro”:

Diseases incident to the state of slavery are disappearing, and tuberculosis, syphilis, and cancer are deep-rooted in the colored people. Old immunities are lost. Admixture with white blood has weakened the race. In the presence of new blood has come the tendency to acquire new diseases; the amalgamation is responsible for much that is radically new in the pathological field. (708)

He adds later:

Conspicuous as is the part played by venereal diseases in the life of the negro, syphilis, so very much more prevalent among the colored, is on the increase, and facts supplied from various authentic sources go to prove that the negro has acquired this infection since the period of slavery through an ever-increasing low standard of sexual morality. (719)

While he hints at the degeneration of the Black race due to “admixture” and “amalgamation” with the white race, Hecht remains focused on the diseased body of the racial Other, and then specifically on “venereal diseases,” due to the “increasing low standard of sexual morality” (which could not be “controlled” by whites after the abolition of slavery). His vague reference to “facts supplied from various authentic sources” is apparently sufficient to ground the metonymical link he makes between sexual depravity and disease in conjunction with Blackness.

Hecht’s mention of a fundamental difference between Black versus white blood echoes previous medical documentation, reinforcing the ideology that distinct races were anatomically different and that their “hybridity” would lead to disease and/or degeneration. Moreover, skin color not only functioned as a signifier for one’s interior in the sense that Judith Butler describes (the soul, the mind, and the behaviors that were metonymically derived from these notions), but also as a signifier for one’s anatomical interior which was imagined as having visible differences according to skin color. As such, the pinpointing of (distinct) types of blood as a potentially visible sign of their supposed difference could not only ground the concept of disease (at a time when bacteria and viruses were not yet visible, or were just being discovered,

with a microscope), but it could also function as a signified, as proof that the body's interior corresponded to the body's exterior. In this way, somatic signifiers functioned as a means to interpret the body beneath its surface. In his 1851 "Report on the Diseases and Physical Peculiarities of the Negro Race," Samuel Cartwright writes:

[I]t is not only in the skin, that a difference of color exists between the negro and white man, but in the membranes, the muscles, and tendons and in all the fluids and secretions. Even the negro's brain and nerves, the chyle and all the humors, are tintured with a shade of the pervading darkness. His bile is of a deeper color and *his blood is blacker than the white man's*. There is the same difference in the flesh of the white and black man, in regard to color, that exists between the flesh of the rabbit and the hare. His bones are whiter and harder than those of the white race, owing to their containing more phosphate of lime and less gelatin. (emphasis added, 305-6)²⁸

Evidently, while Cartwright and other racial theorists did not go so far as to suggest that the blood of whites was actually white, the color connotations of deeming blood to be either "black" or "white" could thereby work as metaphors for white blood as pure and Black blood as dirty and polluted, and thus polluting. Nadine Ehlers highlights this figurative function of blood:

[A]n individual was said to possess either black or white blood; white blood, however, could only be claimed if it was undiluted. For white blood was conceptualized as that which carried the identity, integrity, and currency of whiteness. In the words of the influential twentieth-century American eugenicist Lothrop Stoddard, the white subject was seen to have "clean, virile, genius-bearing blood, streaming down the ages through the unerring action of heredity, which, in anything like a favorable environment will multiply itself, solve our problems, and sweep us on to higher and nobler destinies." In opposition, the discourse of blood, as influenced by the discourse of color, rendered "black blood" as that which denoted negative meaning; it functioned in terms of signification as pollutant, contaminant, contagion, and stain. (30)

As Ehlers suggests, "the discourse of blood" alone was enough to frame the racial Other as diseased and contaminated. Furthermore, the metaphors of interior and exterior to which Butler

²⁸ Samuel Cartwright is now famous for having invented diseases that were specific to Blacks and their relationship to slavery. He named one disease "Drapetomania, or the disease causing slaves to run away" (319) and another "Dysaesthesia Aethiopis, or Hebetude of Mind and Obtuse Sensibility of Body – a disease peculiar to negroes – called by overseers, 'Rascality,'" (321) the treatment of which involved whipping: "The complaint is easily curable, if treated on sound physiological principles...The best means to stimulate the skin is, first, to have the patient well washed with warm water and soap; then, to anoint it all over with oil, and to *slap the oil in with a broad leather strap*; then to put the patient to some hard kind of work in the open air and sunshine, that will compel him to expand his lungs, as chopping wood, splitting rails or sawing with the crosscut or whip saw" (emphasis added, 323).

refers were not deemed to be figurative, precisely because one could cling to the “reality” of blood. Indeed, the notion of “black blood” and/or of “bad blood” had very real consequences, as we shall see below with eugenics and in the following chapter with the “One Drop Rule,” as it pertained to legal discourses.

In Stoker’s *Dracula* this “discourse of blood” is instantiated in several ways, and it bears links to the notions of disease and contamination, as well as to degeneration. On a literal level within the narrative, blood is taken and given by Dracula, it is transfused from the “Crew of Light” to Lucy, and it is seen around the mouths of vampires.²⁹ It thus functions as one of the most (if not the most) important narrative elements driving the plot and characterizing vampires in opposition to the white English characters. For instance, when telling Jonathan of his heritage, Dracula refers to his blood: ““We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship,”” adding later that ““we of the Dracula blood were amongst their leaders”” (24-5). While Dracula’s discourse refers to blood in the sense of a bloodline, it also introduces the metonymical link that blood bears to race. It is in this sense that Arthur’s blood is deemed the best to transfuse to Lucy. As the future Lord Goldaming, an English aristocrat, ““[Arthur] is so young and strong and of blood so pure that [Van Helsing and Dr. Seward] need not defibrinate it”” (106). Arthur’s “pure blood” is thus quite literal, and not to be taken to refer figuratively to his racial and social standing. Dracula’s blood, on the other hand, “poisons” and “infects” Lucy and Mina. He tells Mina that she is now ““blood of [his] blood”” (247). For Mina, this means that she is ““unclean”” (244), that there is ““a poison in [her] blood”” (283) and, as Van Helsing tells her, “[Dracula has] infect [her]” (274). Dracula’s blood is thus “polluted” and “polluting,” and his means of turning Lucy and Mina into vampires operates as a metaphor for the spreading of

²⁹ The “Crew of Light” is Christopher Craft’s term for the small group of vampire hunters.

disease, as is implied by the demise of Lucy alone (despite the help of Arthur's "pure blood" and the blood of the other male vampire hunters).

Moreover, it is difficult to unhinge the sexual connotations that accompany Dracula's blood transmissions. For one thing, they occur at night when his victims are often in bed and in their (white) nightgowns. The result of this blood-sharing is, of course, the degeneration of the white (female) English body, mirroring racial theorists' discourse on degeneration through miscegenation.³⁰ Jonathan hints at the metonymical link between hypersexual desire, blood mixing, and degeneration by predicting what Dracula's migration to London will bring: "This was the being I was helping to transfer to London, where, perhaps, for centuries to come he might, amongst its teeming millions, *satiate his lust for blood*, and *create a new and ever-widening circle of semi-demons* to batten on the helpless" (emphasis added, 44). To this monstrous characterization can be added the ways in which the vampire is animalized through blood, of which some examples have been cited above. In another example, Jonathan finds Dracula asleep in his coffin and notes: "It seemed as if the whole awful creature were simply gorged with blood. He lay like a filthy leech, exhausted with his repletion" (43-4). Again, the repetition of an animal simile here is telling, even more so as the comparison involves a "filthy" parasitic creature, which strongly opposes the animal simile that Dracula had previously used to align his race with that of the lion. More than this, the figurative sense of the animal simile is conditioned by the simile that precedes it. Dracula is in fact "gorged with blood," which thereby lends a literal interpretation to Jonathan's use of simile. Evidently, Dracula's animality, hypersexuality, and "bad blood" are all characteristics of the "degenerate."

As Jean Paul Riquelme writes, "Stoker has his vampire hunters, especially Van Helsing, talk about the vampire in ways that identify this outsider from the East who takes animal forms

³⁰ Miscegenation and an analysis of its instantiation in Stoker's novel will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

as an example of the criminal and of degeneration” (403). While it can be argued that *Dracula* mostly instantiates the racial discourses cited above, Stoker’s novel quite clearly repeats discourses on degeneration, using them to characterize Dracula. As Jack Halberstam points out, “[d]egeneration and Jewishness...were not far apart” in nineteenth-century science, and “Stoker draws upon the relation between degeneration and physiognomy as theorized by Cesare Lombroso and Max Nordau for his portrayal of Dracula” (93). Van Helsing explains to the “crew of light” how Dracula’s mind works: “[T]his criminal of ours is predestinate to crime also. He, too, have child brain, and it is of the child to do what he have done. The little bird, the little fish, the little animal learn not by principle, but empirically” (Stoker 293). Van Helsing’s words provoke Mina to declare that “[t]he Count is a criminal and of criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him, and qua criminal he is of an imperfectly formed mind” (*idem*). Not only is Dracula animalized and infantilized in this instance (the latter operation was also heavily present in scientific discourse on the racial Other), but also, Mina’s citing of Nordau and Lombroso calls forth the connotations that criminals, “being nothing but a subdivision of degenerates” (Nordau 409), had in the minds of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Anglo-Saxon readers.³¹ Studying the skull of the “famous Brigand Vilella,” Lombroso writes:

At the sight of that skull, I seemed to see all of a sudden, lighted up as a vast plain under a flaming sky, the problem of the nature of the criminal – an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals. Thus were explained anatomically the enormous jaws, high cheek-bones, prominent superciliary arches, solitary lines in the palms, extreme size of the orbits, handle-shaped or sessile ears found in criminals, savages, and apes, insensibility to pain, extremely acute sight, tattooing, excessive idleness, love of orgies, and the irresistible craving for evil for its own sake, the desire not only to extinguish life in the victim, but to mutilate the corpse, tear its flesh, and drink its blood.

I was further encouraged in this bold hypothesis by the results of my studies on Verzeni, a criminal convicted of sadism and rape, who showed the cannibalistic instincts of primitive anthropophagists and the ferocity of beasts of prey. (404)

³¹ Jack Halberstam notes that “[s]ince Mina the provincial school teacher mentions Lombroso and Nordau, we may conclude that their ideas of criminality and degeneracy were familiar to an educated readership and not merely a small medical community” (93).

In this description, it is easy to see many parallels with Dracula. Ignoring the list of physical characteristics, (which again, appear as mere somatic signifiers for the list of behavioral traits that make up the second half of Lombroso's extremely long sentence), the criminal is deemed to have certain "superhuman abilities" (Riquelme 403) in addition to hypersexual desire and cannibalistic tendencies. Lombroso further highlights the fact that these "criminal" traits are degenerative, since they are "the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals." In a sense, Dracula's characterization is summed up through this reference to Nordau and Lombroso. Stoker seems to have even suggested this by placing this exchange between Van Helsing and Mina at the end of the narrative, right before the vampire hunters kill Dracula. It is as if it is only once they fully understand the vampire that they are able to defeat him. Indeed, Dracula continually outsmarts the male characters and succeeds in preying on Lucy and Mina when in London. Even as he flees the hunters to Transylvania, he manages to lead them astray. Van Helsing and Mina's conversation thus marks a turning point in which the identification of Dracula as a degenerate criminal – beyond the label of "vampire" provided by the professor earlier in the narrative – helps the vampire hunters to best him, in both a literal and a figurative sense.

Even though Nordau and Lombroso do not refer specifically to race in the examples cited above, racial difference, racial mixing, and racial purity were viewed as inherently linked to the notion of degeneration. Gobineau, for instance, defines degeneration as a degradation of a group's original or initial "blood," "from the racial point of view":

The word *degenerate*, when applied to a people, means (as it ought to mean) that the people has no longer the same intrinsic value as it had before, because it has no longer the same blood in its veins, continual adulterations having gradually affected the quality of that blood. In other words, though the nation bears the name given by its founders, the name no longer connotes the same race; in fact, the man of a decadent time, the *degenerate* man properly so called, is a different being, from the racial point of view, from the heroes of the great ages ... The heterogeneous elements that henceforth prevail in him give him quite a different nationality—a very original one, no doubt, but such originality is not to be envied ... He, and his civilization with him, will certainly die on the day when the primordial race-unit is so broken up and swamped

by the influx of foreign elements, that its effective qualities have no longer a sufficient freedom of action ...

If I manage to prove this proposition, I shall have given meaning to the word “degeneration.” (1853, 26)

Gobineau thus fuses nation with body, with the figure of the body of man functioning as a metaphor for the “health” of the nation. Gobineau saw the idea of a strong nation as necessarily equated with one pure, homogenous race, where the “quality of that blood” remains unaffected by mixing with “foreign elements.” Here is the ideological groundwork from which would later arise the eugenics movement and its influence on immigration legislation. For now, it is important to highlight the extent to which “foreign elements” were characterized as a contamination of the body of the (white) nation that could produce not only the “degenerate man,” but also the degeneration of the nation.

The discourse of degeneration was repeated in Stoker’s novel, and also instantiated in horror films of the 1930’s to 1950’s, particularly in werewolf narratives. In Stuart Walker’s 1935 *Werewolf of London*, George Waggner’s 1941 *The Wolf Man*, and Jack Arnold’s 1958 *Monster on the Campus*, the heroes (“of the great ages”) are infected by “foreign elements,” causing their metamorphosis into the “degenerate” forms of predatory animals. In Walker’s film, Wilfred Glendon is a wealthy English botanist who is bitten by a werewolf while on an expedition in Tibet. In Wagner’s *The Wolf Man*, Larry Talbot is a Welsh aristocratic heir who is bitten by a werewolf (played by Bela Lugosi – as if to draw from the connotations of monstrosity and foreignness that the actor held) when he ventures into a gypsy camp. Like Stoker’s *Dracula*, foreign Otherness is both literal, in that each werewolf who “contaminates” the main character is foreign to England, and figurative, in that the body of the werewolf operates as a metaphor, a vehicle for the tenor of contaminating foreignness. Yet, the “horror” of these films lies not with the initial foreign werewolf attacks, but with the “degenerative” effect of contamination on the body of the noble and intellectual white Anglo-Saxon man. In one sense, these characters are “hybrid” beings – both man and wolf, both British and foreign.

But the overall effect of their contamination is that their rational human side is overtaken by the “primitive,” “savage,” and animalistic instincts of the wolf. Each werewolf nearly murders the woman he loves, but is ultimately killed (in wolf form) by a human hero. This plotline is repeated in Arnold’s film, but it is displaced to an American college campus, where the contaminating “foreign element” functions more clearly as a metaphor for Blackness. For Patrick Gonder, the film “must be read in the context of *Brown vs. the Board of Education*, the film having been released only a few years after that landmark decision” (n. pag.).³² He continues:

[T]he monster on campus is the demonized black male student, threatening to contaminate the purity of white women and cause the reversal of white evolutionary potential. The Caveman is imaged as a racist caricature of the African American: bestial, violent and corrosive to the tenets of lawful, white society. (n. pag.)

The opposition between Blackness as primitive and savage, and whiteness as civilized and educated, is played out through the body of the evolutionary science professor, Dr. Blake, who becomes “contaminated” by a pre-historic fish from Madagascar. A close-up accompanied by a repetitive ominous musical note mark the introduction of the “dangerous” dark fish on screen and is repeated when Blake plunges his bleeding hand (cut on one of the fish’s teeth) into the fish’s dark and murky water. Thus, even though the fish remains immobile (unlike the predators in Walker’s and Waggner’s films), its threat to the white male body of the professor is signified through a symbolic bite and color-coding. In addition to these references to infectious “primitivism,” as well as to the beast-like body of the professor, police investigations and journalistic accounts (along with Blake’s own dialogue regarding evolution) continue to draw from degenerative discourse. A handprint left by the “beast” is described by a detective as “deformed,” while a photo of the monster’s footprints on the newspaper’s front page is accompanied with the words: “beast,” “subhuman,” and “primitive.” Following Gonder’s

³² These kinds of legal discourses will be discussed in the following chapter.

argument, Arnold's film uses the prehistoric African fish and the "degenerative" effects it has on the body of the white male professor as metaphors for the "threat" that Blackness posed to white superiority and the body of the nation.

Eugenics

The nineteenth-century discourse of degeneration, and the concepts of animality, hypersexuality, and disease – to which it was metonymically linked – led to another discourse, that of eugenics, which made whiteness an increasingly restrictive category. For Gregory Michael Dorr, eugenics is also a metaphor: "To promote their views, eugenicists developed and deployed a specific rhetorical construction, the 'eugenic metaphor.' The eugenic metaphor melded elements of political, economic, scientific, medical, and popular discourse" (12).³³ However, the figurative functions and rhetorical strategies of the language used to construct eugenics were also taken to be literal, factual, and scientific. The British scientist Francis Galton coined the term in 1883, in his monograph *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development*. Here, he defines the term in a footnote as "[t]hat is, with questions bearing on what is termed in Greek, *eugenes*, namely, good in stock, hereditarily endowed with noble qualities" (17). He continues:

This, and the allied words, *eugeneia*, etc., are equally applicable to men, brutes, and plants. We greatly want a brief word to express the science of improving stock, which is by no means confined to questions of judicious mating, but which, especially in the case of man, takes cognisance of all influences that tend in however remote a degree to give to the more suitable races or strains of blood a better chance of prevailing speedily over the less suitable than they otherwise would have had. The word *eugenics* would sufficiently express the idea; it is at least a neater word and a more generalised one than *viriculture*, which I once ventured to use. (*idem*)

In much the same way that "hybridity" was adopted from the realm of botany to stand for racial mixing, Galton takes the "science of improving stock," of breeding animals and plants, and

³³ Of course, like other discourses in scientific racism, eugenics involves relationships of metonymy and simile as well as metaphor. But Dorr's use of the term metaphor here is quite suitable since it reflects the ways in which eugenics discourse reinforced the racial binary.

applies it to “man.” Elof Carlson notes that this kind of language continued with American eugenicists:

Many eugenicists had some type of agricultural background. Charles Davenport and Harry Laughlin, who together ran the Eugenics Record Office, were introduced through their shared interest in chicken breeding. Both also were active in Eugenics Section of the American Breeder’s Association (ABA). Davenport’s book, *Eugenics: The Science of Human Improvement through Better Breeding*, had a distinct agricultural flavor, and his affiliation with the ABA was included under his name on the title page. Agricultural genetics also provided the favored model for negative eugenics: human populations, like agricultural breeds and varieties, had to be culled of their least productive members, with only the healthiest specimens used for breeding. (n. pag.)³⁴

The metonymical leap from agriculture and the science of breeding chickens to the “breeding” of human populations was substantial. In a sense, it is counterintuitive to what racial anthropologists had worked hard to claim in the nineteenth-century: that the white man is far removed from the animal. Yet the same husbandry framework could characterize them as the “healthiest specimens for breeding.” In another sense, eugenics reinforced earlier scientific racist discourses – if the racial Other is closer to the animal and to nature, then their “breeding” should be controlled in the same way.

Indeed, while Galton stresses that eugenics does not refer to “judicious mating” alone, this is precisely what he focuses on and what becomes the focus of the eugenics movement in the U.S. As Galton adds later: “The indications of superior breed are partly personal, partly ancestral ... It is the ancestral part that is neglected, and which we have yet to recognise at its just value” (211). He argues:

Whenever a low race is preserved under conditions of life that exact a high level of efficiency, it must be subjected to rigorous selection. The few best specimens of that race can alone be allowed to become parents, and not many of their descendants can be allowed to live. On the other hand, if a higher race be substituted for the low one, all this terrible misery disappears. The most merciful form of what I ventured to call “eugenics” would consist in watching for the indications of superior strains of races,

³⁴ According to Carlson, Galton employs “positive eugenics,” or “watching for the indications of superior strains of races” (n. pag.). These “views were absorbed by degeneracy theorists who embraced negative eugenics as their favored model” (n. pag.), that is watching for the indications of inferior strains of races and restricting who can then “be allowed to become parents” (Galton 199).

and in so favouring them that their progeny shall outnumber and gradually replace that of the old one. (199-200)

Galton later admits that “high” versus “low” in defining which race should be “preserved” and which should be “replaced” is rather vague, by stating that he aims at “ascertain[ing]” what are “the signs of membership of a superior race” (211). Even though scientific racial theories had already provided several lists of traits that comprised the so-called “high” versus “low” races, these were altered and extended, making the condition for belonging to the “superior” race increasingly restricted.

Eugenics thus borrowed heavily from “familiar language” in its “meld[ing]” of the “eugenic metaphor.” Eugenicists drew upon “elements of political, economic, scientific, medical, and popular discourse” in the “rhetorical construction” of “the ‘eugenic metaphor.’” Dorr’s argument illustrates the ways in which the rhetoric of scientific racism involved relationships of similitude (or simile) and contingency (or metonymy), but was made to function as metaphor through the “‘body politic’” and its dichotomy of inner versus outer:

If society was indeed analogous to a living organism (the “body politic”), then the next logical step was to construe social problems as equivalent to physical illnesses ...

Using the familiar language of genealogy, breeding, and illness/health, the eugenic metaphor facilitated the redefinition of citizenship—who was and who was not “fit” to be a full member of the polity. In the process, eugenicists created an imagined community—the “American race”—and sought to substantiate its existence by an appeal to biology. (12-13)

Stemming from Gobineau’s ideas of the nation as equivalent to the purity of racial identity, the eugenic metaphor became a new linguistic means of restricting the definition of the white American citizen in opposition to those that did not “belong.” The metaphor gave new credence to the discourse of blood:

Americans, particularly those in Virginia, maintained a deep fascination with issues of genealogy, kinship, and “bloodlines.” To be of “good blood” meant approximately the same thing as being “eugenic”—both individuals were considered “well born.” Similarly, to be of “bad blood,” or to possess a mixture of “good” and “bad” blood, relegated one to a lower, subhuman level similar to what eugenicists termed “dysgenic” or “cacogenic.” This ancient notion of “blood” as the vehicle for heredity

demystified genetic science even as it obscured the complexity of genetic operation.
(*idem*)

Rather than referring to blood as an indication of racial identity, eugenics appeared to provide a more solid scientific foundation for restricting the definition of whiteness, which could then justify the legal definition of Blackness according to the One Drop Rule, where “‘one drop’ of black ‘blood’ caused a genetic reversion from whiteness to blackness” (31). In addition to heredity, eugenicists conducted tests for “feeble-mindedness” which were used to confirm metonymical links to other concepts that had traditionally defined racial Otherness:

The definition of the feeble-minded shifted during the early twentieth century, but by the 1920s the concept of feeble-mindedness exhibited consistent race, class, and gender biases. The results of the Army Alpha and Beta intelligence tests purported to reveal a rising tide of mental defect ... The tests depicted African-Americans—the favored southern labor pool, and roughly one-quarter of Virginia’s population—as predominantly feeble-minded. The tests compounded stereotypes about black hypersexuality, criminality, and disease, stigmatizing blacks as Virginia’s most dysgenic population. (Dorr, 110)

While Dorr’s work focuses on the impact of eugenics in the state of Virginia, his argument reflects the ways in which a positive test result for “feeble-mindedness” worked to equate the notion with other indications of “bad” or “Black” blood: “hypersexuality, criminality, and disease.”

At the same time that the eugenics movement took hold in the U.S., early twentieth-century American racial theorists began to examine European “stocks” more closely, looking for models of white racial purity versus degeneration in order to prevent the so-called “Melting Pot” of the American nation.³⁵ No longer content with the umbrella label of “Caucasian,”

³⁵ The “Melting Pot” metaphor comes from a 1908 play of the same name, by Israel Zangwill. David A. Hollinger reports that “melting pot” refers to the “mixing of white Americans with each other,” which “gained currency at the start of twentieth century in relation to massive immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe” (1366). It is thus not to be confused with the term or the notion of miscegenation. “As the new word—miscegenation—became associated with black-white mixing, a preoccupation of the years after the Civil War, the residual European immigrant aspect of the question came to be more than ever a thing apart, discussed all the more easily without any reference to the African-American aspect of the question. This separation of mixture talk into two discourses facilitated, and was in turn reinforced by, the process Matthew Frye Jacobson has detailed whereby European immigrant groups became less ambiguously white by becoming more and more definitely ‘not black.’” (1367)

Madison Grant and Lothrop Stoddard, for instance, claimed that there were three “European stocks”: “Nordic, Alpine, and Mediterranean” (Stoddard 8).³⁶ In his 1917 monograph, *The Passing of the Great Race, or the Racial Basis of European History*, Madison Grant uses the somatic signifiers of eye, hair, and skin color to define the Nordic race as the white racial ideal:

Eye color is of very great importance in race determination, because all blue, gray, or green eyes in the world today came originally from the same source, namely, the Nordic race of northern Europe. This light colored eye has appeared nowhere else on earth, and is a specialization of this subspecies of man only, and is consequently one of extreme value in the classification of European races ... Blond hair also comes everywhere from the Nordic species, and from nowhere else ... The color of the skin is a character of importance, but one that is exceedingly hard to measure as the range of variation in Europe between skins of extreme fairness and those that are exceedingly swarthy, is almost complete. In general the Nordic race in its purity has an absolutely fair skin, and is consequently the *Homo albus*, the white man par excellence. (21-3)

In Grant’s definition, whiteness is to be interpreted as literally as possible, so only those with “light colored eye[s],” “blond hair,” and “extreme fairness” of skin can be deemed “the white man par excellence.” It is significant that Grant does not bother with Stoddard’s terminology of the “stock.” For Grant, the Nordic group is not a separate “branch” of the “Caucasian” race, but a separate “race” or “species” altogether. In contrast, the “lowest” of the European “stocks” or “races” is characterized as impure. Writing of the Mediterranean “stock,” Stoddard states:

Unfortunately, some branches of the stock are racially impaired and impoverished today, both by a breeding out of the most intelligent strains and by the admixture of vast numbers of nondescript, inferior Asiatic and African elements. This is clearly the case with the populations of Southern Italy and Portugal. Matters are even worse in parts of the Near East, inhabited in ancient times by Mediterranean stocks who built up brilliant civilizations, but today inhabited by mongrel populations of a very poor quality. (12)

European immigrants to the U.S. were thereby categorized in terms of “value”: for what they could contribute to American racial identity as “truly” white or not. Accordingly, Grant warns his readers of the negative effects of unrestrained European immigration:

³⁶ Grant and Stoddard were members of a group called the “Galton Society,” along with Davenport. “Reflecting its namesake’s interests, the Society was concerned with presumed human racial differences and policies of differential breeding ... [T]he Galton Society brought together scientific and philanthropic leaders to popularize eugenics through a newsletter, the *Eugenical News*” (Selden, n. pag.).

We Americans must realize that the altruistic ideals which have controlled our social development during the past century, and the maudlin sentimentalism that has made America “an asylum for the oppressed,” are sweeping the nation toward a racial abyss. If the Melting Pot is allowed to boil without control, and we continue to follow our national motto and deliberately blind ourselves to all “distinctions of race, creed, or color,” the type of native American of Colonial descent will become as extinct as the Athenian of the age of Pericles, and the Viking of the days of Rollo. (227-8)

By marking the Mediterranean “stock” as racially Other to the “the type of native American of Colonial descent,” Grant thus equates the melting pot metaphor with degeneration. Likewise, Stoddard refers to the value of immigrants by extending the metaphor:

The melting-pot is a fact, but in general its virtues are not inherent. If the constituents are not assimilable, then evil more often than good results. There is a great deal of dross and poor alloy which normally comes out of all racial melting-pots, as well as occasional good stuff. In the control of the racial melting-pot in the United States, the country must see to it that, by the selection of materials and the direction of processes, we produce not too much “dross and pot-metal,” but mostly “stainless steel.” (17-18)

Of course, Stoddard’s figurative references to types of metal are not unconscious. Nor is their color-coding and the term “*stainless steel*.” But these metaphors work to position their tenors as literal references. After all, Stoddard argues, the “melting-pot” is not figurative, it “is a fact”; and the aim of eugenics was to ensure that this “fact” “produce[d]” a ““stainless”” white population.

Eugenicist concern with the uncontrolled “boiling” of the melting pot, miscegenation, and reproduction of the “feeble-minded,” had an important impact on legal discourse and legislation. One of the most significant effects of eugenics discourse was the Supreme Court’s authorization of the sterilization of people diagnosed as “feeble minded,” as in the infamous 1927 case *Buck v. Bell*. Justice Holmes delivered the court’s opinion and, not surprisingly, his language repeats eugenicist rhetoric.

Carrie Buck is a feeble minded white woman who was committed to the State Colony above mentioned in due form. She is the daughter of a feeble minded mother in the same institution, and the mother of an illegitimate feeble minded child. She was eighteen years old at the time of the trial of her case in the Circuit Court, in the latter part of 1924. An Act of Virginia, approved March 20, 1924, recites that the health of the patient and the welfare of society may be promoted in certain cases by the sterilization of mental defectives, under careful safeguard, &c.; that the sterilization

may be effected in males by vasectomy and in females by salpingectomy, without serious pain or substantial danger to life; that the Commonwealth is supporting in various institutions many defective persons who, if now discharged, would become a menace, but, if incapable of procreating, might be discharged with safety and become self-supporting with benefit to themselves and to society, and that experience has shown that heredity plays an important part in the transmission of insanity, imbecility, &c. (205-6)

Following eugenicist logic, Holmes and his fellow justices presume that “feeble-mindedness” is hereditary – Buck was the daughter of a “feeble minded mother” as well as the “mother of an illegitimate feeble minded child,” and, as he concludes, “heredity plays an important part in the transmission of insanity, imbecility, etc.” Buck’s sterilization was granted for the “welfare of society.” The “menace” that Buck would pose to society if she were “discharged” without sterilization is thus to be read not in terms of physical harm, but the “menace” of “procreat[ion]” of other “mental defectives.” In the same year that the Act of Virginia approved the sterilization of “mental defectives,” the state also required its constituents to register their “racial composition” with the State Registrar of Vital Statistics. Restricting the definition of whiteness to those with “no trace whatsoever of any blood other than Caucasian” or “one-sixteenth or less of the blood of the American Indian and have no other non-Caucasic blood” (“Virginia Health Bulletin,” n. pag.), the state thereby enacted the One Drop Rule, wherein one drop of any “racial blood” aside from American Indian categorized that person as non-white. The same act prohibited marriage between a white and a non-white. I will return to the One Drop Rule in my discussion of miscegenation in the next chapter. Here, it is important to note that the symbol of one drop of blood was taken to be literal and had very real consequences for those who were then identified and registered as racially Other.

As this chapter has shown, scientific (or pseudo-scientific) discourses of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries used rhetoric and figurative language to construct race and racial categories. While race was believed to be a literal reality, an ontology grounded in the body’s

interior and exterior, the need to resort to the figurative in “describing” (while, in fact, constructing) the racialized body demonstrates the ways in which racial differences were (and have been) based on fantasy. At the same time, the repetition and/or instantiation of the rhetorical strategies – which equated supposed racially-Other signifiers with concepts such as animality, sexual deviancy, disease, and degeneration – in the making of monstrous creatures in fantasy fiction mirrors the ways in which the racial Other is both a fantasy and is fantasized as “monstrous” or less than “human.” Of course, scientific racist fantasies had very real consequences, in large part through their influence on legal discourses and legislation.

Three

Racial Signs in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-century Fantasy Fiction and Legal Discourses

This chapter continues to examine the signs and concepts in scientific discourse, those that judges, lawmakers, and politicians frequently called on as a basis for case rulings and legislation. In conjunction with scientific discourse and fantasy narratives, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century legal discourse was an integral piece of the network of racial discourses. Beyond repeating and continuing the circulation of fantastical racial signs, (political and) legal discourse implemented additional concepts which reinforced racial categorization and the division between racial and/or ethnic Otherness and whiteness (an increasingly exclusive category). Through legal discourse, the white male body was made to function as a synecdoche for the American nation as a whole. Like scientific discourse, anti-immigration, anti-miscegenation, and anti-passing discourses equated the white male body to the “human,” but they also circumscribed American identity, stigmatizing as less-than-human, and even “monstrous” individuals who did not correspond to the body politic. Fantasy

narratives of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century instantiated these discourses, thematizing anti-immigration, anti-miscegenation, and anti-passing ideology through monstrous characters who threaten to “pollute” the white racial purity of the national body. In this chapter, I analyze the language of anti-immigration, anti-miscegenation, and anti-passing in political discourse, legal documents, and court cases, followed by an analysis of the ways in which early fantasy narratives (such as Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* and Tod Browning’s film, Victor Halperin’s 1932 film *White Zombie*, and Charles Brabin’s 1932 film *The Mask of Fu Manchu*) contributed to the construction of racial Otherness as monstrous through the instantiation of these discourses. Just as legal discourse performs racial Otherness in contrast to white American identity, the monstrous characters of these texts perform racial Otherness through the language and narratives of (anti-)immigration, (anti-)miscegenation, and (anti-)passing.

Fantasy narratives of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century participated in the performance of race and racial difference by instantiating anti-immigration, anti-miscegenation, and anti-passing ideology through their “monstrous” characters who/which were made to perform these discourses. The previous chapter focused on the figurative language and rhetoric that constructed race in scientific discourse and was then instantiated in fantasy narratives, largely through characterization. In this chapter, I also analyze (figurative) language and rhetoric in legal discourse, but the ways in which legal discourse was instantiated in fantasy narratives is slightly different. An analysis of narratological elements reveals the performance of racializing legal discourses. Characterization remains key since anti-immigration, anti-miscegenation, and segregation policies relied on the stigmatization of the racial Other as animalistic, diseased, and sexually deviant. Because immigration and passing, as well as miscegenation, involve the ways in which race was (and has been) shaped by spatial distinctions, narrative space, and in particular oppositional spaces, show the contingency of the

national body on strictly defined borders and the fear of their permeability. The use of narrative perspective in early fantasy narratives is essential to the instantiation of passing since the narrator, the focalizer, and/or the inscribed reader must identify the “monstrous” Other who attempts to pass. And as the plot of these fantasy texts asserts, these “monstrous” foreign, miscegenating/miscegenated, and/or passing Others must be “punished” for the threat they pose to the national body, which is often represented metonymically through the white female body.

Given the relationship between scientific and legal discourses, it is not surprising that the latter includes figurative language in its conceptualization of racial Otherness. For instance, animalizing similes and metaphors, as well as tropes of the diseased and/or sexually deviant, are repeated in legal discourse. As some of the examples below illustrate, the racial Other is often characterized as a horrific, “monstrous” threat to the American body politic. In such cases as these, the dividing line between the two supposedly distinct ontologies of fantasy fiction and legal discourse is revealed as illusory. As discussed in Chapter One, Paul de Man’s analysis of Rousseau’s metaphoric “giant” highlights the role that fear plays in turning fiction into fact: “By calling [man] a ‘giant,’ one freezes hypothesis, or fiction, into fact and makes fear, itself a figural state of suspended meaning, into a definite, proper meaning devoid of alternatives” (1979, 151). In anti-immigration discourse for example, Madison Grant’s 1917 *The Passing of the Great Race* warns of the dangers that non-white immigrants, or “ethnic horrors,” represent to the white race (81). Fourteen years later, Tod Browning’s 1931 horror film *Dracula* uses an Eastern-European vampire in a similar manner, as an “ethnic horror,” a metaphor which threatens white racial purity as well. Both texts use fear, “horror,” in the construction of their metaphor, and each “[literalizes] its referent,” “overlook[ing] the fictional, textual element in the nature of the entity [they connote]” (de Man, 1979, 151). It is through legal discourse that

racial/ethnic Otherness (the tenor of Grant's and Browning's "ethnic horror" metaphor) is made reality.

Anti-immigration, anti-miscegenation, and anti-passing laws of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century enacted, or rather performed, racial Otherness, playing out the science of racial categorization often through another metaphor, that of "the color line." That the law is performative may go without saying. J.L. Austin's most famous example of performative speech is the phrase pronounced at the end of the marriage ceremony, "I now pronounce you man and wife," which effectively brings the heterosexual marriage into being. In the same way, statutes and court rulings create race and racial difference, even though judges and jurors have argued that the law is merely descriptive. Virginia's 1924 Racial Integrity Act, for example, changed the definition of Blackness from one-sixteenth to one drop of "black blood" (I will discuss this law in more detail below). With laws such as this, the function of the color line shifted from separating bodies based on their exterior skin color to the body's interior, as if to form the contours of bloodlines within bodies. More so than scientific discourse, legal discourse enabled a public performance and enactment of racial categories, notably through state and federal trials. One such example is the 1925 *Rhineland v. Rhineland* divorce trial (that will be discussed in more detail below), of which Nadine Ehlers writes:

Rhineland ... shows that the legal trial cannot be perceived as a self-contained sanctum or text. Rather, it acts as a locus of cultural reproduction wherein discursive meaning is at once interpellated and reinscribed. Legal trials act as a particular form of narrative that connects the governing principles of law to general culture and vice versa. These two arenas condition one another; legal injunctions refashion and reenforce the discursive laws of signification and the performative decrees in and through which social subjects are constituted. Likewise, performative compulsions and existing signifiers of social law form and simultaneously find expression within the legal arena. (sic, 101)

The *Rhineland* trial narrative stages one of the processes through which the presence and/or absence of somatic signifiers are given racial meanings. In this arena, race operates as the "disciplinary production of the figures of fantasy through the play of presence and absence on

the body's surface" (Butler, 1990, 184). The color line metaphor was thus empowered with tangible effects: legitimized through state borders in anti-miscegenation court rulings, through the delineation of public space in Southern segregation laws, and arguably through national borders in anti-immigration litigation as well. The narratives surrounding and stemming from legally discursive performatives – whether part of fantasy fiction or historical “reality” – thus repeated, “reinforced,” and “reinscribed” the practices and productions of racial categorization and the “monstrosity” of the racial Other.

Anti-Immigration Legislation

Perhaps more so than the other legal discourses examined in this chapter, anti-immigration legislation was strongly influenced by scientific discourse, specifically by eugenics. Indeed, more than affecting reproductive laws (see Chapter Two), eugenicists also shaped federal immigration legislation, defining the immigrant as either “Americanizable” or as forever “foreign” and racially Other. This section examines how immigration laws of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries performed American citizenship and the body politic as an increasingly restrictive white racial category through its opposition to and the exclusion of the foreign racial Other. Before the “first permanent limitation on immigration” with the Immigration Act of 1924 (“Immigration Restriction Act” n. pag.), the Immigration Acts of 1891 (before the eugenics movement took hold in America) and 1917 had already singled out groups that were denied admittance onto U.S. Territory. The 1891 Act “excluded”: “All idiots, insane persons, paupers or persons likely to become a public charge, persons suffering from a loathsome or a dangerous contagious disease, persons who have been convicted of a felony or other infamous crime or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude, polygamists ...” (“Immigration Act of 1891” n. pag.). While no racial groups are cited, these labels point to the discourse of degeneration and some of the same concepts (such as disease and sexual

immorality) that were used to define racial and/or ethnic Otherness. In addition to excluding immigrants from the Middle East and Southeast Asia, the 1917 Act reflected eugenics discourse by adding to the 1891 list “feeble-minded persons” and “persons not comprehended within any of the foregoing excluded classes who are found to be and are certified by the examining surgeon as being mentally or physically defective” (“Immigration Act of 1917” n. pag.).¹ While the concern to refuse entry to these groups remained, the Immigration Act of 1924 marked an even stronger shift towards exclusion based on nationality, or rather – in the eugenic mindset of American legislators – race. The “law restricted immigration into the United States to 150,000 a year based on quotas, which were to be allotted to countries in the same proportion that the American people traced their origins to those countries, through immigration or the immigration of their forebears” (Ngai 67). As such, the law was designed to restrict immigration to those who were identified as white “American people” by early twentieth-century standards.²

The racial implications involved in this move were denied by a disavowal of the ways in which “nation” and/or “nationality” were used as metaphors for race and racial identity. Indeed, “Congress had accepted the principle of national origins as fair and nondiscriminatory” (68). As Mae M. Ngai notes:

[t]he legislative genealogy of immigration quotas turns on the endeavors of lawmakers to make race-based laws appear to be not racist ... Nativists lobbied for quotas based on 2% of the foreign-born population in 1890, which reduced southern and eastern Europe’s quotas to 15% of the total. The idea of quotas based on the national origins of the entire population in 1920 was conceived by Sen. David Reed of Pennsylvania, chair of the Senate immigration committee, and John Trevor, a colleague of Madison Grant. Reed and Trevor turned things on their head by claiming that using only the foreign-born population to determine quotas discriminated against native-born Americans. (68, note 4)

¹ The Immigration Act of 1917 was not the first law to exclude immigrants based on their nationality. I will discuss the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Page Act of 1875 in more detail below.

² Of course, the first naturalization act of 1790 was also the first law to limit American citizenship to white European settlers. The “1790 act set the new nation’s naturalization procedures. It limited access to U.S. citizenship to white immigrants—in effect, to people from Western Europe—who resided in the U.S. at least two years and their children under 21 years of age” (“H.R. 40, Naturalization Bill” n. pag.).

Reed and Trevor's rhetoric framed the white American as a potential victim of unrestrained immigration. In this respect, Grant suggests that the white man will not die out through interracial mixing, but because of his refusal to mix with "the newcomers":

As to what the future mixture will be it is evident that in large sections of the country the native American will entirely disappear. He will not intermarry with inferior races, and he cannot compete in the sweat shop and in the street trench with the newcomers. Large cities from the days of Rome, Alexandria, and Byzantium have always been gathering points of diverse races, but New York is becoming a *cloaca gentium* which will produce many amazing racial hybrids and some ethnic horrors that will be beyond the powers of future anthropologists to unravel. (81)

Grant's use of the term "*cloaca gentium*" – which can be translated as "sewer people" or "sewer of nations" – is a prime example of the ways in which entire populations are excluded through abjection. His aim is to restrict immigration, ensuring that American borders act as a means to protect the body politic, or the inner (white American citizens) from the outer (racial / ethnic / foreign Others). Referring to Iris Young's use of Kristeva, Butler discusses the "boundary between the inner and outer," "excremental passages," and their relation to "identity-differentiation," arguing that "this is the mode by which Others become shit" (1990, 182). Grant's fantasy of "*cloaca gentium*" renders the abjection of the immigrant Other all the more explicit, as if he were in fact literalizing the metaphor. Grant imagines these populations as so "inferior" that the "native American" will not dare to "intermarry" with them.³ Rather, the "native American" will simply die out while "amazing racial hybrids and some ethnic horrors" overtake the country. Grant's (and Congress') view of a threat to American whiteness as coming from the nation's exterior also involved the virtual erasure of all non-white inhabitants' existence on American land, as well as the refusal to acknowledge them as American citizens. Ngai continues:

[T]o the extent that the "inhabitants in continental United States in 1920" constituted a legal representation of the American nation, the law excised all nonwhite, non-European peoples from that vision, erasing them from the American nationality. The

³ Of course, Grant's labeling of white European settlers as "native Americans" also involves the linguistic erasure of the Indigenous populations of the North American continent and positions the former group as truly belonging to and owning the land.

practical consequence of those erasures is clear enough. In 1920 African Americans accounted for approximately 9 percent of the total United States population. Had they been included in the base population governing the quotas, the African nations from which they originated would have received 9 percent of the total immigration quota, resulting in 13,000 fewer slots for the European nations. (72)

Undoubtedly, the immigration legislation of this period worked to equate race with nation, but this process only occurred for selected nations. Since the national body was fantasized as white, African Americans (as well as Asian Americans) had to remain invisible.⁴

Thus, through early twentieth-century immigration legislation and eugenics discourse, the myth of the American nation as the rightful home of the white “native American” was reinforced, with lobbyists and legislators working to ensure that the purity of the national body was upheld in opposition to “foreign” (as well as Indigenous) racial Others. To their minds, because America was a white nation, it should stay white. This is what Lothrop Stoddard argues in his 1924 *Racial Realities in Europe*:

[T]he American people has made up its mind that America is going to remain predominantly Nordic in race, ideals, and institutions. And that decision will stand, because, despite the immigrant flood of the past generation, the American people is still mainly Nordic in blood. Now that the North European stocks have begun to realize that they and their ideals are really challenged by the presence of unassimilated alien elements, they are drawing together in instinctive self-defense and will exert a power that will be irresistible ... In fact, our immigration-restriction laws are the best proof of Nordic racial ascendancy in America. (243-4)⁵

Stoddard sees American immigration-restriction laws not only as a means of asserting “power” over the “challenge” of “unassimilated alien elements,” but also as proof of white supremacy. While Stoddard believes white supremacy is already in place and in action in 1924, Harry Laughlin suggested that the white American race could become even more superior. A decade later, as the Expert Eugenics Agent for the Committee on Immigration and Naturalization, Laughlin wrote a report (entitled “Report of the Special Committee on Immigration and Alien

⁴ Native Americans were granted citizenship in the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924. However, to some extent, they continued to be legally defined as second-class citizens: “The right to vote, however, was governed by state law; until 1957, some states barred Native Americans from voting” (“Indian Citizenship Act” n. pag.).

⁵ See Stoddard’s and Grant’s definition of the Nordic Race in the previous chapter.

Insane, Submitting a Study on Immigration-Control”) in which he urged lawmakers to restrict immigration to those who could offer better genes. Metaphors and similes equating race to the family, the economy, and agriculture abound in his report. For instance, immigration “is a long-time investment in human stocks” (7), and “[i]mmigration-control, like the marriage of a man’s daughters, is purely a domestic matter” (8). Laughlin’s language likens the American government to the patriarchal father while it feminizes and dehumanizes potential immigrants (as well as American citizens) as “daughters” (who can also function as financial assets). He later continues:

Because America needs no more human seed-stock, she is in a very strong position to set high standards for future immigrants who seek to enter the country. If the country is wise it will admit as future immigrants—i.e. human seed-stock—except those applicants who, in race and numbers, can be promptly distributed over the country, and readily assimilated to American ideals and loyalty, and who in hereditary quality are—not barely above capacity “to keep out of institutions for the insane, and the prisons,” but who, by the most searching tests humanly possible, will constitute an asset to America in physical stamina, in mental capacity, and in moral fibre. Future immigrants should be very substantially superior to our present average race-capacity. Besides all these standards of absolute quality, there is the matter of similarity of immigrants to the foundation racial stocks of the country. The nation needs no excuse for setting the highest immigrant-standards. Common loyalty demands that our national policy of population-control provide that our human seed-stocks of the future will conserve our best racial stocks in accordance with historic traditions, and that in individual capacity the future American will be a decided biological advance over the present and the past. Because immigration constitutes a major element in such outcome, no one who desires the perpetuity of American institutions would permit immigration to lower American human seed-stock standards in any respect. (14-15)

For Laughlin, “future immigrants” and Americans are little more than “human seed-stock,” and their “breeding” should reflect “historic traditions,” “the foundation racial stocks of the country,” and ensure the “perpetuity of American institutions.” His rhetoric reflects scientific racism, not only because he employs plant and animal metaphors to refer to human reproduction, but also because he bases his arguments on a fantasized “tradition” and “foundation” of America as white – much like the anti-immigration legislation of the same period. His use of figurative language constructs the American nation as “perfect” and “perfectible” through the making of the ideal white American citizen, or rather the

(re)production of his body. Ngai shows how this kind of logic affected national and racial identity categories in her discussion of the Immigration Act of 1924:

[T]he law constructed a white American race, in which persons of European descent shared a common whiteness that made them distinct from those deemed to be not white. Euro-Americans acquired both ethnicities—that is, nationality-based identities that were presumed to be transformable—and a racial identity based on whiteness that was presumed to be unchangeable. This distinction gave all Euro-Americans a stake in what Matthew Jacobson has called a “consanguine white race” and facilitated their Americanization. But, while Euro-Americans’ ethnic and racial identities became uncoupled, non-European immigrants—among them Japanese, Chinese, Mexicans, and Filipinos—acquired ethnic and racial identities that were one and the same. The racialization of the latter groups’ national origins rendered them unalterably foreign and unassimilable to the nation. The Immigration Act of 1924 thus established legal foundations for social processes that would unfold over the next several decades, processes that historians have called, for European immigrants, “becoming American” (or, more precisely, white Americans), while casting Mexicans as illegal aliens and foredooming Asians to permanent foreignness. (70)⁶

Since nationality functioned as a metaphor for race, and since America – like (Northern) European nations – was/were equated with whiteness and with the absence of race and ethnicity, European immigrants could easily exchange one nationality for another while non-European immigrants could not. Here, Ngai focuses on how the 1924 Act affected non-European immigrants. But the law – in conjunction with eugenics discourse – also stigmatized Eastern European immigrants as non-white and unassimilable.

The “threat” of Eastern European immigrants that was prevalent in legal discourse was also instantiated in fantasy narratives of the early twentieth-century, such as Browning’s *Dracula*.⁷ As we have already seen, the character of Dracula in both Stoker’s novel and Browning’s film is characterized through rhetoric that reinforced the stigmatizing concepts of animality, disease, and hypersexuality in relation to racial Otherness – some of the same labels

⁶ Evidently, this dynamic of two “ethnicities” versus one has shifted today. As Ngai argues based on Jacobson’s reference to a “consanguine white race,” white Americans have been “Americanized,” while individuals identified as racially Other are labeled with hyphenated categories, such as Japanese-American, Mexican-American, and African-American. In a sense, these laws succeeded in laying the groundwork for equating race with nation and in marking certain nationalities as “unalterably foreign and unassimilable to the nation,” as it is difficult for a person marked as non-white to claim that they are simply “American” even today.

⁷ Of course, anti-immigration discourse is also apparent in Stoker’s novel, as H.L. Malchow notes (162-163). I focus on Browning’s film because of its release at the time of U.S. (Eastern European) anti-immigration sentiment and legislation and its American viewership.

that eugenicist lobbyists and immigration legislators cite in their moves to restrict immigration to those deemed “white.” More than this, the character of Dracula is Transylvanian, of Eastern European origin. While Stoker’s novel was relatively unknown to American readers, Browning’s adaptation popularized the Dracula character and narrative in 1931, at a time when anti-immigration and eugenic (as well as anti-miscegenation) sentiments were raging. Leland Monk writes that “Dracula’s foreignness ... taps into anxieties about a dangerous immigrant population coming to the United States not to assimilate into but to subvert and destroy the American way of life” (499). Despite the fact that, as Stephen D. Arata notes, the novel was centered on British fears of “reverse colonization,” immigration, and racial mixing, Browning’s film arguably Americanized the issues of the novel (621). Although the film is set in England (like the novel), and despite the British accents of the other characters, the central couple of Mina and Jonathan speak with American accents. Lucy’s surname – Westenra in the novel – becomes “Western” in the film. The British aristocrat, Lord Arthur Holmwood, and the caricatured American cowboy, Quincy Morris, who implicitly reinforces the “Englishness” of the British characters, are absent from Browning’s adaptation. Strategies such as these displace the foreign threat that Dracula poses from a British to a white American context.

In addition to the rhetoric through which Dracula is characterized, plot and space play a fundamental role in constructing the vampire as a metaphor for the “dangerous” Eastern-European immigrant. The threat that Dracula brings to the space of England is initially portrayed through the events on the ship that carries him from Transylvania to England. It is violently tossed by the sea, and the captain and his crew are found dead upon arrival in the port. The tragedy is assumed to be the consequence of the storm. Dracula (and his migration) is associated with a force of nature that is capable of decimating the population within his reach. While the film does not make direct reference to degeneration and criminality in the same way as the novel, his first act upon arrival in London is to attack a flower girl in the street.

As he strolls away from the scene, the camera cuts to the flower girl's body with a police officer standing over her, blowing his whistle. This scene, which does not exist in Stoker's novel, characterizes Dracula as a criminal through the metonymy of the policeman and the "crime scene." Moreover, it has already been noted that Dracula's Transylvanian home is "infested" with rodents and insects that metonymically characterize him as diseased.⁸ His London home of Carfax Abbey bears a strong resemblance to the Transylvanian Castle with its old dilapidated staircase and a dusty and dirt-filled basement, and operates as a space that is opposed to the opera and the home of Dr. Seward, which represent British upper-class society. Like Stoker's novel, the film suggests that the immigrant displaces his dirty and diseased body and home from one country to another. Dracula's aim of integrating into upper-class society, preying on Lucy and Mina, played into early twentieth-century fears of the immigrant polluting the white American "gene pool." In other words, Browning's *Dracula* instantiates the rhetoric of early twentieth-century anti-immigration discourse through its characterization of Dracula as a diseased criminal who migrates to London and preys upon the British population, thereby posing a threat to white racial purity. (I will return to this in further detail in my discussion of anti-miscegenation legislation below.) While the film constructs Dracula as diseased and as a criminal through metonymy, the repetition of these concepts in 1931 undoubtedly contributed to strengthening the anti-immigration discourses of the period by positioning the vampire character as a metaphor for the Eastern-European immigrant, and in turn for rendering Eastern-European immigrants monstrous.

As is clear from Ngai's discussion of the 1924 Immigration Act, Eastern Europeans were not the only population who were targeted by anti-immigration legislation, and fears of

⁸ H.L. Malchow traces the historical association between rats and Jews that existed at the time of Stoker's novel: "From the Middle Ages on, wandering Jews, like vampires and rats, had been associated with plague, and as recently as 1892, reappearance of cholera in Hamburg had been blamed on the arrival of Polish Jews there" (162-3). Browning's film makes the connection between the signifier of rats, the concept of disease, and the ethnic (and/or Jewish) Other explicit. Of course, this association had already been established in vampire cinema with the German adaptation of Stoker's novel, F. W. Murnau's 1922 *Nosferatu*.

contamination by foreigners were prevalent on both American coasts. Long before East Coast concerns over European immigration, the rise in Chinese immigration to the West Coast from the mid to the late nineteenth-century led to some of the most vehement anti-immigration and nativist rhetoric, which stigmatized the Chinese as racially Other in much the same way as Blacks and eventually deprived them of the same rights and status. Ronald Takaki notes that ““Chinese migrants found that racial qualities previously assigned to blacks quickly became ‘Chinese’ characteristics”” (quoted in Kanstroom, 98). In the 1854 California Supreme Court case of *People v. Hall*, the sentence condemning a white man to be hanged for murdering a Chinese man was overturned because, like Black (and Native American) men, the Chinese were deemed unsuitable to bear witness. Rendering the Court’s opinion, Chief Justice Hugh Murray “construed the term ‘black’ to be a generic word that excluded all but Caucasians,” and the integration of these racially Other groups ““at the polls, in the jury box, upon the bench, in our legislative halls”” was “unthinkable” (Kanstroom, 99). Like other non-white identified groups, the Chinese were marked as diseased, sexually immoral, and criminal, in large part through state and federal legislation which sought to exclude them. For instance, with fears “about the development of Chinese families and culture, ... the migration of Chinese women [was seen] as a distinct threat” (Kanstroom, 102). Roger Kanstroom notes that in 1870, “Senator Cornelius Cole described Chinese women as ‘the most undesirable of population, who spread disease and moral death among our white population’” (sic, 103). Well before the general exclusion of “prostitutes” by the Immigration Act of 1910, the 1875 Page Act aimed to exclude Chinese women who might enter the country “for the purposes of prostitution” (The Page Act, n. pag.). Given that, as Kanstroom notes, the number of “Chinese female versus male immigrants decreased from 1876 to 1882, when, of 32,579 Chinese immigrants to the United States, only 136 were women” (103), Chinese women (and the Chinese men who might then interact with them) were clearly marked by the law as “lewd and immoral” (The Page Act, n.

pag.).⁹ The exclusion of Chinese women was followed by the exclusion of men when in 1882 Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act on the grounds that “the coming of Chinese laborers to this country endangers the good order of certain localities within the territory thereof” (Chinese Exclusion Act, n. pag.). The Chinese were considered to be such a distinct threat that they were “covered by their own special system and were not subject to general immigration law until 1903” (Kanstroom, 115). Another statute, the 1892 Geary Act, continued Chinese exclusion and required all Chinese residents to register with the government by obtaining a “certificate of residence,” threatening deportation to those found without one after a year’s time (“Geary Act (1892)” n. pag.). In the Congressional debate that led to the passing of the Geary law, one senator argued that the government should ““set apart for [the Chinese], as [they had] for the Indians, a territory or reservation, where they should not break out and contaminate our people”” (quoted in Kanstroom, 118). These laws clearly constructed the Chinese as sexually immoral, criminal, contaminated, and potentially contaminating immigrants who would corrupt the “good,” white American body (politic).

Fantasy fiction of the early twentieth-century abounds with evil, subhuman Chinese characters; though not monsters in the strict definition of the term, they are constructed as monstrous and as a threat to the white man through the very same concepts that were used to stigmatize Chinese immigrants. As in the examples of animality in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientific discourse (as well as other fantasy texts of the same period) which were discussed in Chapter Two, the Chinese were animalized through similes and metonymies often involving snakes. In a 1933 story, “The Germs of Death,” that appeared in the pulp magazine *Weird Tales*, the white narrator characterizes the Chinese villain as having “eyes,

⁹ Deborah Madsen notes how the law was enacted as an exclusive practice: “The preamble to the Act placed a duty upon the local port authority to withhold authorization to embark in the case of vessels transporting immigrants...for the purpose of prostitution...By empowering a local official to exercise discretion in determining whether or not an individual woman could enter the US, the Act had the effect of excluding most Chinese women, who had long been stereotyped as prostitutes” (2008, 4).

sunken into their sockets, black as coals” that “glittered like those of a snake” (Ward 325). One of the most famous Chinese villains at the time, Fu Manchu, is also aligned with snakes.¹⁰ In Charles Brabin’s 1932 film *The Mask of Fu Manchu*, one of the heroes must cross an underground cave full of snakes in order to meet Fu Manchu. Like Browning’s *Dracula*, these animals mark the body of Fu Manchu (played by Boris Karloff) as serpent-like through metonymy.¹¹ Similar to *Dracula*’s claw-like hands, Fu Manchu’s long and sharp nails characterize him as bestial through synecdoche, as in Figure 4 (see Appendix). Notice the sharp, threatening fingernails and a green, scaly hand that is reminiscent of a serpent.¹² In line with the connotations of sexual immorality of Chinese women, Fu Manchu’s daughter is clearly a sadist. Attracted to the young white hero, she is visibly aroused while he is tortured. Furthermore, Fu Manchu and the villain of “The Germs of Death,” Fah Yoon, are dangers to the white body and race. Using mystical powers, Fah Yoon displaces the mind of the narrator into the body of a “Mongolian,” leaving his white body lifeless. The “horror” of the narrator is thus to find that he has been made into a “subhuman” being, “a slant-eyed, yellow-skinned creature,” whose “lips [draw] back over [his] fangs in a wolfish snarl.” In Brabin’s film, Fu Manchu’s aim is to “wipe out [the] whole accursed white race” (57:20). In the climactic scene of the film, Fu Manchu shows his Chinese male followers the white heroine and asks if they would all like to have women like her as their “wives.” To their rallying cries, he yells, “Then conquer and breed! Kill the white man and take his women!” (1:03:10-18). While these

¹⁰ The Fu Manchu character originates from a British novelist, Sax Rohmer. The character’s first appearance was in the 1913 novel *The Mystery of Dr. Fu Manchu*.

¹¹ The animalization of the Chinese through the figure of the serpent might have had something to do with stereotypes of character. Quoting a certain Dr. Morrison, Samuel Morton notes that the Chinese “are generally selfish, *cold-blooded*, and inhumane” (emphasis added, 45). Additionally, the casting choice of actor Boris Karloff, who was famous for playing villains and the Frankenstein monster, obviously adds to the characterization and connotation of Fu Manchu as monstrous.

¹² Notice also the yellow skin shade, which is further emphasized by the shadows and yellow clothing. Evidently, yellow skin was considered an “Asian” or a “Mongolian” racial trait. Gobineau, for instance, uses the term “yellow races” (27) and characterizes their skin tone as “yellowish” (107). Like the term “red” which was used to define Native Americans, yellow skin is a synecdoche that labeled an entire body and group (or groups). Despite the black and white coloring of Brabin’s film, the dialogue attempts to make Fu Manchu’s “color” visible when, for instance, the white heroine calls him a “hideous, yellow monster” (57:10).

narratives might not refer to immigration through their plot or as a theme, they reinforce the network of stigmatizing signifiers and concepts in anti-immigration rhetoric that was more specifically focused on the Chinese.¹³ These texts construct the Chinese as an animalistic, sexually perverse, criminal, and less-than-human threat to white civilization, in part through miscegenation.

Anti-Miscegenation Legislation

As much anti-immigration rhetoric demonstrates, one of the key motivations behind restricting immigration was the desire to protect a racially pure white identity against “inferior” immigrants who might then “pollute” the American “gene pool.” But the fear of miscegenation had begun within U.S. borders well before immigration restrictions, precisely when the abolition of slavery became part of political discourse. Miscegenation is and has been a threat to racial definition in the sense that those who engage in interracial sex could produce children who do not easily fit on one side of the racial binary or the other.¹⁴ It was often for this reason that white American lawmakers felt compelled to ensure that miscegenation was not only illegal, but was also a punishable crime, even a felony. Yet the notion of miscegenation does not destabilize race and racial identities. To suggest that there is such a thing as miscegenation, that there is such a thing as racial mixing, is to affirm the notion of race, because there cannot be racial mixing if race is not considered a valid, stable (or un-mixed) identity category from which to mix. As Robert Young states: “The idea of race ... shows itself to be profoundly

¹³ Abigail De Kosnik writes: “*The Mask of Fu Manchu* encodes the ‘yellow peril’ and anti-Asian immigration sentiments that were rampant in the United States in the early decades of the twentieth century” (89).

¹⁴ Even today, debates rage over President Barack Obama’s racial identity. While some prefer to see him as mixed – half-white and half-Black – others argue that he is Black based on the One Drop Rule (Saulny, n. pag.). This contemporary debate is reminiscent of changing laws defining racial identities at the turn of the nineteenth-century. More on this later. When referring to the racial binary throughout this part of the chapter, I intend to draw from the sense in which it operated in most cases in legal discourse, meaning white versus non-white. In some legal situations, however, whiteness was defined in a much less exclusive manner (to include Native Americans and Asians) and the binary was “displaced” to mean Black vs. non-Black. I will return to this.

dialectical: it only works when defined against potential intermixture, which also threatens to undo its calculations altogether” (19). In an effort to maintain the definition of race and the racial binary, anti-miscegenation rhetoric in legal (as well as scientific) discourse, along with fantasy narratives of the early twentieth-century, worked to define racial Otherness through the stigmatization of those who threatened racial purity, rendering monstrous those who might engage in interracial sex and those who were identified as mixed-race.

One way in which miscegenation proved to be a powerful – though fragile – concept was through the “drawing” and consistent shifting of lines, boundaries, and/or borders. Whether in reference to state versus federal power, the borders separating states, and/or the metaphorical color line and its continual resituation, linguistic lines were drawn over, around, and even through bodies in the attempt to define their racial identity (or identities). Responding to the Alabama Supreme Court decision for *Burns v. State* in 1872, the lawyer David Davie Shelby urged the court to “maintain” racial boundaries through an assertion of state power. Peter Wallenstein reports Shelby’s argument: not only had God “made the races dissimilar,” but they were not meant to “overstep the line that he has drawn between them.” To maintain that racial line, another line must be maintained, “a line of limitation” that separated the powers of the states from those of the federal government (74). Evidently imagining that the federal government was in favor of racial mixing, Shelby conflated the dividing line between races with the definition of state borders and power as an opposition to the intrusive force of the nation and its recently adopted Fourteenth Amendment. Shelby got his wish when the Supreme Court decision of *Maynard v. Hill* in 1888 cemented state over federal jurisdiction with regards to marriage laws. What this then meant for an interracial couple was that a marriage could be valid in one state but not in another; a couple could be accused of violating the law and “crossing the color line” by crossing a state “line” or border. For instance, a 1907 Oklahoma statute made it illegal for an African American identified individual to marry

someone of any other racial identity, positioning the binary as Black versus non-Black, whereas most other states tended to maintain a more restrictive definition of whiteness with the color line as white versus non-white (Wallenstein, 143).¹⁵ (So for example, a Native American and African American identified couple married in Oklahoma in 1908 would have been indicted for miscegenation but their marriage would have been recognized as valid – and perhaps as racially “pure” – in surrounding states.)

More than state borders, this example demonstrates that changing laws within the same state could abruptly alter an individual’s racial identity from one year to the next. The state of Virginia provides a poignant example. Nineteenth-century Virginia defined a white person as possessing “less than one-fourth African ancestry,” but a 1910 statute moved the boundary between white and Black from “one-fourth fraction to one sixteenth” (Wallenstein, 137). Virginia did not stop its quest for racial purity at “one-sixteenth,” but adopted the One Drop Rule in its 1924 “Act to Preserve Racial Integrity,” which also required all Virginians to register their “racial compositions” (“The New Virginia Law to Preserve Racial Integrity” n. pag.). The legislation of the One Drop Rule in several Southern states moved bodies from one side of the color line to the other (a color line made increasingly “real” through the apartheid division of public space in the Jim Crow South), just as it redefined miscegenation. As Wallenstein notes, “Every time a state moved the boundary that separated one racial identity from another, it demonstrated how flexible the legal definition was, and how arbitrary was the entire enterprise of legislating identity” (140). As it was continually shaping and being shaped by changing racial identities, the definition of miscegenation was also (often) arbitrary – depending on time, place, the political parties in power, legal precedence, and/or the benevolence of a judge.

¹⁵ “Wherever in this Constitution and laws of this state, the word or words ‘colored’ or ‘colored race,’ ‘negro’ or ‘negro race,’ are used, the same shall be construed to mean or apply to all persons of African descent. The term ‘white race’ shall include all other persons.” (quoted in Wallenstein, 142).

The One Drop Rule – the name and the concept – highlight(s) the extent to which the definition of race and miscegenation relied on the signification of blood. More than the simple metaphor for family or biological heritage, blood with regards to race was attributed a synecdochal function – one drop was quite literally made to stand for “the whole.” Imbued with such meaning, (one drop of) blood was thought to manifest itself on the exterior of the body. Indeed, the legal language involving “racial blood” often implied that there was a difference between “negro blood” and “white blood,” one that might appear through behavior (as, for example, the Virginia Supreme Court’s 1911 ruling for *Moon v. Children’s Home Society of Virginia* suggests by equating “gentle people” with “white blood” (691)), or through superficial somatic signifiers.¹⁶ For instance, the 1883 *State v. Jackson* Missouri Supreme Court ruling that prohibited someone who was “at least one-eighth black” from marrying a white person also gave “the jury trying a party accused of such a marriage” the power to “determine the proportion of negro blood in either party to the marriage from the appearance of such person” (“*State v. Jackson*” n. pag.). The law implied that physical appearance could “determine” more than an individual’s racial identity, it could also represent the exact percentage of “negro blood” in an individual’s veins.¹⁷ These laws legitimized inner/outer bodily metaphors and made it seem as if somatic signifiers were grounded in the “natural” signified of the body’s interior.

Significantly, defining a mixed-race individual as either Black (or white) or mixed-race was not enough for white American legislators, for whom racial identity needed to be traced

¹⁶ Most scientists of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries did not pretend to suggest that there was actually a recognizable difference between the blood of an African versus the blood of a European. But one example to the contrary is noteworthy: in 1864, Carl Vogt quotes Pruner-Bey’s anatomical description of a “negro” in which the latter declares that “the blood is always thick, black, and glutinous; it never is in bleeding projected in an arch, but adheres to the vessel, whilst the serum is more or less dark yellow” (*Lectures on Man* 185). Black blood is here characterized in a monstrous fashion. Perhaps influenced by Vogt’s affirmation, William Campbell wrote in 1891 (under the penname of “Caucasian”): “There also seems to be a difference between the blood of the white man and that of the negro, too subtle to be detected by microscopic observation, but proved by experimental test” (21).

¹⁷ I will return to the relevance of somatic signifiers with regards to racial definition, as well as to the power given to jurors, in the following section on passing.

as far back as possible to racially “pure” ancestors. It is paradoxical that Virginia’s 1924 “Act to Preserve Racial Integrity,” which positioned a very clear dividing line between white and Black through the One Drop Rule, nevertheless required its inhabitants to provide their “racial composition,” decreeing that “if there be any mixture,” individuals were to provide “the racial composition of the parents and other ancestors, in so far as ascertainable, so as to show in what generation such mixture occurred” (“The New Virginia Law” n. pag.). Such reasoning highlights two conflicting interpretations with regards to blood as definitive of race. While the One Drop Rule suggests that one drop of “black blood” is enough to “blacken” (or overpower, if you will) what is otherwise considered “white blood,” the need to locate the “generation” in which “mixture occurred” suggests that a stable racial identity can only be linked to racially “pure” individuals, regardless of how far into the past this identity is deferred.¹⁸ In either case however, the color line was drawn, and in part, through the significance granted to blood.¹⁹

As the One Drop Rule illustrates, language played a vital role in anti-miscegenation discourse. Like the need felt by Galton to coin “eugenics,” the term “miscegenation” did not exist until it was deemed that the “threat” was present. An 1864 political pamphlet coined the term “miscegenation” at the time of the presidential election – the election that would cement Abraham Lincoln’s “Emancipation Proclamation” (along with the Union’s victory over the Confederate states the following year). While racial mixing had been occurring throughout America’s period of slavery, David Goodman Croly’s and George Wakeman’s 1864 pamphlet, “Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races Applied to the American White Man

¹⁸ Allow me to stress the performative force of this rule, because I believe that it bears a close relation to fantasy narratives in which the blood of one race or species “overpowers” or “contaminates” the other.

¹⁹ In another legal contradiction regarding racial definitions, Native American blood has been used in quite a different manner. More specifically, “blood quantum” – the fraction of Native American blood – is necessary to claim tribal citizenship, which involves federal assistance and property rights and resources on reservation land. So while the One Drop Rule was used to make whiteness exclusive and deny Blacks the same rights as whites, blood quantum has been used to make Native American-ness exclusive and deny rights to those whose blood does not qualify as sufficiently Native American. Elizabeth Rule notes that the hope behind the law was “that over time, Indians would literally breed themselves out and rid the federal government of their legal duties to uphold treaty obligations” (quoted in Chow, n. pag.).

and Negro,” suggests that the end of slavery would mark the beginning of an era in which racial mixing would predominate.²⁰ Initially referred to as “amalgamation” – a term used interchangeably among naturalists and anthropologists to refer to animals and humans – the coining of “miscegenation” solidified another way in which the concept of race could be fixed. Croly and Wakeman define their word in conjunction with the reason for creating the word: “miscegenation ... denote[s] the abstract idea of the mixture of two or more races,” and while “amalgamation is a poor word, since it properly refers to the union of metals with quicksilver,” miscegenation “express[es] nothing else” (11). For Croly and Wakeman, race, with regards to humans, deserves its own vocabulary.²¹ Even more, the coining of the term marked a turning point in racial definition: Blacks and whites could no longer be delineated through the slave/free binary.²² The loss of this framework would, the pamphlet suggests, correspond to a loss of distinction (or hierarchy) between the races, not only in a linguistic and legal sense, but also through the physical “blending of the races.” While the pamphlet initially appeared to promote this “blending,” it was ultimately written in order to ensure the opposite: that miscegenation would not occur and that racial purity would remain intact.

Croly and Wakeman’s pamphlet (along with other pamphlets that followed) creates a narrative of miscegenation, complete with characters that stigmatize those who were a “threat” to racial purity, namely Black men and white women, and mixed-race individuals.²³ While

²⁰ “Amalgamation” was not considered a threat during slavery when miscegenation mostly occurred between white masters and Black female slaves. Most mixed-race children were thus born into slavery, remaining on the Black, or rather, the slave side of the slave/free binary. Racial boundaries were therefore maintained and defined through this binary. As white supremacists feared, the end of slavery would mean a loss of this distinction and a reinforcement of racial definition was evidently deemed necessary.

²¹ In addition, as Young notes, “the strategy involved the production of a new word that would have the more specific meaning of actual racial mixture than the customary term ‘amalgamation’, which doubled as the term for the restoration of the Union” (144).

²² Peter Wallenstein cautions against the assumption that the slave/free binary automatically categorized Blacks and whites: “Despite the prevailing notion that ‘black’ and ‘slave’ were synonyms in slave states, such was never the case. It was more an assertion – a claim or a hope – than an accomplished fact” (52).

²³ Following in Croly and Wakeman’s footsteps, other political pamphlets blatantly defined miscegenation through the Black man and white woman. For instance, the title page of L. Seaman’s “What Miscegenation Is! What we are to Expect Now that Mr Lincoln is Re-elected” “carried its message with an illustration of a caricatured black ‘sambo’ figure kissing a white girl” (Young 146). Although white women were, arguably, not fully-fledged citizens until 1920, they were deemed to be the bearers of racial purity. Note the irony: they

anti-miscegenation law criminalized each partner in an interracial couple regardless of the sex associated with each distinct race, the debates surrounding interracial mixing centered on white women and Black men, particularly at the time of abolition.²⁴ Wallenstein notes, “As they had for 200 years, many held that white men should have exclusive access to white women” (62), and slave emancipation would be an invitation for Black men ““to marry our daughters”” (W.D. Moore, quoted in Wallenstein, 63). In this kind of rhetoric, white women were positioned as passive and powerless objects that might become prey to the “predatory” Black man. Regardless of the morally pure pedestal on which white (middle to upper class) women were placed, they were also considered weak and passionate and, therefore, in danger of “licentious” desire and behavior, particularly vis-à-vis the already “morally corrupt” Black man. Croly and Wakeman play on this fear in their pamphlet, in what was to become possibly the most “provocative” part of their framing of miscegenation (Young 145). In a chapter entitled “Heart Histories of the White Daughters of the South,” they characterize the “Southern Belle” as especially apt to “miscegenate”:

Nor are the Southern women indifferent to the strange magnetism of association with a tropical race. Far otherwise. The mothers and daughters of the aristocratic slaveholders are thrilled with a strange delight by daily contact with dusky male servitors ...

It is idle for the Southern woman to deny it: she loves the black man, and the raiment she clothes herself with is to please him ... Yes, the Southern beauty, as she parades her bright dresses and inappropriate colours in our Northern cities and watering places, proclaims by every massive ornament in her shining hair, and by every yellow shade in the wavy folds of her dress, “I love the black man.” (42-3)

While Black men were often stigmatized as having uncontrollable, animalistic and hypersexual desire (for white women), Croly and Wakeman suggest that white women were equally

could not constitute racially pure citizens themselves, but racial purity (or rather racially pure, white, male citizens) had to pass through their bodies, in marriage and motherhood.

²⁴ This was not always the case. Indeed, until the “adoption” of the Fourteenth Amendment by Confederate states, it was often the white partner that received punishment alone. For instance, one Texas judge declared that, ““for such unnatural marriages ... the whites are mainly to blame”” (quoted in Wallenstein, 109). Ironically, “equal” protection was then interpreted as the assurance that Black citizens were inflicted with “equal” punishment (see for example, Virginia’s ruling against Kinney and Hall in 1879).

“guilty” of (potential) miscegenation.²⁵ Although the overall nature of the pamphlet is ironic, there is undoubtedly an element of seriousness in the two anti-abolitionists’ characterization of the Southern belle. Even if hyperbolic, Croly and Wakeman’s “history” ensures that miscegenation was primarily defined as mixing between a Black man and a white woman.²⁶

As this characterization of “miscegenators” suggests, political discourse and the subsequent anti-miscegenation legislation framed interracial marriages and sex as immoral and perverse. Concerning the right of an interracial couple to marry, certain states considered “whether miscegenation laws should be used against all interracial liaisons” (Wallenstein 126). However, regardless of whether or not a couple was considered to have attempted to marry, interracially identified partners were, more often than not, trapped in a double bind the end result of which was conviction for “adultery and fornication,” or in other words, a labeling of their relationship as immoral, or even sexually perverse.²⁷ As Wallenstein notes:

The law of race and marriage permitted people to be charged with “fornication,” “adultery,” or “cohabitation” who believed and claimed that they had in fact married, or who were prevented from carrying through on their wish to marry by the very laws under which they were charged. It rendered “criminal” and “lascivious” behavior that, aside from the matter of racial identity, was entirely legal, normal, respectable. (129)

Interracial marriage was, therefore, positioned on the same level of moral depravity as polygamy and incest, all of which “required” laws forbidding these practices.²⁸ As Chief

²⁵ In her book, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South*, Martha Hodes argues that more lynchings of Black men occurred following accusations of the rape of white women post Civil War than prior, precisely because of the newfound fear of miscegenation and the “need” to reassert white supremacy.

²⁶ This may have also been due to the idea that racial traits were primarily carried and transmitted through the male. But of course, it provided an additional excuse to overlook the interracial sex that had occurred between white male slaveowners and Black female slaves. The eugenicist Galton wrote, for instance: “Looking at any group of negroes in America, it is easy to see that while they are all essentially negroes, whether coal black, brown, or yellow, the great majority of them have varying amounts of Nordic blood in them, which has modified their physical structure without transforming them in any way into white men. This miscegenation was, of course, a frightful disgrace to the dominant race, but its effect on the Nordics has been negligible, for the simple reason that it was confined to white men crossing with negro women, and not the reverse process, which would, of course, have resulted in the infusion of negro blood into the American stock” (73-74).

²⁷ One might be reminded of the rhetoric that surrounded same-sex marriage debates, and indeed, before its legalization in 2015, it is not surprising that contemporary court rulings cite (anti)miscegenation laws as legal (or problematic) precedence.

²⁸ See Wallenstein’s chapter, “Polygamy, Incest, Fornication, Cohabitation – and Interracial Marriage” (123-130).

Justice Joseph E. Brown of the Georgia Supreme Court put it in 1869, “marriages between black citizens and white ones are ‘productive of evil, and evil only’” (Wallenstein 96). Not only were interracial pairings marked as “evil” and immoral, so too were their “(re)productions”: mixed-race or racially “impure” children.

Science proved to be a very useful ally, if not the catalyst itself, for legislation in favor of racial purity because of the ways in which it defined mixed-race individuals as sterile, diseased, and sexually immoral. For instance, Young reports that President Lincoln paid great heed to a study performed by one of his advisors, the pro-abolitionist Robert Dale Owen, on mixed race refugees in Canada, finding them to be “mostly of lymphatic temperament” with “a general prevalence of phthisical diseases” (quoted in Young, 147).²⁹ Some states went so far as to cite scientific “fact” in their legislation. As Wallenstein ironically notes, the Missouri State Supreme Court “called upon the best science to bolster its position” in its 1883 judgment of *State v. Jackson*:

It is stated as a well authenticated fact that if the issues of a black man and a white woman, and a white man and a black woman, intermarry, they cannot possibly have any progeny, and such a fact sufficiently justifies those laws which forbid the intermarriage of blacks and whites. (*Caselaw Access Project*, n. pag.)³⁰

Not only were mixed-race individuals marked as “sterile” and “diseased” through scientific discourse and the legal rulings that ensued, but they were also stigmatized as mentally and/or emotionally inferior and unbalanced. Aside from Owen’s label of “lymphatic temperament,” “persons of mixed blood” might be labeled as “vicious or unsalutary” (quoted in

²⁹ The old physiological/phrenological definition of lymphatic is: “a temperament lacking energy, inactive, indisposed to exertion or excitement” (Webster Dictionary, n. pag.). Phthisical diseases are defined as relating to or afflicted with tuberculosis. Although Lincoln was against slavery, he was not in favor of according African Americans equal rights, nor of interracial mixing. While slavery apologists argued (like Croly and Wakeman) that abolition would result in miscegenation, Lincoln countered by stating that “slavery was the chief cause of miscegenation in the United States” and that its “restriction ... would in fact reduce the possibilities of race mixture” (Fredrickson 54).

³⁰ Of course, the (scientific) claim that mixed-race individuals were sterile appears to be at odds with the aims of anti-immigration and anti-miscegenation legislation, which were to prevent interracial and inter-ethnic reproduction. Yet as this example shows, contradiction was not of concern. Rather, the case illustrates that judges could continue to claim that the law was not proscriptive, and that it merely corresponded to “fact” (or to “nature”).

Wallenstein, 138).³¹ Arguably, whether scientists or legislators referred more specifically to physical or to mental health and well-being, the two traits were believed to be inherently linked. Following the 1927 Supreme Court decision of *Buck v. Bell* where eugenics and sterilization were deemed legitimate practices, the California Supreme Court initially responded to the 1948 case *Perez v. Sharp* by declaring that interracial marriages “‘might lead to the conception of defective or socially maladjusted offspring’” (“*Perez v. Sharp*,” n. pag.).³² Scientific discourse and practices of the nineteenth- through the early twentieth-centuries deemed miscegenation to be a social “evil” and danger to the well-being of American citizens, specifically by stigmatizing the bodies and behavior of mixed-race individuals as “defective.” In a 1955 statement that resembled scientific findings from prior decades, Justice Buchanan of Virginia spoke out against another challenge to anti-miscegenation law:

We are unable to read in the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, or in any other provision of that great document, any words or any intendment which prohibit the State from enacting legislation to preserve the racial integrity of its citizens, or which denies the power of the State to regulate the marriage relation so that it shall not have a *mongrel breed* of citizens. We find there no requirement that the State shall not legislate to prevent the obliteration of racial pride, but must permit *the corruption of blood* even though it *weaken or destroy the quality of its citizenship*. (emphasis added, “*Naim v. Naim*,” n. pag.)

Perceived as microcosms for the body of the nation itself, only racially “pure” citizens were considered physically, mentally, and morally “beneficial” for (or representative of) their country.

³¹ The latter is from a 1911 Virginia case (*Moon v. Children’s Home Society of Virginia*) in which a white widow and mother of two children married John Moon, who, ironically, was defined as white at the time of their marriage under Virginia’s previous less than “one-quarter rule,” but was then identified as Black under the 1910 “one-sixteenth” law. While the court did not question the validity of the couple’s marriage, they removed Mrs. Moon’s children from her custody because her mixed-race (or now “Black”) husband was deemed to provide “‘vicious and unsalutary surroundings’” for the children. The court cited the previous ruling of *Richards v. Collins*: “The court will not regard the parental right as controlling, when to do so would imperil the personal safety, morals, health or happiness of the child. In determining this delicate and often difficult judgment, the court looks at the character, condition, habits and other surroundings of claimants” (“*Moon et al.*,” 697).

³² While the California Supreme Court did abolish its anti-miscegenation statute with the verdict in this case, it did so by a narrow margin, and, as this quote shows, with some initial reluctance.

Interestingly, while scientific and legal discourses worked together to stigmatize mixed-race individuals, they could not escape a contradictory logic in their regard. On the one hand, they admitted the existence of a mixed-race status through the afore-mentioned stigmatizing concepts and through anti-miscegenation legislation, which was designed to ensure that no more mixed-race individuals would be born. On the other hand, some of the very same legislation, which denied mixed-race status to people (with half to as little as 1/16th and then “one drop” of non-white blood), thereby erased the existence of mixed-race identities. This contradiction appears to echo two diverging viewpoints regarding interracial mixing, where one sees the results of interracial reproduction as a “mongrel breed of citizens,” while the other imagines the “absorption” or the “annihilation” of one race by the other. The latter result is what Croly and Wakemen seem to warn against in the chapter entitled “The March of the Dark Races Northward.” Perhaps referring to the image of the “swarm” or “horde” of “inferior races” that other writers evoked, Croly and Wakemen provide a war-like, almost apocalyptic vision in which the “dark races” will “absorb” (or consume) “the white”:

The fact may be startling, but the student of ethnology will be willing to admit that in the course of time the dark races must absorb the white. It is demonstrable from the history of Europe, that the black-haired, black-eyed, swarthy-skinned races have been steadily and surely moving towards northern latitudes. (17)³³

In one sense, Virginia’s One Drop Rule enacted Croly and Wakemen’s fantasy of the “absorption” of the white race by the “dark races,” by denying mixed-race status and white identity to those with “one drop” of non-white blood and by attributing Blackness to a larger population. In another sense, the One Drop Rule defended against this fantasy by “protecting”

³³ Despite Croly and Wakeman’s and a large majority of anti-miscegenation law focusing on Black and white interracial reproduction, there were, of course, states that targeted other racial groups. Even Croly and Wakeman seem to suggest that the “danger” might come from several directions. So for instance at the end of their chapter, “The March of the Dark Races Northward,” they ironically promote massive immigration and miscegenation with Asians: “The next step will be the opening of California to the teeming millions of eastern Asia ... (T)heir incorporation with the composite race ... will hereafter rule this continent” (19).

whiteness, restricting the category, and ensuring that the white race would, therefore, not be “absorbed.”

The instantiation of anti-miscegenation discourse in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fantasy narratives involves plotlines that deal with interracial mixing, as well as characters who are characterized as racially pure and/or as mixed-race, hybrid, and/or “monstrous” beings. Like the contradictory logic present in legal discourse regarding mixed-race identity categories, these fantasy narratives repeat the hesitation between racial identities as defined through a binary versus a mixed status that threatens the “either/or,” particularly vis-à-vis their “monstrous” characters. Bram Stoker’s novel is once again a prime example here.³⁴ While Dracula is made to function as a metaphor for the Eastern European (Jew), the character is also made to embody mixed-race identity. Ironically, in explaining his heritage to Jonathan at the beginning of the novel, Dracula claims both a mixed-race and a stable identity. Indeed, the Count situates his identity geographically and chronologically ““here, in the whirlpool of European races,”” stating that “[w]e Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many races who fought as the lion fights, for lordship”” (24). In relation to nineteenth-century racial discourse, Dracula’s characterization as an Eastern European is positioned as inherently impure, even if the name Szekely can be simultaneously used to form the contours of an identity category. Stephen Arata notes in Dracula’s auto-characterization another way in which Dracula has two identities and the way in which these point to miscegenation:

Dracula’s twin status as vampire and Szekely warrior suggests that for Stoker the Count’s aggressions against the body are also aggressions against the body politic ... Dracula imperils not simply his victims’ personal identities, but also their cultural, political, and racial selves. In *Dracula* vampirism designates a kind of colonization of the body. Horror arises not simply because Dracula destroys bodies, but because he appropriates and transforms them. Having yielded to his assault, one literally ‘goes

³⁴ Although Stoker’s novel is not an American fantasy text, its influence on other American fantasy texts (both early and contemporary) is significant. Because I will later argue that contemporary vampire narratives allegorize previous vampire texts (Stoker’s novel included) in part through the thematization of miscegenation, it is important to analyze how Stoker incorporates anti-miscegenation ideology in his text.

native' by becoming a vampire oneself ... In turn, they receive a new racial identity, one that marks them as literally 'Other.' Miscegenation leads, not to the mixing of races, but to the biological and political annihilation of the weaker race by the stronger. (630)

Arata focuses on the way in which the figurative vampire works with the literal identity category of the Szekely warrior, thus suggesting that the figurative threat of the vampire to the "body" refers to the literal threat of miscegenation – an "aggression against the body politic" – from the foreign other.³⁵ Arata's argument suggests that the Count echoes the threat outlined in Croly and Wakemen's "March of the Dark Races Northward" by stating that Dracula threatens "biological and political annihilation" of the white race. But more than this, Dracula's claiming of a mixed-race heritage works with the figurative status of the vampire – both or neither alive and/or dead, animal and/or human, masculine and/or feminine, heterosexual and/or sexually deviant. In this sense, Dracula functions as both a metaphor for the "miscegen" (to use Croly and Wakemen's term) and for the threat of miscegenation (whether from a stable or a mixed and ambiguous identity category).

Dracula's performance of miscegenation is quite clearly played out through his targeting of white (middle and upper class) British women as victims. In this way, the novel instantiates anti-miscegenation discourse by linking it to the corruption of moral and racial purity through the white female body. The bodies of Lucy Westenra and Mina Harker are positioned at the center of the war over racial mixing (or "absorption") versus racial purity, with Dracula on one side and Lucy's three suitors, Jonathan Harker, and Van Helsing on the other. Arata states:

If in this novel blood stands for race, then women quite literally become the vehicles of racial propagation. The struggle between the two camps is thus on one level a struggle over access to women's bodies, and Dracula's biological colonization of women becomes a horrific parody of the sanctioned exploitation practiced by the Western male characters (633).

³⁵ In his article, "In Transit: The Passage to Empire in Stoker's *Dracula*", Gregory Castle reads Stoker's novel as an allegory for the fear of reverse colonization.

Lucy and Mina's bodies must be protected and/or controlled through white Western patriarchal and heterosexual normativity. If the figurative function of Dracula's nightly visits to Lucy and the contamination of her blood do not clearly point to interracial sex, then the white male characters help to make the connection. In an effort to purify Lucy's contaminated body, the Professor calls on each of the young Englishmen (followed lastly by himself) for blood transfusions. After Lucy's death, Arthur – unaware of the other transfusions – wistfully recalls “his part in the operation where his blood had been transfused to Lucy's veins ... 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). Arthur is not alone in the “feeling” that the sharing of blood equates to sexual intercourse. The attempt to save Lucy with white male blood juxtaposes (and thus reinforces) the way in which Dracula's blood-sharing functions as a metaphor for miscegenation.

Although the voracious (sexual) appetite of Dracula is rarely witnessed, the female bodies of Lucy and Mina (as well as Dracula's “wives”) metonymically construct him as sexually deviant, in addition to instantiating miscegenation discourse that characterized those who (might) engage in interracial sex as perverse. For instance, Jack Halberstam has noted that Lucy, in opposition to Mina, was already characterized as sexually deviant through her multiple suitors and desire to marry more than one of them (89). In this sense, Lucy recalls the figure of Croly and Wakemen's Southern belle who threatens miscegenation through her supposed sexual appetite. Regardless, Dr. Seward encourages a view of the vampire Lucy that contrasts with the human Lucy, since her “purity” has “turned to” “voluptuous wantonness” (Stoker 180). His account reiterates the “deliberate voluptuousness” that Jonathan saw in Dracula's wives (32). Likewise, the loss of Lucy's sexual purity points to the loss of racial purity. Seward's characterization of Lucy melds animal similes with hypersexual connotations: she “growl[s] ... as a dog over a bone” and calls Arthur to her with a “wanton smile” and

“languorous, voluptuous grace” (181). As a vampire, contaminated by Dracula, she threatens contamination to those she encounters. Van Helsing ensures that Lucy does not bite (or penetrate) Arthur, but rather that the reverse occurs. While Arthur’s blood could not triumph over Dracula’s contamination, the narrative offers another figurative consummation of the marriage that never took place. Sos Eltis notes that the “staking of Lucy is described in overtly sexual terms, as a reassertion of masculine dominance and sexual aggression” (571). The “driving deeper and deeper” of Arthur’s “mercy-bearing stake” into Lucy’s body restores her “unequalled sweetness and purity” (Stoker 185), as if to suggest that patriarchal heteronormativity and racial purity ultimately win the female body. However, the more significant “triumph” over the threat of mixing with or contamination from Dracula is symbolized through the birth of Mina and Jonathan’s son (Arata 632). Not only does the child represent heteronormative and racially pure reproduction, but he also restores Mina’s “sweetness and loving care” (Stoker 326), the proper feminine role of the mother, a role that had been usurped and perverted by Dracula when, for instance, he fed Mina blood from his “bosom” (242). Through the characterization of Dracula, Lucy, as well as Mina while she undergoes transformation into a vampire, the novel echoes the ways in which scientific and legal discourses stigmatized racial mixing (and those of mixed racial identity) as diseased and sexually perverse.

Browning’s 1931 adaptation of the novel – released at a time when the One Drop Rule was being applied in Southern States and anti-miscegenation laws were tightened – repeats the threat of miscegenation for an American audience by emphasizing the concepts of disease and sexual deviance through visual iconography. Dracula is animalized and characterized as diseased through metonymical shots of rodents and insects; his deviant sexual desire is depicted on screen through a close-up shot of the vampire eyeing Lucy and henceforth designating her as his next victim, as well as one of the visits that the vampire pays to Mina in her bed. As if

to emphasize the theme of racial mixing, the scene is color coded with the vampire attired in black and Mina in a white dressing gown and sheets. While Lucy, like her character in Stoker's novel, is characterized in a similar fashion to Croly and Wakemen's lustful Southern Belle (she makes it clear to Mina that she is attracted to the Count's foreignness in one scene [25:45]), Mina is initially portrayed as innocent, virginal, and (racially) pure. But once Dracula begins his nightly visits, it is clear that he transfers his deviant sexual desire to her. She reproduces Dracula's lustful look as she moves towards Jonathan and out of the camera frame. The kiss (or the bite) that she seeks from her fiancé characterizes her as sexually deviant, so much so that it may have been problematic for on-screen depiction by Hays Code standards. The continual emphasis placed on Dracula's claw-like hands, especially in the moments when he attacks Mina, connote his body as "unclean" (a term used in Stoker's novel) and diseased. Dracula's declaration to Van Helsing regarding Mina following these scenes – "You are too late – my blood now flows through her veins," (58:47) – serves metonymically to link sexual deviance, disease, and the mixing of blood, or miscegenation.

The filmic discourse of Browning's *Dracula*, as well as of another film in which Bela Lugosi starred – Victor Halperin's 1932 *White Zombie* – reinforce the metaphorical threat to (racial) boundaries. While Browning's film does not display a Dracula with fangs, nor are blood or bite marks shown at any point (perhaps due to the Motion Picture Production Code), Browning nevertheless renders the association between Dracula and contamination evident. One visual strategy that replaces the piercing capacity of fangs is the continual focus on Dracula's eyes. It is with this element that the film refers to Dracula's ability to cross figurative and literal borders. Close-ups and spotlighting on Dracula's eyes serve to symbolize the piercing of skin with fangs, as well as to represent the vampire's ability to enter his victims' minds and control them. More than this, Lugosi is frequently depicted looking directly at the camera as if hypnotizing the audience, positioning the spectator as a potential victim. This

breaking of the fourth wall and the boundaries of the narrative parallels the vampire's threat to the boundaries of the body and to racial identity categories. Halperin's film also "speak[s] to fears of miscegenation," and the structural and stylistic parallels with Browning's *Dracula* are striking (Kee 15). As if to draw from the connotations that Bela Lugosi already had for the American audience, Halperin capitalizes on the actor's foreign accent, his hands – also rendered claw-like – and his "piercing" eyes. As in *Dracula*, Lugosi's menacing eyes traverse the fading from one scene to another and Murder Legendre (Lugosi's character) is frequently portrayed looking directly at the camera in a hypnotic manner. While Murder, a Haitian voodoo master, is not a monstrous being, or zombie, himself, he metaphorically miscegenates by (re)producing zombies.³⁶ To the extent that the zombie was a figure for the Black Haitian slave, the voodoo master's power to turn humans into zombies meant having the power to turn white Americans into the Black and "monstrous" Other. This is precisely what Murder does within the diegesis – zombifying the white female American character, Madeline, on her wedding night – as well as what he threatens the white American audience with by breaking the fourth wall.³⁷

Anti-Passing Discourse

Part of the fear regarding miscegenation was related to the notion that those of mixed-race could cross the "color line" and pass as white. Virginia's Racial Integrity Act and the One Drop Rule were, for instance, aimed to ensure that passing could not occur. Like anti-miscegenation

³⁶ As Gyllian Phillips has noted, Murder is characterized as monstrous in ways other than the figure of the zombie. He is, of course, monstrous in threatening miscegenation, but also through embodying the metaphor of miscegenation himself. She argues that Murder is especially horrific because he embodies the racially ambiguous position of the creole: "(F)ilm scholars seem to assume that Murder Legendre is either 'white' or 'black,' not considering that his character might be racially ambiguous. Indeed, it is this very ambiguity which helps to generate the fear embodied by the zombie master" (28).

³⁷ This visual effect is represented on the movie poster (see Figure 5 in the Appendix). Similar to what Phillips argues about Lugosi's character as the "racially ambiguous" creole (see note 36), Murder's threatening eyes and hands (and the metonymical use of the words "zombie eyes" and "zombie grip") position the character as a zombie himself.

law, Southern state segregation laws (also known as Jim Crow laws) were designed to maintain racial purity through the physical separation of Blacks from whites. As William James Hull Hoffer has noted, “laws forbidding marriage among races” have been interpreted “as the untold, critical part of the segregation movement” (82). He continues:

The laws’ justification – the protection of the races, in particular the white race, from contamination – was a red flag of adverse discrimination if ever there was one. This was not just discrimination on the basis of race. It was the raising of white race to an elevated status and the viewing of another as a contaminant. (sic, *idem*)

While segregation and anti-passing discourse did not continually draw from the racially-stigmatizing concepts of scientific discourse in the same way that anti-immigration and anti-miscegenation legislation did, the notion of contamination was undoubtedly among the driving forces for the “separate but equal” court rulings and statutes that demarcated spaces such as schools, bathrooms, and public transportation as “colored” from “whites only.” The possibility and the practice of passing appeared to threaten segregation and the rigidity of the racial binary that it enacted. However, “[i]t is precisely the presence of rigid artificial institutional binaries that not only produces the pass but also solicits the social practice of passing” (Robinson 735). Just as whiteness depends on the Blackness (or the non-whiteness) of the Other to constitute itself, white hegemony relies on the occasional resistance of the other through a practice such as passing. As Gayle Wald writes, “the color line has always required that subjects produce resistance in the context of the narratives that define them” (10). Significantly, the two court cases that I analyze in this section – *Plessy v. Ferguson* and *Rhinelander v. Rhinelander* – involve narratives of passing, each of which were used to reinforce and reassert the color line and white superiority in policing the boundary.

Referring to how “race is normatively thought to describe ... apparently observable ... markers of difference,” Wald states that “race requires metaphor” (6). The debates surrounding passing highlight the ways in which supposed somatic signifiers were made to operate as metaphors for the body’s interior, often understood as the presence of non-white blood, while

the absence of racially-defining signifiers meant “pure white” blood.³⁸ Like Judith Butler’s comment regarding the construction of the soul, passing discourse illustrates how race operates as the “disciplinary production of the figures of fantasy through the play of presence and absence on the body’s surface” (1990, 184). For instance, the ability of an individual who was legally defined as Black to pass as white suggests that the somatic signifiers used to identify the racial Other are “absent” and, indeed, arbitrary. Stuart Hall highlights the arbitrariness of skin, hair, and bone as racial signs, arguing that “Black” is an arbitrary title intended to delineate an identity category: “Black is not a question of pigmentation” but rather “a historical category, a political category, a cultural category” (2009, 204).³⁹ The term “black” as a defining feature is thus a metaphor – one that was believed to hold a physical truth-value within (“black blood”) and on the body.⁴⁰ In the context of racialized blood as mere fantasy, in this section I examine the rhetoric of legal discourse through which absent somatic signifiers are nonetheless made “present” in order to perform racial Otherness and its opposition to whiteness.

The 1896 Supreme Court case *Plessy v. Ferguson* demonstrates the ways in which the law was used to reinforce racial definition when faced with ambiguity. The outcome of *Plessy v. Ferguson* was the legitimization of segregation law. By dividing space based on somatic signifiers such as skin color, the law literalized the metaphor of the color line. Significantly, Homer Plessy was chosen by the Afro-Creole community to challenge the Louisiana Separate Car Act because of his ability to pass as white. He was identified as Black by a train conductor

³⁸ After quoting Richard Dyer on the “invisibility of whiteness as a racial position,” Shannon Winnubst argues: “Whiteness maintains its power in our racist cultural symbolic through its invisibility: to be white is not to be of a race, it is just to be ‘human,’ ‘a person,’ ‘an individual.’ This is also how maleness and heterosexuality operate: in erasing themselves as anything particular, they parade (silently, invisibly) as the universal, as the norm, as ‘natural’ ... With several ironic twists of ‘logic,’ the white male heterosexual body erases its own corporeality ... so that it can enter into the totalizing realm of the universal ... to be Other is to be in the body, to be particular, to be less than the universal, to be flawed, limited, marked, different” (6).

³⁹ One might also think of the way “yellow” was previously used to refer to Asians (and to Fu Manchu in the example previously mentioned) and the way “red” was used to refer to Native Americans (and was used in the mascot name of the Washington football team, the “Redskins,” until February 2022), as well as of the stereotypical connotations that these colors are meant to call forth with regards to a group of people.

⁴⁰ I leave the term “black” in lower case here to highlight that it has been (and still is used) descriptively. The fact that the word is now commonly capitalized highlights its proper use as an identity category, as Hall asserts.

and subsequently arrested only because of a deal made with the train company (Hoffer, 66-68). Plessy's skin color and status as a mixed-race person were elements that were meant to challenge the logic of the Separate Car Act in maintaining a Black/white racial binary enforced by a train conductor's ability to identify a "passer." However, as Golub notes, "[w]here Plessy's legal defense consciously deployed racial ambiguity to destabilize racial categories, Justice Brown's majority opinion may be understood as just such an exercise in containment, responding to the disruptions that mixed race and passing create" (567-8). Not only did the Court's ruling reject "racial ambiguity" (I will return to this below), but the Court's opinions (both Justice Brown's and Justice Harlan's dissent) strikingly bear no reference to Plessy's ability to pass, nor to passing in general, and thereby to its "challenge" to the Separate Car Act. While the summary of the case, regarding the plaintiff, states that "the mixture of colored blood was not discernible in him" and that Plessy refused to "admit that he was in any sense or in any proportion a colored man" (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, n. pag.), Justice Brown and Justice Harlan did not address these points in their opinions and chose instead to address the issue of the constitutionality of segregation based on a very clear "color line," stemming from the signification given to skin color. Virtually denying the plaintiff's "lack of color" or appearance as white, Justice Brown, speaking for the Court, as well as Justice Harlan in his dissent, assume that color is a given and is the defining factor in the differentiation of the two races, although they disagree on how the law should respond to this difference.⁴¹ In addition to

⁴¹ While Justice Harlan is perfectly aware of the meaning of the Court's ruling as well as the effect it will have on race relations, he too views the racial binary as firmly grounded in skin color, stating the now often cited (albeit in a misused manner): "Our constitution is color-blind" (*idem*). Even if Justice Harlan's statement advocates law that does not racially discriminate, he nonetheless discursively reaffirms the "color line." Moreover, in his preceding statements, he advocates white supremacy. But unlike his colleague who does so through the validation of systematic oppression, Justice Harlan calls on American exceptionalism as defined through the U.S. constitution and its proscription of the white man's treatment of those who are "inferior": "The white race deems itself to be the dominant race in this country. And so it is, in prestige, in achievements, in education, in wealth, and in power. So, I doubt not, it will continue to be for all time, if it remains true to its great heritage, and holds fast to the principles of constitutional liberty" (*idem*).

disavowing the effect that the *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling would have, Justice Brown suggests that the law merely reflects or mirrors the skin color distinction:

A statute which implies merely a legal distinction between the white and colored races – a distinction which is founded in the color of the two races, and which must always exist so long as white men are distinguished from the other race by color – has no tendency to destroy the legal equality of the two races. (*idem*)

Justice Brown thus suggests that the law should not (or does not) proscribe, but rather describe(s) the difference between the two races based on color. Of particular note is the way in which his language reflects how color is the defining factor that “distinguishes” those with color from those without. Despite the fact that he suggests that both races have a defining color (“a distinction which is founded in the color of the two races”), the “white” race is of course not “colored,” but is “distinguished from the other race by color.” More than this, he insinuates that the law is passive, even powerless to alter this distinction. Referring to the fourteenth amendment, he states:

The object of the amendment was undoubtedly to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but, in the nature of things, it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based on color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political, equality, or a commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either. (*idem*)

Justice Brown thus denies the performative power of the law as well as the circular logic within which his argument is inscribed – for him, the law follows the “natural” order of racial difference, whereas, in fact, he naturalizes the racial binary both through his repetition of this terminology in a Supreme Court case opinion and through his validation and propagation of state statutes that segregate “colored” from “white” bodies.

Segregation law granted the power of surveillance, the power to police the boundary between “white” and “colored” space and thereby to identify passers. Indeed, segregation law legitimized white subjects in particular as “readers” of supposed somatic signifiers of racial Otherness. While Justice Brown did mention the issue of the train conductor’s power to enforce segregation law, he rejected the court’s need to address it:

The power to assign to a particular coach obviously implies the power to determine to which race the passenger belongs, as well as the power to determine who, under the laws of the particular state, is to be deemed white, and who a colored, person. This question, though indicated in the brief of the plaintiff in error, does not properly arise upon the record in this case, since the only issue made is as to the unconstitutionality of the act, so far as it requires the railway to provide separate accommodations, and the conductor to assign passengers according to their race. (*idem*)

On the one hand, Justice Brown denies train conductors the power to “deem” a person as belonging to one race or another, a power that lies with the state. On the other hand, he acknowledges that by deeming the Louisiana Separate Car Act as constitutional, train conductors will nevertheless have the power to identify and define people based on race through the act of “assigning passengers” to separate spaces. Train conductors were thus validated as official “readers of race” in the same way that judges and juries were, and the “common man” would be in the 1920’s.

Two additional Supreme Court cases of the 1920’s cited “common knowledge” as the most valid manner through which to distinguish whiteness from other races. In the case of *Ozawa v. United States* (1922), Takao Ozawa of the “Japanese race” requested citizenship, arguing that “his white complexion made him white” (Smith-Pryor 199). The Court rejected his request on the basis of “science and common knowledge” (*idem*), stating that defining race on skin color alone would “result in a confused overlapping of races and a gradual merging of one into the other, without any practical line of separation” (*Takao Ozawa v. US*, n. pag.). Yet in *United States v. Thind* (1923), the Court rejected the scientific claim that an Indian, such as Bhagat Singh Thind, could be categorized as Aryan and thus Caucasian:

We venture to think that the average well informed white American would learn with some degree of astonishment that the race to which he belongs is made up of such heterogeneous elements ... [T]he words “free white persons” are words of common speech, to be interpreted in accordance with the understandings of the common man. (*US v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, n. pag.)

Ironically then, science was ruled as correct in defining racial differences in 1922, but incorrect in 1923. Regarding Thind, “familiar observation and knowledge” took precedence over

“speculations of the ethnologists” (*idem*). Such rhetorical maneuvering allowed the Court to avoid legally defining a specific way in which races could be categorized, and instead gave the power to delineate whiteness to the “common man.”⁴² Of course, the “common man” referred to the common white man, now legally validated as a “reader” of racial Otherness, particularly in the Other’s attempt to pass as white.

The case *Rhineland v. Rhineland*, taken to the New York Supreme Court in 1925, effectively put passing and the common man’s ability to identify passers on trial. Leonard (Kip) Rhineland, son of a wealthy aristocratic New York family, having married Alice Jones of a much more humble and “questionable” background, filed for an annulment on the grounds that Alice had passed as white and committed fraud. While the trial could have been a simple question of annulment versus divorce, it was highly publicized, thereby demonstrating the extent to which the issue (or fear) of passing was prevalent at the time.⁴³ While journalistic interpretations of the trial and the couple varied, one newspaper interpolated its subscribers as “readers of race” by printing a picture of Alice with the headline “His Colored Bride,” inviting or challenging readers to identify the somatic signifiers of Alice’s body that marked her as “colored” and thereby positioning themselves as jury members (see Figure 6 in the Appendix). Indeed, in determining whether or not Alice had committed “fraud,” the jury was ultimately asked to decide if Alice had successfully passed to Kip, or more importantly, whether or not she could pass at all. Interestingly, although the defense had different options through which to counter the accusations of fraud made by Kip and his lawyer, Isaac Mills – namely to point to the fact that miscegenation was not illegal in the state of New York, or even to argue that

⁴² The logic follows Justice Brown’s statement in *Plessy v. Ferguson* who, again, attempted to deny the law’s power in defining race and suggested that the law should merely follow “nature” (*idem*).

⁴³ See Elizabeth Smith-Pryor’s work, *Property Rites: The Rhineland Trial, Passing, and the Protection of Whiteness*, for a rather detailed summary of contemporary newspaper and magazine reports as well as for a historical analysis of the trial. It is also important to note here that even in the North, where the “color line” was not literalized through segregation law in the same manner as in the South, it was nonetheless made present through (in)access to white privilege, as demonstrated through a court case such as this.

Alice was in fact white – Alice’s lawyer, Lee Parsons Davis, chose to declare his client as “colored” and to argue that not only had she not attempted to pass, but also that she could not pass at all.

The jury (composed only of white men) was then ultimately asked not so much to rule in favor of either the accuser or the defendant, but to decide whether or not race was detectable through somatic signifiers and/or acts and gestures. As if to ensure that his argument remained the least threatening to racial categorization, Davis had Alice strip to the waist in front of the judge and jury, submitting her body to the court as evidence – evidence of the “body that definitively reflected corporeal norms of black racial status” (Ehlers 78). Davis’ strategy was to position the jurors as “readers of race,” defying them NOT to see somatic signifiers that categorized Alice as Black. Davis stated to the jury:

I let you gentlemen look at a portion of what [Leonard Rhinelander] saw. He saw all of her body. And you are going to tell me that he never suspected that she had colored blood! That is what he testifies to. You saw that with your own eyes. A boy of twelve would have known that colored blood was coursing through her veins. (quoted in Ehlers, 80)⁴⁴

As Ehlers notes:

With this rhetoric Davis challenged the jury as to *their* ability to verify racial “truth,” the presumption being that the common man *should* be able to ascertain whether an individual before them was white or had the mark of black ancestry (if they possessed all their faculties and were racially literate). The jurymen were utilized in this capacity as racial “experts.” (80)

For Davis, Alice’s somatic signifiers point to her “colored blood,” which is in turn positioned as the “truth” of her racial identity. Yet ironically, Davis does not name the somatic signifiers on Alice’s body that are intended to signify her “colored blood.” Rather, in obliging the jurors to “see” and to read Alice’s body as “colored,” Davis displaces blood as a signified – it becomes a signifier that works to make present to the eyes of the jurors what might otherwise be absent “colored” somatic signifiers on the exterior of Alice’s body.

⁴⁴ Davis’ strategy was based on prior testimony that Kip and Alice had engaged in pre-marital sex.

Gestures towards the “common man” as “racial expert” exceeded the space of the courtroom. As Elizabeth Smith-Pryor notes, newspapers such as the *Daily Mirror* and the *Evening Journal* “echoed” “superstitions that race left particular signs on even a passing body (a half moon on the nails or spots on the back)” (202). Perhaps the most curious example of how this case illustrates the extent to which racially defined somatic signifiers that were absent from Alice’s body were nonetheless made to be present, or that Alice’s skin and body parts were made to bear racial meanings, was Grace Robinson’s report in the *Daily Mirror*. Despite not having been allowed to attend Alice’s exhibition (as a woman), Robinson wrote that in addition to Alice’s back being of a darker skin color than her face, her breasts “were obviously those of a colored woman” (quoted in Smith-Pryor, 202). Robinson’s declaration reflects Davis’ rhetoric by interpolating her readers to see and identify what is otherwise absent – not only did she not see Alice’s breasts, but she also points to Alice’s breasts as signifiers of Blackness without explaining what about her breasts might “prove” her Blackness. Readers of the *Daily Mirror* could then take the place of the jurors as “racial experts” and reassure themselves that successful passing was unlikely.

Realizing that the case mounted against Alice magnified white supremacist fears of passers, especially of those that might marry and miscegenate into whiteness, Mills changed his strategy, suggesting that it was precisely Alice’s Blackness that made her racially identifying signifiers absent. Mills played into stereotypes of Black femininity by portraying Alice as a “‘vamp’ and ‘wily mulatto,’ whose hypersexuality and cunning, which supposedly signified Blackness, seduced Leonard and rendered him helpless against her” (Ehlers 82). That Alice would attempt to fool Leonard and pass as white was part of her Blackness: “In constructing Alice in this capacity, Mills effectively argued that it was precisely her ‘black’ racial traits ... that facilitated her ability to successfully keep this Blackness hidden, to ‘deceive’ Leonard, and to pass-for-white” (*idem*). Ehlers continues:

By conducting this mode of argumentation, Mills highlights the notion of the inevitable performative disclosure of racial “truth,” a truth that always ultimately “shows itself.” His demonstration of the ability to detect the acts and behaviors that “gave away” her blackness *recovered* and evacuated the fear generated by his earlier proposition that the body may become a site of alchemy or a vehicle of duplicity. One simply needed to be racially literate and ever vigilant (83).

Mills thus gave the opportunity to jurors to rule in Kip’s favor while still clinging to the belief that, if he had not been “racially literate” at the time of his marriage to Alice, they could be. Nevertheless, Mills’ new line of argumentation did not suffice. It seems that the jurors preferred to believe that Kip had not been “duped,” and that race could ultimately be defined and identified through somatic signifiers such as those that Alice apparently exhibited. “In a reassertion that race is ultimately both detectable and definable, the jury did find in Alice Rhinelander’s favor, declaring not only that she *did not*, but also that she *could not* have defrauded Leonard” (83-84). By siding with Davis’ argument, the jurors effectively validated themselves (and other “common men”) as “racial experts.” Their ruling went beyond asserting that any racial ambiguity could be erased by a very clear and distinct “color line.” Rather, the ruling suggested that racial ambiguity was always (and would always be) non-existent.

Fantasy fiction of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century instantiated the ways in which these rhetorical maneuvers in legal discourse reinforced the racial binary against the practice of passing. The fear of racial ambiguity is embodied by monstrous characters passing as human in narratives that simultaneously reassert the racial binary through the means of narrative perspective and characterization, which allow the reader/spectator to easily identify the passing monster. Stoker’s *Dracula*, for instance, stages its human characters as inscribed readers of the Count. Each character’s perspective effectively provides indications on how to “read” Dracula and the threat of passing (as well as immigration and miscegenation) that he performs. While Jonathan, the first homodiegetic narrator of the novel, expresses doubts as to the veracity of what he sees, which therefore might question the reliability of his account, the reader is then placed in a privileged position during the following reports from other

homodiegetic narrators, such as Lucy, Mina, and Dr. Seward, who struggle to understand why Lucy's health is dwindling. Somatic signifiers that function as metaphors for Dracula's animality and racial Otherness are repeated from one account to another. Dracula's hooked nose, red eyes, white and sharp teeth, along with the frequent presence of wolves, all provide clues to the monster who might initially pass as human to certain characters, but who cannot pass to the reader. Of course, the character of Professor Van Helsing provides an additional and "educated" means with which to read Dracula. Interestingly however, Van Helsing is very rarely employed as a homodiegetic narrator. Rather, his knowledge is best used in teaching the "common men" (and women), those that will form the Crew of Light, how to read, identify, and interpret the vampire. The fear of Dracula's ambiguous (racial) identity is then stabilized through the process of naming as, for instance, when Van Helsing first uses the term "vampire" to explain what happened to Lucy: "'She was bitten by the vampire when she was in a trance, sleep-walking—oh, you start, friend John, but you shall know it later'" (Stoker 172). Soon thereafter, Van Helsing exhibits Lucy in her vampire state in part to teach Dr. Seward and his friends about Dracula, so that they "*know it*," and are then able "'to find out the author of all this our sorrow and to stamp him out'" using "'clues which we can follow'" (186). Thus, not only is the initial confusion regarding Dracula's identity resolved, but the vampire's potential to pass is lost.

While Dracula might attempt to pass as human only to Jonathan at first (and not vis-à-vis the other characters), he wishes to pass specifically as an Englishman. It is here that the figurative passing of monster as human overlaps with the extradiegetical and literal practice of racial passing, as well as with the conceptualization of immigration and miscegenation as threats to racial purity. Discussing Dracula's excellent level of English, the Count says to Jonathan:

"Well I know that, did I move and speak in your London, none there are who would not know me for a stranger. That is not enough for me. Here I am noble; I am *boyar*;

the common people know me, and I am master. But a stranger in a strange land, he is no one; men know him not – and to know not is to care not for. I am content if I am like the rest, so that no man stop if he sees me, or pause in his speaking if he hear my words ‘Ha, ha! a stranger!’ I have been so long master that I would be master still – or at least that none other should be master of me.” (17)

While suggesting that he realizes that foreigners are viewed as inferior, Dracula wishes more than to simply pass as “the rest.” Rather, he hints at a desire to “be master still” in the same way that the “common people know [him]” in his own land. Of course, Dracula’s use of the term “common people” refers to the contrast in class with his status as noble. Yet, in stating that he wishes to pass among the English, he also wishes to dupe the “common people” or “common man.” Later, Jonathan is confronted with the frightening possibility of Dracula not only passing as an Englishman, but also as himself:

It was a new shock to me to find that he had on the suit of clothes which I had worn whilst travelling here ... There could be no doubt as to his quest, and in my garb, too! This, then, is his new scheme of evil: that he will allow others to see me, as they think ... and that any wickedness which he may do shall by the local people be attributed to me. (37)

In this sense, Dracula’s passing takes on additional criminal connotations in that he both usurps his victim’s identity, and he uses this identity to accomplish “evil.” Once in England, the evil Dracula accomplishes by passing extends to the significations of miscegenation and degeneration of the white English population.

Browning’s 1931 film adaptation instantiates anti-passing discourse in a more explicit manner than Stoker’s novel; without the multiple homodiegetic narrators, the filmic discourse makes use of other means to position the spectator as a (racial) “expert” to whom Dracula cannot pass. For instance, without adopting Dracula’s perspective as a focalizer, the camera provides the spectator with several unmediated shots of the vampire while he is not attempting to pass. The Count is visually introduced to the spectator as he emerges from his coffin. Shots of his crawling and claw-like hands, which are metonymically constructed as animalistic through cross-cuts with rodents and insects, are then repeated when Dracula later enters Mina’s

bedroom and moves to bite her. The camera also provides unmediated views of Dracula while he passes – for instance, on the streets of London as he attacks a flower girl, and with a close-up of his face as he observes Lucy at the opera, where his facial expression betrays his “evil” intentions when no human characters are paying attention. Despite this privileged position for the spectator, the ability of Dracula to pass is part of what makes the film horrific. Unlike the vampire in Stoker’s novel, Dracula does not hide his foreignness. Lugosi’s flamboyant accent and style of dress serve to construct him as a threatening foreigner, but simultaneously reassure the spectator that he cannot pass as British. Nevertheless, Browning’s Dracula quite clearly attempts to integrate into upper-class British society, passing as a harmless guest in Dr. Seward’s and Mina’s home. Furthermore, two shots appear to place the spectator within the narrative, effectively positioning him/her as a (potential) victim. In Dracula’s introductory scene, Dracula looks directly at the camera as it zooms from a long shot to a medium shot, as if to hypnotize the spectator. When Dracula bites Mina, a POV shot briefly puts the spectator in Mina’s place. Thus, the spectator is ultimately reassured that the passer will be identified within the narrative as well. Here, the character of Van Helsing provides an inscribed reader’s perspective, guiding the other human characters and the spectator to identify the passing vampire. When Dracula pays a visit to Dr. Seward and Mina, cross-cuts from Dracula to Van Helsing’s concerned face as he watches the Count, and to the Professor’s POV shot where he sees a mirror in which the vampire does not appear, inform the spectator that the Professor has identified the passer. Indeed, while Dracula may be able to hide his claw-like hands from the human characters, he cannot efface the telltale sign of his lack of a reflection in a mirror.⁴⁵ The plot’s resolution, with Van Helsing staking the vampire, much like the Count’s demise in Stoker’s narrative, reinforce the idea that passers are ultimately caught and “punished.”⁴⁶ In

⁴⁵ Interestingly, the play of presences and absences on the body’s surface is reversed here, since it is through an absence – the absence of one’s reflection in a mirror – that Dracula is identified as a vampire.

⁴⁶ Narratives of passing in the 1920’s and 30’s that end with a death appear to have been common, such as Nella Larsen’s 1929 novella *Passing*, where the passing woman dies, and the 1934 film *Imitation of Life*, where the

other words, Browning's film presents the threat of passing through the foreign monster that can initially pass within the narrative, but cannot dupe the spectator and is eventually identified and appropriately punished in the end.

The divisions between scientific and legal discourses and fantasy fiction, when it comes to the construction of race and racial difference, are not clear-cut but rather work together in their mutual constitution of the network of racially-stigmatizing signifiers and concepts. Both the scientific and legally discursive – intended to be literal, to describe our extradiegetical, ontological reality – and the fantastical text must rely on the figurative, the former through language and the latter through language both within the diegesis and through its (con)figuration of the extradiegetical. If, as the above analyses show, the racial Other is nothing more than figurative, a metaphor, a fantasy, then a character such as Dracula is a metaphor of a metaphor, a fantasy of a fantasy. He serves to highlight the ways in which the “human” is simultaneously constituted through fantasy, or as de Man might argue, through “fear,” “a condition of permanent suspense between a literal world ... and a figural world” (1979, 151). Here, metaphor is the making present of the racial Other and of monstrous creatures to bear signs of difference, to displace the fear of the ambiguity and the fragility of the (white) “human,” effectively denying the metonymical processes through which whiteness and the “human” can otherwise have no meaning.

The character of Dracula in either (or both) Stoker's novel and Browning's film can be used as an example of the instantiation of each scientific and legally discursive concept discussed in this and the previous chapters. Dracula embodies the “metaphorical Other” *par excellence* in that he is used to constitute, define, and stabilize the boundary of, as well as the

passer's mother dies.

“outside” of, “human” identity. Jack Halberstam refers to the process of “Othering” in Stoker’s novel through scientific and literary discourses:

Othering in Gothic fiction scavenges from many discursive fields and makes monsters out of bits and pieces of science and literature. The reason Gothic monsters are overdetermined – which is to say, open to numerous interpretations – is precisely because monsters transform the fragments of otherness into one body. That body is not female, not Jewish, not homosexual but it bears the marks of the constructions of femininity, race, and sexuality. (92)

Dracula bears multiple marks that each point to the concepts constructing racial Otherness, such as animality, sexual deviancy, disease, immigration, miscegenation, and passing. As a consequence, Dracula is “open to,” and there have been, “numerous interpretations” of his monstrosity. Halberstam’s focus is largely on Dracula’s sexuality, while he acknowledges that “Dracula’s sexuality makes sexuality itself a construction within a signifying chain of class, race, and gender” (101). My focus has been on the ways in which Dracula’s embodiment and performance of racial Otherness makes race “a construction within a signifying chain” that also involves gender, sexuality, and class. The “overdetermination” of Dracula not only highlights the ways in which the “human” is constituted as a highly restrictive category, but it is also one of the reasons why the figure of the vampire has been so fruitful for contemporary reinterpretations that work to question and to permeate the boundary between the (white) “human” and the (racial) Other, as the next chapter will demonstrate.

Part Two

Four

Humanizing the Monster, Naturalizing Race

Contemporary fantasy narratives of the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-centuries follow the deconstructive approaches found in postmodern and postcolonial literatures. Narratological shifts in characterization and narrative perspective make the “monster” into a being that is no longer entirely “Other” to the “human.” It is now quite common to find a “monstrous” being as the hero of the story, “more human” than the human that might be the villain.¹ Like these narratological shifts, the “monster” is no longer a less-than-human object and has now adopted a “human” (or humanized) subject position. Physical differences do not necessarily operate as somatic signifiers for inhumane or “non-human” character traits. Rather, in the contemporary fantasy narratives discussed in this chapter – the *Twilight* films (2008-2012), Stephen Norrington’s 1998 *Blade* and Len Wiseman’s 2003 *Underworld* – and in the chapters that follow, the dichotomy between the “monster” and the “human” is contingently defined by

¹ Here, I am referring to texts that will be discussed later in this thesis, such as Marvel’s *X-Men*, Octavia Butler’s *Lilith’s Brood*, Andrew Currie’s *Fido*, and HBO’s *True Blood* series. But there are also several examples of this trend that are not included in this thesis, namely Neill Blomkamp’s *District 9*, Isaac Marion’s *Warm Bodies*, and James Cameron’s *Avatar*.

character actions. These narratives thus question the “human,” destabilizing the human / non-human Other binary that prevailed in nineteenth and early twentieth-century fantasy narratives, such as *Dracula*, by displacing it and re-mapping it in relation to contemporary perceptions of “inhumane” versus “humane” behavior. There are a multitude of contemporary fantasy narratives that play with the human / monster dichotomy, but do not necessarily refer to the ways in which these categories have been constructed through metonymical associations with race and racial difference. However, there are those that continue to draw from these traditional associations, maintaining an intertextual relationship to fantasy narratives that participated in the construction of race and racial Otherness, using these meanings as a basis for characterization which can then be put into question. In the texts analyzed in this chapter, some of these problematic meanings are repeated and even reinforced, while others are destabilized. Norrington’s *Blade* and Wiseman’s *Underworld*, for instance, reposition extra-diegetical references to whiteness and racial Otherness, such that whiteness can then be demonized as “monstrous,” while the racial Other is in turn humanized and positioned as the hero of the story. Nevertheless, although the human / monster binary is destabilized and “monstrous” somatic signifiers no longer equate to “monstrosity” or “monstrous” behavior, these contemporary fantasy narratives do not necessarily question nineteenth- and early-twentieth century signs of racial difference and stigmatizations of racial Otherness.

The shift in the signifying practices of monstrosity in relation to racial Otherness works in conjunction with the thematization of racial discourses such as miscegenation which, as it does in Stoker’s *Dracula*, initially appears as a means of both subverting (white) racial purity and of posing a “threat” of racial mixing. Given that miscegenation operated as a “specter” in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientific and legal discourse and fantasy fiction – embodied for instance by the “lustful” Black man and white woman in Croly and Wakeman’s 1864 pamphlet, as well as by the nightmarish figure of Dracula – its use in constructing

“monstrous” or “human” characters and their relationships in contemporary fantasy is key to understanding how each text either propagates or destabilizes racial meanings. As later chapters will illustrate, miscegenation is a fairly common theme in contemporary fantasy, and this is precisely because it is necessary to the distinction among racial categories. As Robert Young states: “The idea of race ... shows itself to be profoundly dialectical: it only works when defined against potential intermixture, which also threatens to undo its calculations altogether” (19). As Young suggests, race can only be constructed as a stable identity category through its opposition to the instability of “intermixture,” which ironically exposes race as fantasy at the same time. The instantiation of miscegenation as a theme and/or discourse in contemporary fantasy can work to highlight this illusion, or conversely to reinforce the notion as an extra-diegetical and pre-discursive reality. This reinforcement can occur regardless of whether or not miscegenation is framed in a positive or negative light. For instance, Wiseman’s *Underworld* reframes species-mixing and hybridity as a positive means to subvert white racial purity and hegemony. This is in opposition to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fantasy narratives, which pointed to miscegenation as a means to stigmatize their monstrous characters. However, this reframing of miscegenation alone is not sufficient to destabilize the extra-diegetical “reality” of race, in the same way that traditional allegory relies on and reinforces an ontologically stable world “exterior” to the text. To suggest that there is such a thing as miscegenation, that there is such a thing as racial mixing, is to affirm the notion of race, because there cannot be racial mixing if race is not considered a valid, stable (or un-mixed) identity category from which to mix. So, while the narratives that will be analyzed in this chapter might destabilize the notion of the racial binary and valorize the threat to racial purity through miscegenation, they continue to reinforce the identity category of race and the binary it forms with interracial mixing. Likewise, the racially-pure body may continue to be configured as the starting point from which mixture can occur, such that race remains perpetually marked as pre-

discursive. Accordingly, metaphors of the dichotomy between the body's inside and outside persist in these narratives. In other words, although "monstrous" somatic signifiers may no longer equate to "monstrous" behavior, they point to a fundamental biological and ontological difference, an essentialization of Otherness that is grounded in the body's interior. Ultimately, the texts analyzed in this chapter use miscegenation in a way that reveals a profound sense of racial anxiety, in that they demonstrate a consistent tension between the instability of racial mixing and the fixedness of racial definitions.

One of the ways in which the *Twilight* films, Norrington's *Blade*, and Wiseman's *Underworld* stage racial mixing as a frightening threat to (rather than as a potential subversion of) racial definitions is through abjection. As Julia Kristeva defines it in *Power of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, abjection plays a fundamental role in exposing the boundaries of the self as illusory because they rely on metaphors of the body's interior in contrast to its exterior, as well as on an unwavering borderline between the two. Indeed, for Kristeva, the process of abjection is necessary for the constitution of the subject that remains in consistent denial of that which might threaten its contours, including food and bodily waste: "But since the food is not an 'other' for 'me' ... I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish *myself*" (3). The "*myself*," once it is exterior to the body, must be established as "Other" in order to maintain the illusion of a stable identity. Not only do the fantasy texts in this chapter stage "monstrous" bodies that exceed the normalized boundaries of the "human" subject, but they also point to the ways in which entire groups are constituted as abject and "Other" in the process of defining the norm. As discussed in Chapter Two, Judith Butler cites Iris Young's reference to Kristeva's work on abjection "to understand sexism, homophobia, and racism," noting that "the repudiation of bodies for their sex, sexuality, and/or color is an 'expulsion' followed by a 'repulsion' that founds and consolidates culturally hegemonic identities along sex/race/sexuality axes of differentiation" (1990, 182).

In staging miscegenation, these three fantasy texts threaten the racially pure (white) self in the same way that abjection does. Not only do the films depict “monstrous” bodies, they also position these bodies as a threat to racial purity, a danger to the boundaries of the (white) self and, therefore, of rendering that self just as abject and Other as the group it seeks to reject through the process of abjection and repudiation. In the *Twilight* saga, Bella’s relationship with Edward, a vampire, might be characterized as miscegenation. However, Edward is intimately aligned with the white “human” subject in contrast to Jacob, who is both Othered as a Native American and abjectified as a werewolf. Norrington’s Blade is the product of miscegenation between a white vampire and a Black human and he consistently works to expel the abject Other part of himself by killing vampires, effectively embodying the boundary between humans and vampires and acting as a guardian of species (or figuratively, racial) purity. Furthermore, Wiseman’s *Underworld* portrays abject and animalistic werewolves who threaten the supposed racial purity and superiority of vampires.

The threat to racial definitions that each text stages is ultimately alleviated through various processes that exceed the consistent Othering and sidelining of characters that embody miscegenation and its “danger,” because they also continually ground “monstrous” differences in the stability of the body’s interior in addition to (or in conjunction with) an extra-diegetical and pre-discursive “reality” that is referenced through the traditional form of allegory. In the *Twilight* saga, Jacob’s difference is essentialized as something he was “born” with, while Edward’s, though also depicted as biological, is socially controllable. Blade suffers from a “disease” in his “blood.” In *Underworld*, Michael Corvin’s transformation into a half-vampire, half-werewolf being is due to his genetic heritage. Such configurations work to link “monstrous” somatic signifiers with the body’s inner biological make-up, as well as to isolate within a few individuals the threat that the Other poses to identity categories. Moreover, the now popular CSI shot in which the camera plunges inside the body is used in both the *Twilight*

saga films (specifically with regards to Bella's transformation) and in Wiseman's *Underworld*.

In Foucault's discussion of early nineteenth-century medical perception, we find a similar movement:

The medical gaze must therefore travel along a path that had not so far been opened to it: vertically from the symptomatic surface to the tissual surface; in depth, plunging from the manifest to the hidden; and in both directions, as it must continuously travel if one wishes to define, from one end to the other, the network of essential necessities. (1973, 135)

In a sense, the CSI shot repeats this "medical gaze" movement, "travelling" back and forth between the "symptomatic surface" and the body's interior – its tissues and even its "cellular level." Each (somatic) signifier is thus fixed to its ("cellular") signified, even if metonymically one can be substituted for the other and even if they are "continuously" pointing towards each other. Although these meanings, these relationships between signifiers and signifieds, function through metonymy, they are positioned within each diegesis as metaphorical. While metonymy continually delays a concrete signification process – highlighting, for instance, an identity category as constructed through a chain or a network of signifiers – metaphor conversely attempts to fix the duality between the figurative and the literal, the signifier and the signified, or the somatic signifier and the body's essential, inner "nature." Even though these are fantasy narratives, these instances point to the ways in which somatic signifiers have traditionally operated in conjunction with essentialism, as grounded in the biological and the pre-discursive, whether diegetically or extra-diegetically. While Butler argues that the body's inside and outside function as metaphors for each other, de Man's definition of metaphor (as discussed in Chapter One) points to the figure's grounding of a so-called extra-diegetical reality: "Metaphor is error because it believes or feigns to believe in its own referential meaning ... Metaphor overlooks the fictional, textual element in the nature of the entity it connotes" (1979, 151). So while it is important to point out that two of the texts discussed in this chapter – namely Norrington's *Blade* and Wiseman's *Underworld* – use allegory to reference race and racial

differences, even calling attention to racism and racial injustices, they rely on the traditional form of allegory, a series of extended metaphors that “believe in [their] own referential meaning.” The fantasy of racial difference as species difference and of miscegenation as species mixing in the intra-diegetical world of each text contributes to the extra-diegetical shaping of race as a pre-discursive reality. Indeed, despite the “message” that each text appears to convey to the implied spectator regarding the acceptance of racial differences and/or racial mixing, I argue that through the narratives’ reliance on race as an extra-diegetical ontology, grounded in and “safely” restrained by biological differences, the racial binary is maintained and continues to be reified as the white “human” subject in contrast to the non-white “monstrous” Other.

The *Twilight* saga films

As in Norrington’s *Blade* and Wiseman’s *Underworld*, the *Twilight* narratives deal with the theme of species-mixing. Bella Swan, the saga’s primary focalizer, is a human teenager who falls in love with Edward Cullen, a vampire, and the stories of the early films revolve around the feasibility of their relationship. At the end of the third instalment, the two characters marry, and at the end of the fourth, Bella gives birth to a half-human, half-vampire child before becoming a vampire herself. Arguably, the saga merely repeats the contemporary fantasy trend of humanizing the monster, and the narratives appear to use the theme of species-mixing primarily as an allegory for concepts such as teenage sexual abstinence rather than pointing to race.² However, through Bella and Edward’s inter-species relationship, along with its triangulation with another species Other, Jacob Black, a werewolf, the narratives both subtly evoke and evade an allegorical reference to miscegenation. In so doing, they may seem to use

² For a more complete analysis of the saga’s references to abstinence, see Ann V. Bliss’ essay, “Abstinence, American-Style.”

inter-species conflicts on a figurative level to condemn prejudice and promote tolerance of differences, but they nevertheless repeat discourses and signifying practices that reinforce white racial purity while simultaneously disavowing racial anxiety. Ironically, it is partly through the discourse of sexual abstinence that the films reiterate racist discourses. In the process of humanizing the vampire Edward, the early narratives stage a classic mind versus body opposition – Edward must control his overpowering hunger (which both literally and figuratively refers to sexual desire) for the ready and willing Bella, at least before marriage. Yet the love triangle storyline involving Jacob (particularly in the second film, *New Moon*) positions Edward's mastering of the mind/body dichotomy (a mechanism that both humanizes him and reinforces his whiteness) in contrast with Jacob's Indigeneity, abject animality, and the character's discourse that essentializes Native American stereotypes. Though Stephenie Meyer (author of the *Twilight* novels on which the films are based) borrowed from the Quileute tribal legends of (were)wolves in the creation of her Quileute and werewolf characters, the films do not stage the tribal legends but rather reinforce American Indian tropes of "savagery" and this concept's metonymical links to nature versus civilization, the body versus the mind, and the animal versus the human. Ultimately, the films instantiate racist discourses that construct the human as white in opposition to the non-white Other.³ Therefore, despite the vampire/human love affair, the *Twilight* films ultimately promote white racial purity.

Through the narrative's characterization of werewolves and the filmic discourse, the first two *Twilight* films especially – *Twilight* (2008) and *New Moon* (2009) – ultimately dehumanize Jacob Black and his Quileute community through stigmatizing Indigenous

³ To some extent, this argument is not new. Several critics have already noted the ways in which Edward is characterized as white in contrast to Jacob as racially Other through the racial binary's metonymical links to other concepts – some of which I repeat here – and through their competition over Bella. See, for instance, Melissa Burkley's 2011 "Is *Twilight* Prejudiced?: Is Racism a Major Theme in *Twilight*?" and Natalie Wilson's 2010 "Got Vampire Privilege?: The Whiteness of *Twilight*." My focus is additionally on how the films appear to use both literal and figurative meanings that point to the racial binary as a pre-discursive, extra-diegetical "reality."

stereotypes and metaphors that also essentialize racial difference. For instance, when Bella learns about the existence of the werewolf species from Jacob, he tells her that it is a “gene” which is carried and transmitted among “a few lucky members of the tribe” (*New Moon* 1:11:30). In this example, Jacob characterizes both the Quileute werewolves within the diegesis as well as Quileute tribal members, and perhaps other Indigenous groups, extra-diegetically. Characterized as a biological trait which is grounded in the body’s inner cellular structure, the werewolf operates figuratively to reinforce the idea of inherent anatomical differences within the Quileute tribal body.⁴ Regardless of the traditional figurative implications of the werewolf species that involve associations among Indigeneity, savagery, and animality, the *Twilight* narratives thus instantiate scientific racial discourse, reinforcing the notion that Quileute anatomy is biologically distinct from other ethnic or racial groups.⁵

More than using the metaphor of the body’s interior as the causative signifier for the body’s exterior (whether referring to the stereotypical physical traits of Native Americans or to the wolf), Jacob’s metamorphosis highlights an identity category that comprises tattoos, specific clothing and hairstyles, and a personality modification as well. Indeed, before his first transformation and identification as a werewolf (or as having the werewolf “gene”), Jacob wears his hair long and is appropriately dressed for the cold and gloomy weather in the Pacific Northwest, attired in long sleeved shirts and pants. He and Bella initially observe another group of young men (the “*La Push* gang”), also part of his tribe, from afar. These characters appear

⁴ Meyer did her homework regarding the tribe’s wolf legends, but altered/adapted them for her fictive world. Regardless, Jacob’s explanation turns the metaphysical belief into a biological difference. With regards to Meyer’s depiction of their group, “the Quileute community’s feelings about the series vary.” Although the films may have “helped the Quileute cause in ... land legislation” (to return 785 acres “to the Quileute from nearby Olympic National Park”), “[s]ome of the elders ... said, ‘Well, we know it’s fiction, we know who we are,’ ... Other tribe members were offended by the transformation of their origin story and Wolf Society into a fantasy werewolf connection” (Jacobs 2012). For more detail about how the films have affected the Quileute tribe and their land see Christine M. Mitchell’s 2010 essay, “Forks, Washington: From Farms to Forests to Fans.” For a more detailed analysis of how Meyer borrowed from Quileute legends, see also Kristian Jensen’s 2010 “Noble Werewolves or Native Shapeshifters?”

⁵ One such example of scientific racism vis-à-vis Native Americans is the “firewater myth” which states that Native Americans are genetically more inclined to alcoholism than Caucasians, and which still persists today.

as reckless, macho “bad boys.” In opposition to Jacob, they have short hair and wear nothing but torn denim shorts, exposing their tattoos and muscled torsos; and they have trouble controlling their tempers. Thus, the first sign of Jacob’s impending metamorphosis is inexplicable anger along with violent threats. The next time Bella sees him, his body bears the signs of his new identity: he too appears shirtless in denim shorts, with a muscular torso, a tattoo, and short hair. Jacob’s new appearance, anger management issues, and jealous possessiveness of Bella all work to reinforce a contemporary and fantastical version of the “savage” versus the “noble savage” dichotomy.⁶ What is more, “biology is destiny” in *Twilight*, when for example, Jacob tells Bella: “It’s not a lifestyle choice,” werewolves are “born (this) way” (1:11:50). He thus refers to a fairly common explanation invoked by individuals who identify as homosexual in order to counter the argument that homosexuality is a matter of choice or can be “cured.” It is also an explanation that has been used to defend difference and promote tolerance. But here, given the figurative implications that link the werewolf to the Quileute tribal member, and given the historical associations between Indigenous groups and savagery, along with its metonymical links to animality, Jacob’s remark is laden with problematic essentializing implications. Jacob’s visual and metaphorical representation of the Quileute body also aligns him with the concept of the body in opposition to the mind. In contrast, Edward is depicted as having an extraordinary amount of self-control over his “thirst” for Bella (mind over body), whereas Jacob’s semi-naked body is consistently visually present. But more than this, as the above insinuates, his body controls his mind.

⁶ In his essay “Noble Werewolves or Native Shape-Shifters?”, Kristian Jensen provides a reminder of the “Noble Savage” figure: “In contrast to the hostile and vicious images of indigenous people propagated since the European ‘discovery,’ this new conception in its variations essentially depicted American Indians as simple people, untainted by civilization, beneficent in nature, and morally upright in their ‘wild’ state” (n. pag.). Jensen argues that Meyer combined the traditional European figure of the werewolf – “anger can trigger their transformation” and “they are virile, passionate beings” with “aspects of the Quileute shape-shifter”: “they are in harmony with the human society they exist to serve, like the Noble Savage of Caucasian fancy” (n. pag.).

Other metonymical associations that accompany monstrous figures and complement the body/mind dichotomy, such as that of the werewolf and the vampire, are repeated in the *Twilight* films, and are actually accentuated by the competition for Bella's affection and body.⁷ Indeed, (and as I will show in my analysis of Wiseman's *Underworld*) despite the presence of several human characters, the narrative pits werewolf against vampire, pushing the spectator to read this dichotomy in relation to the animal versus human binary, and consequently to notions of wilderness/savagery versus civilization as well. Jacob's semi-nakedness might remind the spectator not only of stereotypical images of American Indians wearing little clothing, but it also serves to oppose him to Edward who very rarely exposes his torso. Edward's comparative "prudery" is of course justified by the fact that his skin shines in the sunlight and therefore reveals his identity as a vampire. But these signifiers, along with others, serve to construct the two characters through metaphors pointing to the civilized versus uncivilized, the human versus animal, and ultimately white versus racial Other binaries. For instance, Edward's clothing, his home, and the car he drives, position him and the Cullens as upper class ("echoing" white privilege, as Natalie Wilson argues [n. pag.]), while Jacob's more modest dwelling on the Quileute reservation, his means of transportation, and his grunge-style clothing categorize him as poor or lower-middle class. Edward's wealth is further symbolized by his sparkling skin, which Bella herself likens to "diamonds" (*Twilight* 50:30). As if this network of signifiers were not enough to construct Edward as a white and affluent "human," the filmic discourse often highlights his contrast with Jacob. For instance, once Jacob has joined the pack of werewolves, Bella confronts him while he is shirtless; the pair are standing in mud, under pouring rain and a dark, gloomy sky. After a close-up on Jacob, the camera cuts to a flashback: a shot of Bella and Edward lying in a grassy field with flowers while the sun

⁷ The love triangle dynamic is accentuated by the fact that no female werewolves are initially depicted (which is also the case in Wiseman's *Underworld*). In the *Twilight* saga, the first film in which we see a female werewolf is the fourth, *Breaking Dawn, part 1*, which is significantly when Bella and Edward marry and the love triangle plot officially ends.

shines down on them, giving way to Edward's glistening face, but not torso since he remains fully clothed. While Jacob exhibits the angry and somewhat aggressive behavior that Bella had previously been warned about, her memory with Edward is a peaceful moment in which the two merely stare into each other's eyes and smile. Furthermore, Bella's confrontation with Jacob takes place outside the Forks township and on the Quileute reservation. Accordingly, the filmic discourse characterizes Jacob and the space in which he resides as dark and dangerous. For Bella, this means an association with the Other who is quite literally positioned outside the boundaries defining the white American citizen. In contrast, a union with Edward appears to be blessed by heaven.⁸

In these ways, despite Edward's Otherness through vampirism, and despite the potential threat he poses to Bella's physical safety in craving her blood, he is then framed as relatively normative and thus the "safer" choice for her, because Jacob comes to represent both racial and species miscegenation. While Edward's whiteness allows for his vampirism to function figuratively for somewhat non-traditional significations (such as saintliness), Jacob's monstrosity is constructed as a metaphor that reinforces his racial Otherness. Edward is at first a vampiric version of the "bad boy," the dangerous and mysterious rebel to whom all the high-school girls are drawn, while he is also a means to render possible the impossible love story

⁸ Jacob's last name, "Black," underlines these associations and their metonymical links to the racial binary. Interestingly, the first time Edward fully removes his shirt is only at the climax of the second film, *New Moon*. Debra Dudek notes the opposition between Jacob's and Edward's torsos: "Jacob's toned and muscular body provides a startling contrast to Edward's nearly-emaciated torso" (67). Of course, Edward's shirt removal plays an important function in the plot: it is in an attempt to expose his vampire identity to the world in order to be sentenced to death by the ruling vampires, the Volturi. Edward's naked torso thus aligns him with death (a concept which is otherwise quite commonly linked to the figure of the vampire) – and his extreme paleness and "nearly-emaciated" form emphasizes this – while Jacob is conversely a vision of health, and is, therefore, aligned with life. However, the context of Edward's suicidal torso shapes the associations with the life/death binary. The scene takes place in a Vatican-like setting. Dudek notes that with the "religious iconography," "Edward embodies the emaciated eroticism of a martyr" (*idem*). As Bella jumps into his arms, Edward significantly says, "Heaven" (1:34:47). Rather than being aligned with death, Edward appears as almost Christ-like, pointing to a Biblical instead of a vampiric version of eternal life, as if blessed by "heaven" once again. In his work *White: Essays on Race and Culture*, Richard Dyer outlines the ways in which whiteness has often been metonymically linked to concepts of divinity. So while it could be argued that Edward is divine-like through his superhuman vampire traits, one could also say that it is precisely this divinity that reinforces his whiteness and, therefore, his alignment with the "human."

(between a vampire and a human). His non-normativity (vampirism) is normalized (partly through high-school romance coding). Arguably, it is Jacob, despite his long hair and flagrant Indigenous identity, who initially appears to be the “safer” potential partner. He plays the “good” to Edward’s “bad” boy, and his human identity poses no threat to species distinctions in the way that a relationship with Edward does. On the figurative level, Bella’s potential relationship with Jacob does not represent miscegenation – he remains human, while the first film goes through a long list of what makes Edward different from Bella (old age, superhuman powers, no need to sleep, sparkling skin, and last but not least, an overwhelming lust for Bella’s blood). Even including the narratives’ references to the extra-diegetical “reality” of racial identity categories, Edward’s extreme whiteness does not appear to trump Jacob’s racial Otherness and the former appears as most threatening to normativity. However, once Jacob’s identity as a werewolf becomes apparent, it is clearly Edward who becomes the “safer” choice. As Natalie Wilson argues, Jacob “is framed as the *real* and more dangerous monster” (n. pag.). Additionally, his body – given his capacity to shape-shift into a giant wolf – continually exceeds its own boundaries, those that would otherwise mark him as identifiably human.

Interestingly, Jacob’s excess is both used to shape and is shaped by the normativity of Edward’s and Bella’s mixing.⁹ These relative positionings exist within the narrative at the same time that they construct the “human” in relation to whiteness versus the racial Other. Stephenie Meyer herself has admitted that Jacob was initially merely a plot “device” that enabled the “outing” of Edward to Bella:

Originally Jacob was just a device. In *Twilight*, Bella needed a way to find out the truth about Edward, and the conveniently located Quileute Tribe, with all their

⁹ Of course, Jacob’s excess is abject if only because he defines “the outside” and the Other in relation to Edward’s normality. However, Jacob’s excess and abject Otherness are not nearly as “threatening” to racial purity as that of the werewolf characters in Wiseman’s *Underworld* and the character of Blade in Norrington’s film. This can be said of both his character within the plot – he is eventually “adopted” and “tamed” by the Cullens, much like the figure of the “noble savage” – and of his visual depiction in the filmic discourse. For instance, although the Quileute werewolves are much larger than regular wolves, they nevertheless have the same shape and are recognizable as wolves. As I will explain below, this is not the case for the werewolves in *Underworld* which appear more as a mutated or “monstrous” hybrid between man and wolf.

fantastic legends, provided a cool option for that revelation. And so Jacob was born – born to tell Bella Edward’s secret. (n. pag.)

The fact that Meyer found it necessary to use the Quileute Tribe for Edward’s revelation suggests that the tribe and Jacob were already marked as Other, different from “normal,” “white” humans who did not or could not know the Cullens’ secret. Jacob was thus created and his character constructed as a means to reinforce Edward’s and Bella’s couple, despite (and in part, because of) Jacob’s desire to separate them. Some of the film’s iconography also demonstrates how Jacob’s character and his “kind” shape and normalize the couple. In Figure 7 (see Appendix), for instance, Bella and Edward’s loving embrace is outlined by the werewolf, while the werewolf’s head is also shaped by the couple. In Figure 8, the characters’ positions symbolize their mutual roles in the film. While Jacob continues to attempt to play the part of Bella’s bodyguard vis-à-vis Edward, he ultimately functions as another hurdle that the couple must overcome. More than this, in *Twilight: New Moon*, Jacob informs Bella that it is the presence of vampires around the Quileute reservation that provokes his tribal members’ metamorphosis into werewolves: “When a blood-sucker moves into town, the fever sets in” (1:11:30). Jacob’s body is thus shaped by Edward and Bella in quite a literal sense within the narrative. Though Edward is not in Forks at the time, Jacob blames him for his metamorphosis. Jacob’s protection (and over-protectiveness) of Bella is also characterized as a biological necessity, given that “Meyer’s creatures are in harmony with the human society that they exist to serve” (Jensen, n. pag.).¹⁰ Furthermore, like his body, Jacob’s anger and protectiveness of

¹⁰ Jacob’s biological need to protect Bella is later doubled through his “imprinting” on Renesmee, Edward and Bella’s daughter. Indeed, according to Jacob, Bella’s destiny as Renesmee’s mother must be the reason Jacob had always felt drawn to her, and to the need to protect her (*Twilight: Breaking Dawn – Part 2*, 13:05). Of course, it could be argued that the narratives then hint at a future of inter-species mixing between Jacob (werewolf) and Renesmee (half-human, half-vampire). But, as Wilson points out, Jacob is “tamed,” “civilized,” allowing him to “integrate” into the Cullen family: Bella “as future vampire, tames his wolfishness, preparing him to enter the Cullen world – first via being allowed into their house, then dressed in ‘civilized’ clothes, then ultimately made a family member through his imprinting on Renesmee. Not only is he colonized by these vampires, he now has godly Edward as a father. What a nice little assimilationist fairy tale” (n. pag.). The foreshadowing of Jacob’s future with Renesmee thus participates in the ways that the films subtly evoke and evade a reference to miscegenation. Indeed, it is only once Jacob has abandoned his Quileute reservation and integrated into the Cullen sphere of wealth, whiteness, and Americanness, that “mating” with

Bella are continually characterized as excessive, which then in turn position Edward's demeanor and behavior towards Bella as relatively calm and rational. In these ways, while Edward's characterization pushes the definition of "human" to an extreme, Jacob's excess provides the "outside," the Otherness, that normalizes Edward and allows him to appear identifiably "human." Of course, part of this construction and relative positioning of the "human" vis-à-vis the Other involve their metonymical associations with whiteness and racial Otherness.¹¹

Evidently, Bella's fairy tale vampire romance would not be complete without marriage and a child, and it is here that the concept of miscegenation is both carefully evoked and evaded, whether in reference to Bella's transformation or to Renesmee, the half-human, half-vampire child she and Edward produce.¹² With regards to Bella herself, Edward only agrees to "turn" her if she agrees to marry him. The bite is then clearly likened to sexual intercourse – Edward appears as the "perfect gentleman" and only allows himself to satiate his desire for Bella once married – and Bella's transformation is later configured in large part as a transition from a teenage, virginal state to womanhood (with a beauty make-over). Despite this agreement, Bella's turning is postponed and instead comes as the ultimate means to save her from a life-threatening pregnancy and childbirth. In this way, if Bella's turning should figuratively refer to miscegenation in the slightest, or even quite simply represent an act that might threaten

Renesmee becomes imaginable. At the same time, such a change in position and erasure of Otherness implies that there is little to no "threat" to species or racial purity. More on this below.

¹¹ Admittedly, the Cullens are not the only vampires in the *Twilight* narratives, though for the first three installments they are the only white American and "vegetarian" vampires we see. It is notable that the fifth film, *Breaking Dawn, part 2*, introduces peaceful vampires from around the world. One could then argue that the narratives promote diversity and do not necessarily equate the figure of the vampire to whiteness. However, these secondary vampire characters are laden with cultural and ethnic stereotypes and further normalize Edward and his fellow Cullens, reinforcing their position as white.

¹² The fairy tale story is not only enacted through the couple's "happily ever after," but Bella's death after childbirth followed by her re-birth as a vampire also portrays a vampiric version of Snow White. This is the first time Edward bites Bella, and she recovers from her emaciated form in a spectacular manner (her transformation into a vampire is aided by her sudden beautification, complete with make-up). Significantly, Kristen Stewart (the actress who plays Bella) would go on to portray the fairy tale princess in the 2012 *Snow White and the Huntsman*. For more on the saga's references to the fairy tale, see Janice Hawes' 2010 essay, "Sleeping Beauty and the Idealized Undead: Avoiding Adolescence."

identity categories, it becomes the “last resort,” the only way to save the heroine’s life. Moreover, this tentative “threat” to identity categories is easily soothed by an essentialist remark from Bella. As she savors her new-found superhuman powers, her voice-over tells us: “I was born to be a vampire” (*Breaking Dawn, part 2*, 30:00). Bella’s turning is then configured not so much as a transformation as it is a sort of return to her “natural” state, an accomplishment of her destiny.¹³ Even Bella’s special superhuman “gift” as a vampire is pre-figured while she is still human. As a vampire, she is a “shield” and, as Edward says in the final film, this was why he was never able to read her mind when she was human (48:06).¹⁴ This is also why he was (at least partly) initially drawn to her. In these ways, the *Twilight* films suggest that Bella was always already a vampire, and accordingly, Edward and Bella were also “destined” for each other. In this light, there is no potential species-mixing, nor allegorical racial mixing.

A similar strategy of both evoking and resolving a potential threat to identity categories is employed with regards to Renesmee. Yet the conflicts that once surrounded Bella’s body and identity, which shift to her daughter, center on whether or not the unborn child should even be allowed to live. While Bella is pregnant, the narrative instantiates anti-miscegenation discourse: “What they’ve bred” is “unnatural,” “dangerous,” a “monstrosity,” “an abomination,” and humans must be protected from “it” (1:06:00). However, this discourse is displaced from the mouths of (figurative) white supremacists to those of the Quileute werewolves. Even though most of Bella’s vampire entourage believes that she should have an abortion because of the danger the fetus poses to Bella’s life, the more significant threat to the

¹³ *Breaking Dawn, part 1* portrays this configuration by replaying Bella’s human life in reverse as she dies and is reborn as a vampire.

¹⁴ The gender implications of Bella’s “gift” are flagrantly problematic. Several critics have already noted the ways in which Bella’s human body is continually bashed and bruised throughout the *Twilight* narratives, all in the “name of love” for Edward, and then for their child. Sarah Schwartzman also notes that the narratives provide a “setup that strongly endorses a pro-life message ... Even when the baby is killing her ... Bella and Rosalie consider it their sacred maternal responsibility to protect the baby” (n. pag.). Bella’s characterization as the stereotypical fragile, self-sacrificial female is then extended to her vampire identity. She may no longer be fragile, but her “gift” as a “shield” contributes to the stereotype of the mother, for she then quite literally becomes the embodiment of maternal protection.

unborn child comes from the species / racial Other. Just as Jacob fights to prevent Bella from embracing vampirism and ultimately from becoming a vampire, the werewolves operate as the non-human Other that protects and preserves humans and their identity from vampirism. But while the transformation of a human into a vampire is to be avoided at all costs, mixing the species is apparently unfathomable. Nevertheless, (despite Bella's dangerous pregnancy) Renesmee, as the daughter of the heroine and the result of Bella and Edward's fairy tale romance, is not a threat, neither literally nor figuratively. Consequently, the werewolves are initially positioned as the primary antagonists to the happy family. Their perspective is not meant to be trusted, which in turn indirectly characterizes Renesmee as the opposite of the above exclamations: she is not "dangerous," not "monstrous," not "an abomination," and importantly, she is "natural" and is accordingly normalized. She continues to be normalized in the final installment of the *Twilight* saga. Although she initially shocks and scares the vampires who eventually meet her, and although her existence provokes a potential war with the Volturi (the vampire world-leaders), it is not because of her half-vampire, half-human identity. These problems are instead due to a case of mistaken identity because, as we quickly discover, "hybrid" human/vampire children are so rare that Renesmee seems to be only the second in existence.¹⁵ This knowledge reassures rather than frightens. It also safeguards the species/racial binary. Since Renesmee is so extremely unique, there will be no others like her. Ultimately, while the *Twilight* films may provide a looser interpretation of what "human" identity is, the vampire subject position is largely essentialized as white through its opposition to and exclusions of the (racial) Other.

¹⁵ I am aware of the meanings the term "hybrid" carries and the way it was used in nineteenth-century scientific racism, particularly in (anti-)miscegenation discourse, as Robert Young outlines in his work *Colonial Desire*, for instance. I use it here for lack of a better word.

Blade

Stephen Norrington's 1998 *Blade* shares themes, ("monstrous") character traits, as well as similar metaphorical and metonymical relationships with the *Twilight* saga films, but with the significant difference that Norrington's film renders explicit some of its extra-diegetical references to miscegenation and racial anxiety. Like Renesmee, Blade is a unique "hybrid" half-human, half-vampire. Also like *Twilight*, there are three species groups and the film is primarily focalized through a human female character. Yet in *Blade*, this female character is Black and the somatic signifiers of the main characters' skin color are given meaning through the film's use of traditional allegory. Norrington's text actually involves two allegories which point to miscegenation. Blade's "hybridity" is central to the plot, and Norrington draws extensively from the comic-book character's back-story where Blade's mixed-status and super powers come from a white vampire's attack on his pregnant Black mother. Allegorically, Blade's species hybridity refers to miscegenation and mixed-race identity. The second allegory positions Blade at the center of a species war among "pure-blood" vampires, "turned" vampires, and humans. Not only does the term "pure blood" point to the notion of racial purity, but the narrative also characterizes each group through extra-diegetical associations with race and class. Following its source in the comic book character, Blade's role as a (super)hero is to protect humans from vampires, but the film's characterization of "turned" vampires implies that Blade is also meant to preserve the boundary between the species / racial groups, and therefore, to ensure that no other human becomes "miscegenated" like himself.¹⁶ In one sense, Blade is like Edward in the *Twilight* films – Blade's struggle to control his vampirism is characterized as the classic mind/body opposition, where his body threatens to overcome his "self." Initially, it might appear that the film attempts to undo the essentializing relationship

¹⁶ In his original comic book appearance in *Tomb of Dracula* (1973), Blade teams up with Van Helsing and his granddaughter in their hunt for Dracula.

between the body and the inner self. Yet, it is through the metonymical construction of meanings associated with Blade's body as Black and as vampiric, that the film naturalizes Black masculinity as excessive, "monstrous," and Other. Moreover, the battle that Blade wages within himself or against his own body functions as a synecdoche for the war he fights against vampires in an effort to keep them from overpowering and "infecting" the human population. In this sense, Blade is not like Edward. Despite his (super)hero status, Blade is as Other and as abject to the white American subject as Jacob, if not more so. Although Norrington's film foregrounds racial tensions, exposing rather than denying racial anxiety, Blade's characterization as excessively Other and abject reinforces racial differences as well as the boundaries that define the white American subject. Though my analysis primarily examines Norrington's film, a brief look at the intertextual construction of Blade's character in comic books is necessary to comprehend fully the dynamics on which Norrington focuses. Although Blade's character has gone through many changes since his creation in the 1970's, his characterization as a black (hyper)masculine subject (or rather object) has continually operated through traits pointing to excess and non-normativity.

Blade's initial appearance and characterization in the 1973 Marvel *Tomb of Dracula* series did not involve any reference to a partially Other, "monstrous," or vampiric self, and he is instead rendered Other through the concept of Black (hyper)masculinity.¹⁷ From the start, Blade's character was laden with the predominant stereotypes of 1970's Black masculinity, and was based on a stereotypical understanding and reinforcement of the Black masculine hero figure. Marvel's creation of Blade was part of a 1970's trend in comic books to diversify its heroes as Other than white men. Perhaps due to the preceding lack of complex African-American (comic book) heroic characters, the *Tomb of Dracula* writer Marv Wolfman drew

¹⁷ The later revelation of Blade's back story involves a vampire who bit his mother just prior to Blade's birth, and explains his superior strength and speed. But the character initially remained constructed as more "human" than inhuman.

from and repeated the Black masculine “norms” of Blaxploitation film characters, such as Shaft, in his writing of Blade.¹⁸ In addition, the original design of Blade by penciler Gene Colan was reportedly based on a Black NFL player, Jim Brown (Gelder 107). In other words, Blade was constructed through the restricted visual representation of (heroic) Black masculinity in two domains: Blaxploitation film and the world of sports. In the same way that Shaft and Jim Brown stood as figures of the Black masculine hero, or synecdoches for an entire group, Blade in turn functioned as a stereotypical representation of the ways in which the concepts of Blackness and masculinity were assumed to work together.

Likewise, Blade’s speech patterns point to stereotypes of 1970’s Black masculinity to such an extent that Blade can be visually present yet absent from the panel. For instance, his speech often appears in a panel preceding his visual entrance, “teaching characters within the comic, as well as the flesh-and-blood audience, to anticipate his appearance based on his manner of speaking” (Nixon 150). The writer Marv Wolfman has himself noted that his early Blade dialogue was “cliché ‘Marvel Black’ dialogue” (Greenberger, n.pag.). Elizabeth Nixon has remarked that “Blade frequently drops his g’s and sprinkles his speech liberally with ‘brother’ and ‘dig’” (150). She highlights the fact that the series makes clear that “the way he speaks is distinctive,” so much so that it marks his difference from the white (masculine) characters of the series, as well as from the vampire, so although the latter is clearly characterized as non-normative, so too is Blade. He is also the only character who uses the synecdoches of “fangs” and “red-eyes” to refer to Dracula, consistently evoking the visual signifiers that are used to depict Dracula’s vampirism and what distinguishes him from humans. As if to draw a linguistic parallel between the two non-normative characters, Dracula also uses synecdoche, using the term “black” as both adjective and noun to refer to Blade, pointing to the visual signifier of Blade’s skin color that also distinguishes him from the other human

¹⁸ Elizabeth Nixon notes that Douglas Work “dismisses Blade as yet another Shaft wannabe” (151).

characters. Yet overall, Dracula's manner of speech aligns him with the human characters, while Blade's does not and rather contributes to the construction of his Blackness. Furthermore, Blade's speech represents a denial of his character's origin in London. Although Nixon suggests that "British Blade's" frequent identification "by means of his black American accent is one of the ways in which *The Tomb of Dracula* asks readers to question what elements constitute national and racial identities," (150) such a characterization essentializes the relationship between skin color and a racial category through a certain manner of speaking.

However, Blade's mere presence was eventually deemed excessive by the very person who had created him, and the character's subsequent absence from the series reflects anxiety that supersedes concerns about how to construct and represent a Black masculine hero, resulting in the question of whether or not to include him at all.¹⁹ Wolfman seemed to feel that there was a danger that this "cliché" but "hip" 1970's Black masculine character could become more popular than the writer had intended, as if Blade might escape his control: "I knew if I let him, Blade would eclipse the other characters so I pulled him back and let original supporting characters shine" (quoted in Greenberger, n. pag.). It is, of course, unclear whether or not the character's racial identification was involved in Wolfman's choice. Yet the concern about one Black character overpowering a handful of white characters certainly has problematic racial implications, as if Blade could potentially threaten a space that belongs to whiteness. Even Wolfman's figurative language is telling, with Blade acting as an "eclipse," bringing darkness and blocking the light in which other (white) characters can "shine." In any case, in addition to keeping Blade absent from several issues, Wolfman and Colan employed other strategies to keep Blade from "eclipsing other characters." For instance, in Issue No. 61, Blade is visually present in only two of the nine panels in which the vampire-hunting group is depicted, and he

¹⁹ Blade was not the only non-white character to disappear shortly after his creation. Jeffrey Brown has noted that Blade's appearance in *Tomb of Dracula* was part of the "short-lived explosion of minority heroes" in comic books of the 1970's (19).

is on the edge of the panel and/or in the background (see Figures 9 and 10 in the Appendix). While visually present, he remains absent from the dialogue, partially obstructed from the reader's view by another character as well as by her speech bubble. Ironically then, Wolfman's fear of developing Blade's character and of Blade exceeding the writer's control, contributed to his lack of complexity and his minimalization, a reduction to merely a stereotypical synecdoche of the Black masculine hero. Accordingly, the character remained relatively absent from comic books until the 1990's.

While in Wolfman's 1970's *Tomb of Dracula* series, Blade's excess involves a potential exceeding of panels, the bounds of the narrative, and of the writer's control, Blade's later depiction in the 1990's *Nightstalkers* series characterizes Blade and his Black masculinity as excessively hypermasculine to the extent that the character was visually "monstrous." Even though his character was not yet written as half-vampire, Blade's red eyes (in Figures 11 and 12) and fang-like drool (in Figure 12), in addition to the somatic signifiers that point to his hypermasculinity – extremely large muscles and build, the phallic positioning of two bullets hanging below his crotch (Figure 11) – work to situate Black masculinity as excessive and non-normative. Admittedly, the concept of Black masculinity was conditioned by the 1980's aesthetic of white hypermasculinity popularized by characters such as Arnold Schwarzenegger's Conan the Barbarian and the Terminator. Yet the conjunction of somatic and linguistic signifiers in such images as these undoubtedly contributed to the construction of Black masculinity as non-normative and threatening. For instance, in Figure 12, Blade is again depicted as potentially exceeding his narrative by looking and charging at the reader as his sleeve cuff clearly "departs" from the panel boundaries and enters the gutter. Blade's image as a hero is further compromised by the first words of the issue, which define the character as possessed of "blood lust, raw aggression, and uncompromising ruthlessness" with emphasis placed on "blood," "lust," "aggression" and "ruthlessness": words and concepts that were often

used to stigmatize Black Americans as animalistic and savage in U.S. scientific and political discourses.²⁰ Blade's "lust" is visually defined on the cover of the issue, despite the fact that the unconscious white female on the cover is a villain. Blade's menacing stance and excessive masculinity, along with the emphasis on his skin color through dark blue clothing – in contrast with her white skin and bandaging – are visual reminders of the stereotyping of Black men as rapists of white women. As Robyn Wiegman might argue, such an image recalls "the myth of the black male rapist ... within the 'logic' of an excessive hypermasculinization" (84). As a Black character, Blade is constructed through the concepts of excessive masculinity and animality – concepts that have been part of the construction of Blackness, and the Black male in particular, as non-normative. Thus, well before his 1998 characterization as half-vampire, Blade's Blackness combined with a superhero status had contributed to his depiction as "monstrous" by essentializing Black masculinity as excessive and non-normative and already exhibits the ways in which his character bears witness to the persistence of racial anxiety.

Although Stephen Norrington's 1998 film *Blade* borrows the basis of its storyline from a later comic book series, in which the character has a more realistic human appearance, Wesley Snipes' Blade continues the trend started in the earlier comic book series which naturalizes Black (hyper)masculinity as monstrously Other through the film's aesthetics and its use of allegory.²¹ One allegory points to miscegenation through Blade's character, the ways in which he became half-human / half-vampire, and the mysteries of his parentage. Blade later discovers that his vampire "father" is the white Deacon Frost, the villain against whom he has been fighting throughout the film. By creating a white male vampire, who bites a Black female

²⁰ See my discussion of animality in Chapter Two.

²¹ In *Blade: the Vampire Hunter* (written by Ian Edginton, with Douglas Wheatley as penciler), Blade's more human appearance is apparent especially when contrasted with the "monstrous" appearances of the vampires against whom he fights. See issue number 7 for example where Blade fights Deacon Frost. In this issue in particular, when Deacon morphs into a "vampire deity," Blade is implicitly characterized as more "human" in contrast to Deacon's green skin, additional appendages (horns, wings, and snake-like tongues), and a large toothy mouth in place of a stomach. (See Figure 13.) In Norrington's film, however, Deacon's transformation into a "blood god" does not affect his body, except that his eyes turn red. As a result, it is Blade who continues to provide the corporeal image of monstrosity. (More on this below.)

human, who then gives birth to a “mixed-blood” child, the narrative’s evocation of miscegenation is evident as a counter-narrative to the figure of the Black male rapist evoking fears of miscegenation in nineteenth-century discourse. The comic book’s depiction of Deacon Frost as a Southern religious leader makes this symbolism even clearer as it aligns the attack on Blade’s mother with the history of the rape of female slaves by white Southern plantation owners. Like his comic-book character, Deacon is also in quest of world domination, and though he is not a “Southern” religious leader, he has a devout group of followers. Norrington borrows from a storyline in the 1995 comic book series *Blade, The Vampire-Hunter* in which Deacon becomes a “vampire deity” (Vol. 1, No. 7, n. pag.). Yet, the film makes a significant alteration to his character, which then provides another allegorical reference to racial difference. Deacon is a “turned” vampire who faces prejudice from “pure-blood” vampires. In a sense then, Deacon, like Blade, is “miscegenated” and threatens species (or racial) categorization. If any character in Norrington’s film were to resemble Stoker’s Dracula, or the vampire that “pollutes bloodlines” and is a “vector of category transformation,” it is Deacon (Haraway, 1997, 214).²² The narrative thus adds another level of meaning that reflects racial anxiety, displacing the focus in the comic books away from the allegorical reference to racial injustice and the sexual exploitation of Black female slaves onto the question of whether or not racial mixing should occur at all.²³ The answer to this question is not only provided through Blade’s role as a (super)hero and Deacon’s as a villain, but also through the excessive abjectification of Blade’s body and character.

²² Donna Haraway sees this function of the figure of the vampire in a positive way, as a means to disrupt, destabilize, and question racial purity and hegemony (1997, 214). Of course, Stoker’s Dracula and the character of Deacon are villains because of this threat. Some of the vampire narratives that I examine in the following chapters position the figure in the same light as Haraway.

²³ Deacon’s desire to turn all humans into vampires could be interpreted as a repetition of what the character has done to Blade’s mother on a massive scale. Nevertheless, as I intend to show, the film promotes the protection of racial categories, in part by objectifying and abjectifying the character of Blade.

Although Norrington's film consists of an ethnically diverse cast in all three groups of pure-blood, turned vampires, and humans – which might suggest that somatic signifiers such as skin color are not to be read in conjunction with this (second) allegory – Blade's (or Wesley Snipe's) Blackness, along with Deacon Frost's (or Stephen Dorff's) whiteness, are key to the ways in which the narrative uses one of its allegories to point to racial injustice. The film uses the skin color of its two main characters to reverse the power dynamic and the racial implications to which a *Dracula*-type narrative might otherwise refer. In this allegory, rather than constructing the vampire as the “miscegenated” – the polluted and polluting agent who endangers the racial purity of his female victim – the vampire is instead used as a figure for the white supremacist who exploits the Black female body. Deacon's whiteness is further emphasized through metonymical associations with class – he is a wealthy business owner who (literally) preys on the lower classes, and he resides in a luxurious penthouse. What is more,

Blade discovers towards the end of the film that his mother is “alive,” a vampire, dwelling by Deacon's side, who claims ownership of her. He tells Blade to “give ... up [the fight]. She belongs to me Buddy.” In addition, Blade's mother appears as a ready and willing sex-slave when her bed/coffin opens as if it were operated by remote-control. (Frohreich, 2013, 36)

Aside from the obvious Oedipal dilemma that this trio of characters presents, Blade's war with Deacon is also configured as a means through which to fight the racial injustice that he and his mother have suffered, as well as an attempt to reclaim “ownership” of his mother's body. Highlighting the white slave-owner / Black female slave parallel, Blade says to his mother immediately before he kills her: “I must release you” (1:45:25). Blade represents, of course, the result of their “miscegenation” – half-human and half-vampire – while figuratively pointing to the extra-diegetical “literal” meanings of half-white and half-Black.

Yet, more than sending a message about racial injustice, the film's characterization of the mother in conjunction with racial and gender stereotypes remains problematic. Her characterization “propagates the stigmatization of African-American women ... as

‘monstrous’” (Frohreich, 2013, 36). Within the distinction between pure-blood and turned vampires, the latter group is framed throughout the film as “diseased” (more on this later). Blade’s mother illustrates the way this metaphor is also metonymically linked to hypersexuality and/or sexual perversion when, “at the film’s climax, she alternately attempts to seduce him and kill him” (*idem*). The scene thus instantiates the tropes of nineteenth-century scientific discourse which framed the racial Other, miscegenation, and mixed-race persons as diseased. Notably, Sander Gilman remarks that syphilis was once tightly linked to Blackness, and Black women in particular: “The association of the black, especially the black female, with the syphilophobia of the late nineteenth century was ... manifest. Black females do not merely represent the sexualized female, they also represent the female as the source of corruption and disease” (1985, 231). In this sense, Blade’s status as “miscegenated,” and suffering from the “disease” of vampirism, are framed as equally the “fault” of his mother and Deacon. Moreover, an emphasis is placed on the loss of this potential maternal figure. Her death at the moment of Blade’s birth opens the film, along with a POV shot from Blade, showing his mother reaching towards him as she dies. This image of his mother as a loving yet innocent, dying victim is repeated in a flashback when Blade sees Dr. Karen Jensen, a Black hematologist, who has just been attacked by one of Deacon’s vampire minions, lying on a hospital floor. The parallel with the mother is clear; Blade feels compelled to save her and the narrative thus constructs Karen as the mother’s counterpart (much as the white Whistler character operates as a counter father-figure to Deacon). Not only does she become a maternal figure for Blade – she works on a cure for him and is self-sacrificing, letting him drink her blood when he needs it – but she also embodies a more positive construction of Black femininity.²⁴ However, despite the fact that she is a doctor, and a courageous and active character, she normalizes the maternal role, and

²⁴ Considering that Karen plays a maternal role, it would be tempting to read this scene as a metaphor for breast-feeding. But the scene is rather framed as an aggressive sexual encounter. More on this later.

by contrast, the non-normativity of Blade's mother as hypersexual and diseased. Ultimately, Norrington's choice to alter Blade's backstory and include Blade's mother as a vampire reflects racial anxiety surrounding the Black female body rather than the theme of racial injustice to which the comic books referred.

While the stereotypes that characterize Blade's mother, along with her death at the film's climax, dispel any threat to racial purity that this storyline poses, the narrative's second allegory also points to racial anxiety. In this traditional kind of allegory – a series of extended metaphors with extra-diegetical references – turned vampires threaten the hegemony of the pure-blood vampires who have maintained peace with humans for centuries. There is little difference between the ways in which members of each group are characterized, so that each character operates as a synecdoche for the entire group. With regards to the pure-blood vampires, despite ethnically diverse casting, they point to white racial purity and hegemony. Their characterization illustrates the ways in which race and class intersect: they sit at a long table in a corporate boardroom and appear to operate as a board of directors. The lead vampire speaks with a French accent and thereby provides a reference to the figure of the decadent white European. In a meeting with Deacon, it becomes clear that only "pure-blood" vampires are admitted to this elite circle in which vampire business and assets are strictly controlled. Despite Deacon's wealth, his difference as a turned vampire marks him as inferior. Aside from Deacon, we see turned vampires who work for him. While they enjoy the luxury his home has to offer, they otherwise appear in the dark and dingy setting where the opening scene of the film takes place: a meat factory that hides an underground vampire club in which blood pours out of the fire sprinkler system. This first scene is focalized through a human who unwittingly finds himself surrounded by blood-covered vampires, growling and menacing him with their fangs. This is perhaps why James Holte writes: "*Blade* is a throwback to an earlier vision of the vampire as a bloodthirsty monster that looks on humanity as simply a source of food. In

Blade vampires are vicious, vampires hunt humans, and the screen is full of blood and body parts” (n. pag.). Yet Holte’s comment does not take into account the characterization of the pure-blood vampires who are never seen acting violently, feeding from humans (or even with their fangs out), or engaging in sexual promiscuity.²⁵ In contrast, sexual encounters among turned vampires abound. While this suggests something about age associations, turned vampires are clearly characterized as animalistic and hypersexual, a “throwback,” as Holte says, to a Dracula-like vampire.²⁶ Along with the concepts of animality and hypersexuality, *Blade*’s turned vampires share with Dracula the connection to disease.

The metonymical link between disease and miscegenation has a long history (see Chapter Three), and Norrington’s film repeats these associations. Rather than positioning turned vampires as mere vampires in and of themselves, the narrative constantly reminds the spectator of the disease metaphor, thereby characterizing turned vampires as infected beings. This is the implication behind Blade’s “condition” because the virus was transmitted to him through his mother’s infection *in utero*. Blade calls it a “blood sickness,” and is often depicted medicating himself with injections in order to keep vampire-like side effects from affecting him. Karen’s character provides additional context for the narrative’s focus on disease. The film’s introduction of Karen takes place in the hospital – the camera provides a close-up of her face, pans down to her name tag with the title of hematologist, and then cuts to a shot of the blood cells she sees through her microscope. When the colleague who took the blood sample from a turned vampire approaches her, she explains that the blood cell configuration cannot be “possible” and assumes he is playing a trick on her. After being bitten and rescued by Blade,

²⁵ If not asexual, pure-blood vampires appear to be androgynous. Both women and men wear dark business suits. One woman wears no make-up, with her hair up and tightly styled, while one man wears his hair in long braids.

²⁶ There are metonymical associations with age and maturity that are linked to the settings and behavior of turned versus pure-blood vampires. One can also argue that turned vampires are “young” vampires (having recently “turned” from human to vampire), and behave as such, rebelling against the “older” vampires. Moreover, pure-blood vampires appear to represent the “Old World” order in contrast to the “New World” order that Deacon attempts to create, one which effaces aristocratic distinctions.

Karen develops a “cure” for herself. This is what she tells Deacon later when he threatens to turn her: “Go ahead. I’ll just keep curing myself” (1:21:50). To underline the association between turned vampires and disease, she continues, telling Deacon what turned vampires are: “Vampires like you aren’t a species. You’re just infected, a virus, a sexually-transmitted disease” (*idem*). Karen thus insinuates that pure-blood vampires are “natural,” a “species,” while turned vampires are conversely abnormal, an illness, and a threat to the “normal,” healthy body. The metonymical links between disease, sex, and the mixing of humans and vampires work to construct turned vampires as miscegenated beings who threaten the stability of the human/vampire binary and, through the allegory, point to the extra-diegetical racial binary.

These allegorical associations also function through the main plot in which Deacon, as the “blood god,” hopes to turn all humans into vampires – miscegenated beings like himself – and in this sense, the story points to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century white fears of the pollution of racial purity. As Deacon threatens: “It won’t matter who’s pure-blood and who’s not” (1:22:00). Humans, if not already seduced and marked by turned vampires as “familiar,” are characterized as innocent, “good,” and potential victims, through Blade’s mother in the film’s opening scene, Karen, Whistler (Blade’s father-figure who is attacked and left to die by Deacon), and the child that Deacon holds hostage; all suffer at the hands of vampires in one way or another. Blade – whose mixed status is reinforced in both allegories – as the hero of the film, must stop Deacon from turning all humans into vampires, by essentially operating as a guardian of racial purity and ensuring that other humans do not suffer the same fate as himself. As Hamilton Carroll notes, “[t]he figure of the vampire is doubled in *Blade* because the titular vampire is both the other that defines the limits of the subject and, as the film’s hero, the guardian of that subject against the invasive threat of Deacon Frost and the pure blood vampires” (382).

In some ways of course, Blade is more closely aligned with the vampires against whom he fights than would otherwise appear. Like turned vampires, he is “miscegenated,” animalistic, hypersexual, and “inferior” to pure bloods. What is more, his battle to ensure that Deacon does not succeed in his desire to turn all humans into vampires (or in other words, to “miscegenate” “racially pure” humans) creates a parallel between his character and pure-blood vampires. Yet Blade remains an anomaly. Although he is also a miscegenated being and has much in common with turned vampires, he does not fit clearly into any category. In this way, he represents a figurative threat to the same identity categories that Deacon quite literally threatens. Because of his special powers – though vampiric, he can withstand sunlight – he is known as the “daywalker,” and at other times is referred to as a “freak,” highlighting the ways in which his body exceeds the identity categories within the diegesis. Moreover, his character’s figurative pointing to the extra-diegetical “reality” of the miscegenated subject is doubled through the narrative’s other allegory – the figurative rape of Blade’s mother by a white male (vampire). While Carroll argues that Blade’s status as the hero of the film normalizes “the miscegenated subject,” miscegenation, both outside and within the diegesis, still remains “taboo” and “problematic.” Using C.S. Pierce’s notion of the indexical sign wherein “the black subject” functions as a means for (white) American identity to constitute itself, Carroll writes:

If the black subject traditionally stood as an indexical figure of American identities, a figure against which the nation’s proto-citizens could measure their state of national becoming, then the miscegenated subject stands as an indication of the degree to which that index was always more fantasy than fact and, despite the continuing power of miscegenation taboos in American culture, miscegenation has become a normalized – albeit still problematic – condition. (372)

Arguably, Blade is configured as both the “traditional” “black subject” who is Othered in the metonymical construction of “American identity,” and the somewhat “normalized” “miscegenated subject.” However, the film consistently suggests otherwise, both through its visual aesthetics of excess with regards to Black masculinity, and within the narrative itself, through Blade’s self-characterization as abject.

Indeed, the filmic discourse consistently constructs Blade as the excessive, non-normative, abject, and Black (hyper)masculine Other, the visual monster against which others can be identified and normalized.²⁷ Carroll writes that “[d]espite its muscular physical attractiveness, Blade’s body is a site of monstrosity, conforming to every racist stereotype of the hyper-physical, hyper-sexualized, African-American male body” (380). Blade is played by actor Wesley Snipes who, despite his fairly diverse career in terms of film genre, was best known for action movies in which he made use of his knowledge of martial arts.²⁸ Norrington’s film is no exception, with several long sequences devoted to the character engaging in battles with vampires. The film’s focus on Snipes’ body is further emphasized by the character’s relative lack of dialogue. Aside from the POV shots of Blade’s mother, most of the film is focalized through Karen. The spectator learns about Blade, his status as part-vampire, and his past as she does, positioning Blade as the object of the narrative discourse as well as of the filmic discourse. Blade’s Blackness and hypermasculinity are highlighted through the stylization of his excessively muscular body, as Carroll notes, but it is also covered in black leather and tight-fitting armor that accentuates his musculature. Various props such as weaponry (a sword and guns), his motorcycle, and his sunglasses add to his hypermasculinity. His consistent wearing of sunglasses contributes to his dehumanization, as the spectator is often denied access to any emotion that his eyes might display, while the sunglasses also function as a symbol of his masculine power.²⁹ A vampire takes the sunglasses from him in a boastful manner when Blade is at his weakest; he retrieves them in a triumphant moment, emphasized through a close-up and the beginning of a techno song (with an intense and fast-paced beat),

²⁷ Black characters are not the only identities that are Othered through racial stereotypes in the filmic discourse. For instance, Asian actors are characterized as “Oriental” through spaces in which they appear to “belong.” Blade first confronts Deacon in a Chinatown-like setting where he holds a little human Asian girl hostage. Blade later battles two Asian vampires that perform martial arts, surrounded by Oriental statues.

²⁸ In addition to action movies, Snipes had starred in the 1991 romance *Jungle Fever* and the comedies *White Men Can’t Jump* (1992) and *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything! Julie Newmar* (1995) in which he played a drag queen. Snipes’ production company, Amen Ra, co-produced the *Blade* films.

²⁹ The use of sunglasses to denote power and/or masculinity is also apparent in *The Terminator* films as well as *The Matrix* film series, the first of which was released the year after *Blade*.

signaling that the character is ready for action. His sword also operates as a symbol of his masculinity. It is not only a metonymy for the character (his name Blade comes from the sword), but it is also a castrating phallic symbol that only he can wield, since an apparatus on the handle will maim any character that holds it incorrectly.

Added to these fairly common racial stereotypes in the film, are the traditional connotations of vampires (in Norrington's film and elsewhere). Blade's status as a half-vampire builds on the metonymical associations of the vampire as animalistic and hypersexual. At the climax of the film, Blade has been drained of his blood by Deacon. In his weakened state, he must agree to do that which he has refused until then: drink blood. This is when Karen offers her neck to him. Drawing on the metaphorical implications of the vampire bite in previous vampire fiction, the scene is framed as a sexual encounter. But more than this, it is an aggressive sexual encounter. Blade repeatedly thrusts against Karen and grunts, Karen squeals and says "Don't stop," while the camera quickly cuts to different angles on the two protagonists and the music builds in intensity, pointing to a sexual climax.³⁰ Blade then pushes Karen to the side, arches his back, and roars thunderously, as if unleashing a "beast." Yet, even without this scene, Blade's body and gestures ooze hypersexuality through their metonymical connection to hypermasculinity. In contrast, despite Deacon's construction as hypersexual through his acts and gestures, and through his multiple sexual partners, his body is not stylized in this manner. Even as a "blood god," Deacon maintains his "human" shape, whereas the character in the comic book on which Norrington's film is based does not (c.f. note 21). His character in the film thus provides the physical "norm" against which Blade's somatic signifiers construct non-normativity and "monstrosity."

³⁰ At the same time, the camera cuts in and out of another scene occurring at the same time: blood flows along an inverted dome ceiling and then drips on Deacon's forehead. This is the moment he is transformed into the "blood god." In this sense, the scene parallels and contributes to the metaphor of Blade's figurative climax.

The film reinforces the expression of racial anxiety through Blade's attitude of self-loathing and abjection. Although the narrative offers a "redemptive" moment when Blade is obliged to accept his vampirism in order to regain his strength, and although he decides to reject Karen's offer of a "cure" in order to continue to use his superhuman strength to fight vampires, Blade views his vampire self as abject. Blade's disgust over blood as a potential but "perverse" food source is reminiscent of Julia Kristeva's definition of abjection in the constitution of the subject: "[S]ince the food is not an 'other' ... I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish *myself*" (3). For example, while Karen encourages Blade to see himself as human, Blade focuses on his difference, his vampirism. He tells her: "I'm not human ... Humans don't drink blood ... I have spent my whole life looking for that thing that killed my mother. It made me what I am. Every time I take one of those monsters out, I get a little piece of that life back" (1:01:25). More than Kristeva's reference to food as a threat to the boundaries of the body and the definition of the self, Blade's remark is a reminder of how the figure of the vampire destabilizes metaphors of the inner versus the outer, both with regards to the body and the configuration of the self. Blade's simultaneous desire for and disgust with blood highlights the ways in which he "expels" and defines his "self" as "Other" than "human." At the same time, his killing of vampires allows him to mirror this performative process. The vampires he kills help him to regain his "humanity" since they are simultaneously his Other, his "not me," which also ironically constitutes his abject vampire self. Of course, because of the film's allegorical references to race, Blade's self-abjection must also be read in relation to Iris Young's application of Kristeva's work, which "shows how the operation of repulsion can consolidate 'identities' founded on the instituting of the 'Other' or a set of Others through exclusion and domination" (Butler, 1990, 182). So although the reading of one allegory links his hatred of the vampire to a hatred of the persecuting white supremacist subject, the filmic discourse and

its characterization of Blackness reinforce white hegemony and the abjection of the Black subject, whether miscegenated or not.

The essentialization of Blackness, and of racial identity categories in general, is further accentuated by the discourse surrounding blood. Karen's identification of the "abnormal" blood cells of a turned vampire highlights a fundamental, biological difference between vampires and humans. Read in conjunction with the allegory of racialized groups, the film reinforces the notion that race is also an extra-diegetical reality grounded in biological differences that can be seen even at the level of cellular construction. This is mirrored in the narrative when Deacon reprimands Blade for not accepting his vampirism, advising: "You should've listened to your blood" (1:32:08). Indeed, Blade's self-abjection is configured as a struggle against his own cellular construction. What is more, while Deacon's "blood god" threatens the miscegenation of all humankind, "Blade's blood is the key" (1:22:46) to bringing the blood god to life. In a sense then, it is Blade as much as Deacon who threatens miscegenation. Rather than functioning as a "vector of category transformation," as Haraway would have it (1997, 214), Blade's "miscegenated" blood functions as both a physical and metaphysical signifier, a transcendental signifier that essentializes racial difference both inside and outside the body, as well as both within the diegesis and extra-diegetically. Blade's body is indeed made "monstrous" in Norrington's film as it simultaneously threatens miscegenation, promotes racial purity, and stigmatizes Black masculinity. Thus, despite the ways in which Norrington's film points to racial injustice, it essentially repeats the racial anxiety expressed through Blade's excess and abjection in some of the comic book series on which it was based. Because Blade eliminates Deacon, this anxiety is ultimately resolved through Blade's restriction of miscegenation to the boundaries of his own body.

Underworld

Len Wiseman's 2002 *Underworld* has much in common with the *Twilight* saga and Norrington's *Blade* with regards to the allegorization of racial differences, though it is the most "progressive" of the three texts. *Underworld* also thematizes miscegenation through the "monstrous" species groups of werewolves, vampires, and humans. But like *Twilight* and unlike *Blade*, Wiseman's film refers to miscegenation between a male species Other (a werewolf) and a humanized female character (a vampire), or in the allegorical sense, between a male racial Other and a white female.³¹ Importantly, it is once again the white female body that marks the boundary between species/racial differences, and therefore, needs "protection" from those who threaten species/racial mixing. Yet *Underworld* is much more blatant in its rejection of these racist and misogynist ideologies. For instance, Selene, the white female vampire and main character, is fully capable of taking care of herself and refuses to allow any male character to control her body. Dressed from head to toe in black leather, Selene is more reminiscent of *Blade* than *Bella* in this sense. Furthermore, Selene's perspective as primary focalizer contrasts with the white supremacist perspective which is undoubtedly meant to be villainized and rejected. In conjunction with the reference to racist ideologies, the narrative appears to question racial stereotypes and essentialism, in part through the meanings given to blood and blood sharing. Blood is not only the means to alter species identity (or to miscegenate, in other words), but it is also a means to share (communal) memory. In this way, the narrative allegorizes the manipulation of history as a strategy to erase (the mistreatment of) minority groups from textbooks, suggesting that control over the white female body is not only synonymous with control over racial boundaries, but also with control over a single narrative of national/racial history. Nevertheless, as in *Twilight* and *Blade*, there is only one unique

³¹ I use the term "humanized" here because Selene – the character to which I am referring – is not, strictly-speaking "human" like *Bella*. Yet, as a vampire, she is positioned as human in relation to the animalized werewolves. More on this later.

“hybrid” character, suggesting that any threat to racial purity might be maintained within the boundaries of the one body. This one body, that of the human Michael Corvin, is already unique through his genetic difference and ability to handle the deadly “virus” transmitted by werewolf and vampire bites. *Underworld*’s emphasis on genetic difference, disease, and blood as definitive of each species thereby grounds the concept of racial difference in the interior of the pre-discursive body, along with the film’s use of traditional allegory which fixes its figurative meanings in an extra-diegetical “reality” of race. Ultimately, the expression of racial anxiety can also be found in the film’s need to define race through the very same metaphors it appears to question, illustrating a need to maintain racial distinctions rather than to destabilize them.

Because *Underworld* does not introduce its allegory of race until later in the narrative, the film initially appears to be quite simply about a bloody battle between two distinct species, namely vampires versus werewolves (called “lycans” in the film), where the vampire is positioned closer to the “human” side of the human/animal binary in relation to the werewolf. Throughout most of the film, the vampire Selene is the primary focalizer, a function that humanizes her and initially characterizes the werewolves as the villains of the story. The film begins with her voice-over explaining that the war, a “blood feud,” between werewolves and vampires had ceased centuries earlier, but that orders for the “death-dealers” (vampires who hunt lycans) remain the same: “Hunt them down and kill them off, one by one” (1:57). While these orders might be reminiscent of genocide, the scene that follows appears to justify the death-dealers’ actions as the lycans display aggressive behavior towards humans who are caught in the crossfire. A high-angle shot through a spy-cam positions the vampires on the side of law and order as they spy on the lycans while Selene subsequently attempts to keep the humans safe. What is more, Selene is convinced that lycans once slaughtered her family while the vampire Viktor, a father-figure for Selene, came to her rescue. Selene’s conviction that lycans represent a danger to vampires and humans alike is aided by the fact that vampires no

longer feed directly from humans, but instead receive all of the blood they need from blood banks. Conversely, although lycans do not need human blood to survive, one scene depicts the lycan leader, Lucian, biting the human character, Michael, in a horrific manner. The filmic discourse frames the bite as part of an intense chase scene in which both Selene and Michael appear to fight for their survival. Although not in wolf form, Lucian's mouth becomes a gaping hole full of sharp teeth, while his pupils dilate, giving his eyes a specter-like clear blue color. These features are further emphasized through a close-up and slow motion. Overall, these elements animalize the lycans and position them as the villains of the narrative, while the vampires seem to be the guardians of morality and of humankind.

The narrative builds on connotations of the human/animal binary through its metonymical links with class and "civilization" – connotations that will clarify the allegorical references to race once this second level of reading is introduced in the film. In this way, the film lays out the (racial) stereotypes that it will later expose as problematic. Aside from Selene's clothing and role as a death-dealer, most vampires appear to lead a leisurely lifestyle, sipping blood from wine glasses, wearing fancy dresses and suits, and living in a Gothic castle or manor. These signifiers thus position them as "cultured," "civilized," and wealthy, evoking European aristocracy, especially when contrasted with the characterization of the lycans who dwell in an underground subway and sewage system. Early in the film, Lucian reprimands the group for fighting each other and behaving "like a pack of rabid dogs" (10:55). The simile highlights the ways in which the lycans are constructed as animalistic through the perspective of the vampires, a characterization that Lucian attempts to counter by interpolating them as "gentlemen." The narrative underlines the problematic metonymical associations between these concepts and intelligence through each group's use of technological warfare. Initially, it appears that the lycans simply make use of their bodies in wolf form, while vampires rely on advanced weaponry and a high-tech security system. However, as Selene later discovers, the

lycans have more advanced weaponry than the vampires. When she brings the proof back to her clan, two vampires reveal the ways in which their prejudice leads to other assumptions. Kraven, the vampire coven leader, expresses his disbelief: “You expect me to believe that a mangy animal came up with a weapon specifically designed to destroy vampires?” The vampire in charge of weapons technology replies: “No, I’m guessing it’s military, something they stole” (12:30). While the characterization of the lycans as devoid of intelligence may seem merely to be the result of a metonymical association with animality (as well as to criminality), the narrative actually stages the ways in which racial Otherness, particularly Blackness, is constructed through a network of stigmatizing concepts such as these.

Indeed, like the construction of whiteness in opposition to racial Otherness, these characterizations indicate how the vampires envision species difference, as well as allegorizing a white supremacist understanding of racial difference. The film’s use of traditional allegory comes through a plot twist of sorts – the elucidation of the mystery regarding the lycans’ intention vis-à-vis Michael – and Selene’s realization that she has been misled. Not only do the extended metaphors of the film construct the lycans and the vampires in relation to the Black/white racial binary, but they also resituate the war between the two groups as a dispute over species mixing versus purity, thereby pointing to miscegenation. Through a shift in focalization to Michael, the spectator learns that the lycans were once the slaves of the vampires. A flashback depicts Lucian in chains while being whipped, providing historical imagery that contributes to the allegorical equation of lycans to Black slaves and of vampires to white slave-owners. While this re-characterization is enough to re-cast the “villains” of the story, Lucian tells Michael that this form of oppression is not the origin of the species war. Rather, it was Lucian’s love affair with Viktor’s daughter, Sonia, a vampire, that sparked the ire of the vampire patriarch. The narrative thus points to nineteenth-century constructions of Black masculinity and white femininity, or the white male fear of the Black male’s supposed

uncontrollable desire for the “pure” and “virginal” white, upper-class female. Martha Hodes writes: “The danger of a liaison across the color line was graver for black men and elite white women because those women were at the center of Southern ideas about female purity” (5), as well as, I would add, racial purity.³² Described as the “plantation owner” by screenwriter Danny McBride (DVD commentary), Viktor also owns his daughter’s body – he can bite her (as blood is a means to read another’s memories – more on this later) and even condemn her to death, which he does upon learning that she is pregnant by Lucian.³³ He chooses to erase his daughter and the “abomination in her womb” in order to “protect the species” (1:41:41-53). As almost a daughter to Viktor, a replacement for Sonia, Selene also stands for female and racial purity, and her body marks the fragile border between the two species. Thus, when Viktor learns of her association with Michael, now “contaminated” by Lucian’s bite, Selene is “tainted by an animal” and is no longer trustworthy (1:02:13). Viktor’s language points to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anti-miscegenation discourse. These terms refer not only to patriarchal notions of white female purity, but also to disease, highlighting the ways in which interracial sex and reproduction were once framed as unhealthy for the individual’s body as well as for the body of the nation. Given that Lucian sees Michael as a replacement for the child he lost with Sonia’s death, a “half-vampire and half-lycan,” Selene can only redeem herself by killing Michael, thereby repeating the action of her “father,” erasing the body that contaminated her and that threatens further contamination of the species.

When confronted with the lycan’s goal of species/racial mixing, Viktor’s character provides another instantiation, specifically of a nineteenth-century debate regarding the origin of racial differences. The nineteenth-century fear of miscegenation involved the metonymical

³² Indeed, miscegenation was conceptualized as problematic only when it occurred between Black men and white women while interracial sex and reproduction between white men and Black women was largely ignored in the pre-antebellum period. (See Chapter Three.)

³³ Sonia’s execution is depicted through flashbacks during the film. Viktor’s biting of Sonia is shown in the third film of the series (the 2009 *Underworld: Rise of the Lycans*), which depicts this back-story in full detail.

links between racial identity categories and the concepts of dirt or disease versus cleanliness like those mentioned above; but at the same time, another discourse, namely polygenesis, maintained that racial differences were in fact species differences and that racial mixing was, therefore, ultimately a fantasy.³⁴ Ironically, here in *Underworld*, the fantasy of species mixing refers to the extra-diegetical “reality” of racial mixing. (More on this later.) Although the narrative functions as a traditional allegory, the writers’ decision to incorporate the nineteenth-century monogenetic versus polygenetic debate seems particularly appropriate given that the concept of species was held as an immutable (and transcendental) sign for racial purity. For polygeneticists, race was species. As Robert Young points out:

The monogenetic argument was that the different human races were descended from a single source ... The polygenetic argument, on the other hand, that the different races were in fact different species, and had been different all along, allowed the argument that they would and should continue to be so. Not surprisingly ... this was the idea cherished by those who wanted to uphold the most extreme forms of racial differentiation, and was popular with apologists for slavery in the American South. (101)

The film’s version of the monogenetic argument is called “the sons of the Corvinus clan,” where “one [son is] bitten by bat, one by wolf, one to walk the lonely road of mortality as a human.” As a figure for the “plantation owner,” Viktor cannot admit the possibility of a common ancestor and believes it to be “a ridiculous legend” (1:16:30). Yet, Lucian aims to prove the contrary with Michael, a human descendant of Corvinus, whose body can allow for a crossing of the “bloodlines.” Interestingly, the film’s reference to this nineteenth-century debate is not only part of the allegory – its series of extended metaphors pointing to race and miscegenation – but it also ironically functions as a straightforward repetition given that the category of species is literal within the diegesis. In this way, the repetition of this discourse

³⁴ For more on the monogenetic versus polygenetic debate, see Chapter Two.

within the context of a fantasy narrative works to highlight the fantasy of the species discourse itself.³⁵

Highlighting the vampire's problematic interpretation of a supposed origin story is their careful control of "history," as if to point to propaganda, the falsification or alteration of history, as well as to limited access to knowledge, particularly when it comes to race. The "site" (both physical and temporal) of potential mixing between Lucian and Sonia appears to define the barrier between the two races as well as the ways in which the main characters relate to their racial identity. Indeed, blood not only plays a key role in defining race physically, but it is also a way in which memories are shared – a signifier that is read in both the figurative and literal sense within the diegesis. So, for instance, when Lucian bites Michael, he inherits Lucian's memory of Sonia's execution. As Adam Knee notes:

Once one is a [werewolf] or vampire, moreover, one not only shares some of the (transformative) physical attributes of that group but also partakes of some of its thoughts and memories, no matter what one's own history is; thus, everyone of a given clan or race automatically shares a certain dimension of consciousness and cannot escape a certain race memory. (171)

With this in mind, it seems significant that the memory that is used to define the werewolf "race" is precisely the moment in which a potential mixing between the two races occurred. For the vampires, in contrast, keeping the vampire race pure is not merely a question of ensuring a physical differentiation, but it is also to ensure that their version of history (as the victims of the werewolves rather than the other way around) is properly maintained. As Selene informs the spectator through her voice-over: "The Elders alone hold the power to [share blood with each other and, therefore, to] organize their memories and thoughts into a single cohesive vision, a detailed record of their reign" (45:25). The control over who shares blood with whom

³⁵ Furthermore, Viktor's reliance on a distinctive origin of the two species as the reason for believing the two species should remain distinct appears to be contradicted by the two groups' sporadic mixing with humans, as well as the fact that Viktor and Selene were themselves once human. In other words, the supposed "purity" of the vampire – whether characterized as species or race – is also an ideological illusion within the diegesis.

has a double meaning here – the ruling vampires wish not only to ensure against the mixing of blood to keep their species pure, but also to erase and rewrite history in their guise. In this way, the film suggests that race is (at least partly) “inherited” through narrative and memory, and “that being part of a race involves sharing a common history, one that in turn defines the racial group” (Frohreich, 2013, 38). This function of blood suggests that the body and species (or racial) identity are narrative constructions that are often carefully controlled by others.

The plot revolves around two bodies in particular, Selene and Michael, the heroine and hero respectively, who demonstrate this. Once a human, the only memory that Selene carries with her from her previous life is the moment before she was turned and the reason for her turning. She tells Michael that lycans had slaughtered her family when Viktor arrived and saved her, then turned her into a vampire so that she could avenge herself. Selene’s identity as a vampire thus depends on this narrative and her repetition of revenge on lycans allows her to affirm this identity repeatedly. Yet Selene eventually learns that she was mistaken – it was Viktor who slaughtered her family. Significantly, this loss of faith in her “father” and in the moment she became a vampire corresponds to an ultimate loss of faith in her clan. The discovery occurs at the film’s climax, immediately before she bites Michael and thus helps to complete his transformation into a “hybrid” being.³⁶ Because Selene is the character through which most of the film’s narrative is focalized, her mistakenness works to destabilize the species/racial binary that the vampire point of view originally imposes. Significantly then, one of the few moments in which the film focalizes through Michael is a flashback where he witnesses Lucian’s memory of Sonia’s execution. This particular shift in focalization not only marks the moment when Selene’s initial reading of lycans begins to be rectified, but also signals Michael’s adoption of the lycan perspective and allegiance.

³⁶ As with *Twilight* and *Blade*, the term “hybrid” is not used in the film. I am using it here for lack of a better term, as it allows me to refer to the mixed status of Michael in both the literal (species) sense and figurative (racial) sense.

With regards to Michael, given that his human life and past remain something of a mystery, he appears as a clean slate onto which werewolf and vampire memories and bloodlines can be imposed. Michael's body is thus defined through miscegenation. As in other vampire (or werewolf) narratives, Michael is, in a sense, the child of those who bite him. Yet *Underworld* makes this idea even more explicit through the reference to Lucian and Sonia's narrative – with Selene's replacement of Sonia, Michael's body is intended to replace Lucian's lost child. Furthermore, because the narrative hints at the attraction between Michael and Selene, miscegenation is continually evoked: first with Michael the human, then with Michael the werewolf, and finally with Michael the hybrid. Adam Knee notes of the end of the film: “possible interracial futures are suggested here ... through Michael's newly multiracial identity (lycan, vampire—and human as well)” and Selene as a vampire, “a partial species-other” (172).³⁷ Through its use of allegory, it seems clear that the narrative champions racial mixing and condemns white supremacy. Moreover, given that the narrative uses blood as a signifier for (hi)story, these species or racial identifications appear less biological and more a matter of communal memory and performativity.

However, blood is a very potent and persistent signifier in that the film also incorporates other significations that have been historically associated with blood, such as that of a biological “carrier” of both lineage and of disease. These meanings are not problematized in the same way as those that construct the narrative's allegory, and the film ultimately reinforces a rather essentialist link between blood and identity. For instance, Selene tells Michael after he has been bitten by Lucian to “[c]onsider [him]self lucky. Most humans die within an hour of being bitten by an immortal. The viruses we transmit are deadly” (51:40). Selene's language illustrates two things: firstly that “race is herein figured as viral,” as Knee notes (170). Indeed,

³⁷ At the time Knee's essay was published, the later *Underworld* films had not yet been released. In the 2012 *Underworld: Awakening*, the “possible interracial future” is Selene and Michael's daughter.

not only are communal memories shared through the bite of a werewolf or a vampire, but these memories also come with a virus that transforms the biological make-up of the body. If species is race in this film, as Knee suggests, race is also biological and it is defined through disease. This corresponds to Selene's second implication: that some humans are biologically distinguishable from others in that their "genetic code" (1:17:05) deals with the immortal virus differently. Michael's so-called "luck" is not only confirmed later in the film, it also instantiates nineteenth-century scientific discourse, recalling the ways in which certain infectious diseases have been associated with "Othered" minority groups. Sander Gilman writes, for instance:

In the United States, AIDS has been labeled an "African" or "Haitian" disease. This presumed origin is, of course, very much in line with the white American notion that blacks, being inherently different, have a fundamentally different relationship to disease ... leading to the horrors of the Tuskegee syphilis experiment. (1987, 100)

The discourse surrounding these two diseases and their link to racial difference (have) worked to mark Black bodies as Other – as diseased, contaminated (such as with AIDS) and as having the biological ability to withstand certain symptoms (as the Tuskegee Syphilis experiment set out to prove).³⁸

In Wiseman's film, this particular relationship to disease is inherited via "bloodline" (1:15:05), meaning that blood has the same ontological functions within the diegesis of the film as it does extra-diegetically – it is given "*a reality with a symbolic function*" (Foucault, 1976, 147). These two meanings are inextricably bound to one another, such that the "symbolic function" of the "bloodline" appears to be "a reality." In addition to carrying (whether literally or figuratively) disease and lineage, blood bears the metonymical associations between these concepts as well as the definition of species / race. In *Underworld*, lycans and vampires are shown to be similar to their supposed fifth-century ancestor, Corvinus, who survived the plague, becoming "the first true immortal," as his "blood was somehow able to change the

³⁸ It would seem that *Underworld* engages in the same use of disease as a stigmatizing metaphor for racial difference as *Blade*. However, *Underworld* takes this a step further by grounding disease in the essentialized "interior" of the body.

disease” and “mould it to his benefit” (1:16:00). In this respect, it is Michael alone, a human descendant of Corvinus and an “untainted” “pure source,” who can become the “half-vampire, half-lycan” being sought. “*His blood* allows for a perfect union of [the two] species” (emphasis added, 1:17:25). Michael’s blood is thus “inherently different” due to the “genetic code” passed down through his “bloodline.” Race is not only “figured as viral” but also as a biological inheritance. Michael’s future status as a mixed-species being does little to blur the boundaries between the two categories since his potential to be “mixed” simply reaffirms the “origin” from which the mixing occurs. This origin is temporal, fixed at the site of the fifth-century ancestor, just as it is apparently attached to the physical, anchored in the body’s cellular structure.

The film thus represents the figurative versus literal confusion between the body’s interior and its exterior, ultimately essentializing what is otherwise a metaphorical relationship. The lycan scientist who explains his group’s aim of “combining the bloodlines” expresses their initial frustration by reporting: “Even at the cellular level our species seemed destined to destroy each other” (1:15:20). Here, biology is destiny. The body’s cells take on whatever referential function is needed, acting here as the signifier for the signified of the body’s exterior and its behavior, or acting there as the signified, the logic “behind” or “underlying” the individual’s appearance or behavior. It matters little that the character uses a simile in his remark. His figurative meaning is made literal as it is grounded in the filmic discourse. As he narrates, the camera cuts to shots of red blood cells viewed through a microscope. The emphasis on physical difference that is manifest on the body’s exterior as well as in its interior is further reinforced by a CSI shot. During Michael’s first transformation into a werewolf, the camera “plunges” inside his mouth and down into his torso, depicting the ways in which his organs and bones are affected by the metamorphosis. Like Foucault’s argument regarding “the medical gaze,” such a movement removes any doubt, any reading that might require interpretation. Rather, the “message” is clear – each signifier has its signified, each sign has its meaning. The

camera movement mirrors the ways in which the film replaces metonymical relationships with metaphors. The reliance on the body's interior or on an extra-diegetical ontology as the "origin" or "ground" of species/racial difference through traditional allegory ultimately disserves the film's attempt to highlight the process of (mis)reading involved in racial stereotyping and definitions.

Moreover, the same lycan scientist character who promotes the essentialist relationship between blood and identity repeats the early twentieth-century discourse of eugenics, where the body of the nation could be "purified" through controlled "breeding." While the traditional allegorical equation of intra- to extra-diegetical references – of the lycans pointing to African-Americans and the vampires to white(s) (supremacists) – is put into question in this way, his advocacy of hybridity ultimately reinforces the narrative's use of bodily metaphors to define species/racial difference. Just as Robert Young argues, even though racial mixing "threatens to undo" race "altogether," race "only works when defined against potential intermixture" (19). In a sense then, the lycan scientist and the hybrid body of Michael provide the means by which racial differences remain intact. When the lycan scientist later reveals his species' aim of creating a "half-vampire/half-lycan," it is not to promote racial mixing as a means of uniting the two species in opposition to racial purity, but rather to create a superior being, "stronger than both" (1:18:40). "Indeed, with Michael's strength as a 'hybrid' being, the narrative suggests that he is far from degenerate" (Frohreich, 2013, 39). While the lycan scientist's discourse might appear to counter the nineteenth-century metonymical association between miscegenation and degeneration, it does so through a reference to breeding a superior being, as was one aim of eugenics. The fact that the lycan scientist speaks with an Austrian accent (Knee 169) appears to reinforce the parallel, even though it also problematizes the metaphorical association of the lycans with African-Americans. More than this, the reference to eugenics also displaces the threat that the werewolves pose to species/racial boundaries, suggesting that

racial mixing can also be a matter of controlled breeding. The vampires' need to control bloodlines is then essentially doubled by the lycans' desire to combine them.

The filmic discourse engages in a process of racial stereotyping that contributes to the fixing of racial differences on and within the body. Skin color is given a definitive role in distinguishing between vampires and werewolves. Not only is attention drawn to the film's use of color coding – transformed lycans are dark, vampires are overwhelmingly white, and Michael as a “hybrid” of the two species is blue – but, as Knee highlights, the first actor playing a werewolf to appear on screen is Black.³⁹ Though it can be argued that this element functions as a strategy to lead into the allegory, such that the spectator might immediately begin to read the species war as a racial war, it also initiates the process of metaphorical substitutions in which Blackness is then associated with animality. The film's reliance on stereotypes, both visual and conceptual, is contentious since *Underworld* ultimately engages in the same problematic readings and constructions of race that it attempts to expose. Even if the film uses allegory to refer to the danger of misreading the Other, this traditional function of allegory has the same function as metaphor. The “inside” of the diegesis points to a corresponding “outside” which pre-supposes the extra-diegetical “reality” of race. Selene's (mis)reading of the lycans thus ultimately and ironically functions as a reinforcement of racial meanings as pre-discursive.

While these three narratives humanize the monster (and the vampire in particular) and question the ways in which the figure has been traditionally constructed in relation to racial Otherness, they ultimately reinforce the racial binary through their uses of traditional allegory

³⁹ The Black lycan character, Raze, is played by Kevin Grievoux who also co-created the *Underworld* film series. It is notable that the actor is physically imposing and muscular, has a remarkably deep voice, and that his role as a lycan in the film often positions him on the front-lines of battle scenes. He is not only the first lycan character depicted, but he is also the first lycan character to shift into werewolf form. In contrast, the only Black vampire depicted is characterized as much more “civilized.” He speaks with a British accent (played by British actor Robbie Gee), which distinguishes him from African-Americans, and he plays the part of the technological mastermind of the vampires, further displacing him from potential stereotypes.

and/or essentializing inner/outer metaphors of the body. On the one hand, *Blade* uses one allegory to reverse the dominant narrative of miscegenation between white women and Black men. On the other hand, its second allegory stigmatizes racial mixing and champions racial purity. *Underworld's* allegory seems to challenge racist stereotypes and valorize miscegenation. But like *Blade* and *Twilight*, it ultimately essentializes racial differences. *Twilight* certainly does not allegorize race in the same way as the other two. Instead, it allegorizes the “human.” Through its exclusionary practices – both through the othering of Jacob and his fellow Native American werewolves and through its silence with regards to miscegenation – it reinforces and centers this subject position as white.⁴⁰ Each narrative, whether directly or indirectly, refers to miscegenation. While racial mixing threatens the definition of the racial binary, it can also be said to reinforce it, since the idea of a stable, racially pure category must be maintained in order to sustain the notion of mixing. Furthermore, as these narratives illustrate, another binary can be established: that of the racially pure versus the racially-mixed. Referring to and/or allegorizing miscegenation is, therefore, not a means to destabilize the identity category of race. In a sense, miscegenation operates like traditional allegory itself since the latter is based on a series of metaphors, each of which relies on an extra-discursive, “literal” signified which is ultimately a fantasy. It is worthwhile to recall what de Man says about metaphor here:

Metaphor is error because it believes or feigns to believe in its own referential meaning ... Metaphor overlooks the fictional, textual element in the nature of the entity it connotes. It assumes a world in which intra- and extra-textual events, literal and figural forms of language, can be distinguished, a world in which the literal and the figural are properties that can be isolated and, consequently, exchanged and substituted for each other. This is an error. (151-2)

Both miscegenation and traditional allegory, and narratives of miscegenation told through traditional allegory, ultimately contribute to the fantasizing of race as an “extra-textual,” pre-

⁴⁰ In Chapter Seven, I discuss Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood*, which, I argue, also allegorizes the “human,” but through deconstructive allegory.

discursive reality. In the following chapter, I continue with vampire narratives which use metonymy more than metaphor to destabilize the connection between racial Otherness and the “monster.”

Five

Monstrous Redemptions

Race and monstrosity have both been configured traditionally through similar metonymical signifiers. In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century (and some contemporary) fantasy, the monstrous Other often functioned as a metaphor for the racial Other while the latter was constructed through the same signifiers that were used to characterize the figure of the monster. These two categories drew from a network of stigmatizing signifiers that bore relationships to each other based on conceptual associations (metonymy). Yet they operated as metaphors – denying the metonymical relationships on which each category relied and “overlook(ing) the fictional, textual element in the nature of the entity it connote(d)” (de Man, 1979, 151).

This chapter addresses the trend to humanize the monster in texts that also explicitly characterize the figure through racially Other signifiers. Rather than relying on the theme of miscegenation to destabilize the human/monster dichotomy and the racial binary, the humanized monster becomes a means to destabilize the racial Other. These texts also problematize the position of the racial Other as the Other. In these stories, the monsters – now

(anti)heroes or heroines – are Black, and they work to question the very notion of the racial Other as well as its metonymical link to monstrosity. As in *Blade* and *Underworld*, the figure of the monster is repositioned as the racist white supremacist. In William Crain's 1972 *Blacula*, Jewelle Gomez's 1991 *Gilda Stories*, and Octavia Butler's 2005 *Fledgling*, the Black "monster" is no longer an object – altero-characterized by other characters and/or objectified by the gaze of the camera's focus. Here, Mamuwalde/Blacula, Shori, and Gilda are the subjects of their respective narratives. They are the primary focalizer or the narrator; they have a voice and actively shape the perception of their characters and their stories.

Complementing narratological strategies such as these, the "monster" becomes a means of empowerment, a way to defend or to fight back against Othering actions. Initially, each protagonist experiences a process of victimization. Mamuwalde is turned into a vampire against his will by the racist Count Dracula, Shori survives an attempted assassination by white vampire supremacists which leaves her amnesiac, and Gilda is nearly raped by a white overseer as she attempts to escape slavery. These traumas allegorize the enslavement, rape, and murder of Blacks by whites (through traditional allegory). More than this, given that these moments are also intimately related to each character's transformation into and/or identification as a vampire, they mirror the ways in which the "monstrous" racial Other is constructed, whether this be through physical or discursive acts.¹ The protagonists of each narrative then use their superhuman powers to their advantage, often while demonstrating behavior that contradicts traditional vampire or monster stereotypes. Each text, therefore, plays with vampire narrative conventions in its characterization of the vampire. In *Blacula*, vampire puns and parodic intertextual references to the Hammer *Dracula* films abound. Blacula is more preoccupied with reuniting with his long lost wife than with feeding on humans. In Butler's and Gomez's texts,

¹ It is worth noting here that physical acts or "practices" are contingent upon discourses, just as Stuart Hall notes that "ideas and knowledges of difference organize human practices between individuals" (1996, n. pag.).

the vampire bite is reconfigured as beneficial for humans and does not necessarily involve (human to) vampire reproduction (or miscegenation). The vampire protagonists' actions thus not only destabilize the figure of the vampire (or the monster in general), but they also displace the figure's metaphorical stigmatization of racial Otherness.

These three texts demonstrate not only how the vampire is performative within each diegesis and through their intertextual relationships with more traditional vampire texts, but also how the identity categories of race as well as gender, sexuality, and class are performative. The vampire then becomes a vehicle to expose and question the ways in which race is contingent on gender, sexuality, and class. While the traditional figure of the vampire (such as Dracula) threatens racial purity and stages non-normative gender and sexuality, becoming stigmatized and stigmatizing non-normativity in the process, Gilda and Shori (and to some extent Mamuwalde) validate vampirism as a means to engage with and adopt non-normative gender roles and sexuality, thereby questioning the negative connotations associated with these categories and practices. In so doing, and because Blackness has always been contingent on these other identity categories, these narratives also point to non-normative performances of Blackness, suggesting that race is performative.

At the same time that these three narratives humanize and give their Black protagonists a "voice" and the means to destabilize racial Otherness, they also respond to the relative lack of African-American characters, particularly main characters, as well as writers, in both film and literature. Reconfiguring genres so that they are not predominantly "white" works in conjunction with the narratological displacement of the subject versus the object, the self versus the Other, and the empowerment and "voice" of the "monster." William Crain's *Blacula* is one of many Blaxploitation films, a genre that show-cased African-Americans both in front of and behind the camera, responding to a film industry that had been overwhelmingly dominated by white film-makers and actors. Jewelle Gomez's and Octavia Butler's novels contribute to the

steadily growing presence of African-American writers and characters in fantasy fiction prose – a genre (along with the subgenre of science fiction) that has also been traditionally dominated by white writers and characters.

Indeed, even in the fantasy genre and its subgenres, the absence of African-Americans and other minority groups has contributed to defining the “human” and the body of the American nation as white. Referring to classic works of American literature for instance, Toni Morrison argues that many texts were “written in a response to an unarticulated black presence, as defining themselves by what they are not” (quoted in Leonard, 254). Likewise, Elisabeth Anne Leonard notes that Sheree Thomas uses the metaphor of “dark matter” to refer to the absence/presence of Blacks in literature. In “Looking for the Invisible,” her introduction to a collection of African diasporic speculative fiction entitled *Dark Matter*, Thomas writes: “People have always been frightened by what they cannot see—and the specter of blackness looms large in the white imagination” (xiii). Thomas’ comment recalls de Man’s analysis of Rousseau’s work, namely the role that fear plays in the creation of the “giant” as a metaphor for “man” when a “primitive” man first encounters another. He states that “[t]he figure disfigures, ... it makes fear, itself a para-figural fiction, into a reality that is inescapable as the reality of the original encounter between the two men” (1979, 151). Metaphors of racial difference – whether intended as figurative or not – create and “dis-figure” the “specter” of the racial Other through “fiction.” These are the metaphors that operate in the construction of the body’s exterior versus its interior, as well as in the metonymical composition of the body of the nation (those who “belong” inside the nation versus those who “belong” outside). While the texts in Chapter Four ultimately ground racial differences in the pre-discursive body and an extra-diegetical “reality,” the texts in this chapter demonstrate the ways in which race is constructed through metonymical relationships with other identity categories and concepts. They do so not merely by remedying the absence of African-American characters and writers

in the fantasy genre, but also by ensuring that these presences do not repeat the stigmatizing characterizations of the figure of the “monstrous” racial Other.

To a certain extent then, the narratives that are analyzed in this chapter are situated as a counter-discourse to the hegemonic discourse of white fantasy fiction. In his essay, “Why Blacks Should Read (and Write) Science Fiction,” Charles R. Saunders argues that more Black writers of science fiction and fantasy are needed in order to counter the ways in which African-Americans (or even other hyphenated American identity categories) have been depicted by white science fiction and fantasy writers: “We need to contribute to our culture’s overall mythology as well, and provide alternatives to the stereotypes that continue to plague us within that mythology. After all, if we don’t unleash our imaginations to tell our own sf and fantasy stories, people like Mike Resnick will tell them for us” (404).² Saunders thus calls on fellow Black writers not only to do their part by contributing to the canon of science fiction and fantasy stories, but also to “provide alternatives to the stereotypes” of Africans and African-Americans in the genre (and it is worth noting that he cites Octavia Butler as an already prevalent author). Though “alternatives” is plural, the danger is that they are grouped into one counter-discourse and that this counter-discourse remains merely that: a countering, an opposition, which ultimately reifies the center and white normative hegemonic discourse.³

² Mike Resnick was a popular white American science-fiction writer whose stories often allegorized Kenyans and other African populations.

³ Samuel Delaney noted for instance in 1999 that he had continually been grouped with Octavia Butler as an African-American science fiction writer despite the stark differences in their approach to the genre: “Throughout all of cyberpunk’s active history, I only recall being asked to sit on *one* cyberpunk panel with Gibson ... In the last ten years, however, I have been invited to appear with Octavia at least six times, with another appearance scheduled in a few months and a joint interview with the both of us scheduled for a national magazine. All the comparison points out is the pure and unmitigated strength of the discourse of race in our country *vis-à-vis* any other” (396). Diverse topics in science fiction seem to have been reserved for white writers while the sci-fi writings of African-Americans have been reduced to the racial identification of the authors. Yet Delaney notes elsewhere in the same essay, “Racism and Science Fiction,” that more and more Black science fiction writers allowed for the first African-American Science Fiction Writers Conference in 1998. While such an event must have showcased the heterogenous and distinctive voices of each writer, it still ironically groups these writers and their narratives as separate and distinct, a counter-discourse to white science fiction.

More than simply an issue limited to a specific literary genre, the question of how an African-American counter-discourse is constructed within (literary) language has been an important topic for theorists. In her essay on the use of Bakhtin's double-voiced discourse in African American Literary Theory, Dorothy Hale shows how theorists have used W.E.B. Du Bois along with Bakhtin to define both the limits and the freedom that are supposedly inherent in the expression of African-American identity:⁴

African Americans have a way of making their own point of view visible – even if this point of view is no more than the process of negative relation, the inflection of hegemonic language. In reading Du Bois through Bakhtin, then, theorists discover a source of empowerment for the African American: he controls, if not the terms of his own identity, then at least his own linguistic expression of that identity. (461)

So while hegemonic language and the “terms” of African-American identity are inescapable, these theorists argue that there nevertheless exists a discursive space or a means to subvert white definitions of African-Americanness. However (and despite one's best intentions), Hale also shows that the “Black body” and “race” remain persistent concepts which are not destabilized in the process of voicing a counter-discourse. She notes, for instance, that “the essentially black body” “returns” in Du Bois' theorization of double consciousness, though he “originally attempts to exclude” it by showing “that color is an arbitrary signifier” (452). For the theorists of African-American literature using Du Bois and Bakhtin, the “category of race is thus retained” even if it is “redefined.” Hale writes:

These critics thus imply that the best way to define African American identity is as an activity rather than an entity: African American identity is not fragmented but the very process of fragmentation. The category of race is thus retained but also redefined: instead of restricting African American identity by limiting it to either one kind of body or even one kind of social division, ‘race’ now allows African American identity to be conceived of as infinitely fluid. (462)

Hale's critique is ultimately that “the distinguishing feature of African American identity comes to define all subaltern identity” and that “the particularity of African American identity

⁴ She cites Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Michael Awkward, Barbara Johnson, and Mae Gwendolyn Henderson as the theorists in question.

is lost” (464). I would argue that the search for or the insistence that there exists a cohesive “particularity” and “distinguishing feature of African American identity” reifies race as well, whether African-American identity is considered as part of the Othered group of subaltern identity or not.

In this chapter, I argue that the construction of a counter-discourse is mirrored within the diegeses of Crain’s film and Gomez’s and Butler’s novels. While, on the one hand, these narratives displace and re-signify monstrosity as well as racial Otherness and/or Blackness and their relationship with each other, on the other hand, they maintain a construction of Blackness as opposed to whiteness, which ultimately does not destabilize the racial binary. Given that Blackness functions as a key character trait for each main character and their respective stories, the somatic signifier of dark skin is not an “arbitrary” or “empty” signifier. Each text must rely on this signifier in order to engage with the traditional meanings associated with Blackness or African-American identity and subsequently to displace and put them into question. At the same time, the narratives (re)construct Blackness as an identity category, in parallel (if not also in opposition to) how each text (re)constructs whiteness. Though these two identity categories bear a metonymical relationship with each other both within and outside of each text, they are made to operate as metaphors through their figurative references to Blackness and whiteness as extra-diegetical “realities,” effectively “freezing ... fiction ... into fact” (de Man, 1979, 151). Through each narrative’s use of traditional allegory, they depend on an extra-diegetical “reality” of Black historical and communal experience of racism and racial injustice that works in conjunction with the somatic signifier of skin color. Crain’s film uses the vampire to allegorize the enslavement of Africans and to stage the L.A. Watts riots. Butler’s novel uses the vampire to allegorize anti-miscegenation discourse. Gomez’s novel uses the vampire to escape slavery as well as to represent passing. Although these narratives might not always fix

the signifier of skin color on the body's interior (as was the case in the texts discussed in the previous chapter), they do attach it to the extra-diegetical.

Stuart Hall has discussed the immutability of skin color (as well as hair and bone) in racial discourse. For Hall, arguing that race is purely internal to language is problematic because what is missed in talking about race as a signifier is its "reality": how it operates through racism. At the same time, he argues that skin color, hair, and bone "are finally when we come down to it what provides the foundation for the languages of race that we speak every day, the stubborn, gross, physical facts of color, hair, and bone" (1996, n. pag.). Hall's point then is not to dispute the idea that physical differences (visible or not) exist between individuals, but to argue that it is how some of these differences are given meaning that is problematic. In language, these somatic "signifiers" are "read" and "assumed" to be "signs" of a "genetic code" (*idem*). According to Hall, although racism is shown to be inherent to race, race (and the somatic signifier of skin color) inevitably leads back to the biological body which functions as the "ultimate transcendental signifier," "this reality" that replaces the reality of racism as well as the understanding of race as discourse. In the following analyses, I show how skin color operates as a "floating signifier," effectively displacing and re-signifying monstrosity in conjunction with Blackness, while also defining the Black body. In this way, the figure of the Black monster – as well as the Black body – appear as inherently and necessarily conditioned and constructed by white hegemonic and supremacist discourse, and – if not reifying the body then, at least – reifying Blackness and its place in the racial binary.

Blacula

William Crain's 1972 *Blacula* uses the figure of the vampire to highlight the ways in which the racial Other has been constructed in relation to monstrosity. The film begins with Mamuwalde as an African prince who travels to Castle Dracula in the eighteenth-century to

seek the Count's help to put a stop to the slave trade. Reconfigured as a white supremacist, Dracula turns Mamuwalde into a vampire, "cursing" him with the hunger for human blood, and locking him in a chest from which he will be freed two centuries later in 1972 Los Angeles. As Stacey Abbott notes, this backstory points to "racial oppression and slavery ... as the prince is effectively enslaved by Count Dracula through his transformation into a vampire" (83), and critics have also remarked on the film's reference to the L.A. Watts riots. More than these allegories of racial injustice, Crain's film rewrites the figure and its relation to a subject versus object status and to race. The Blaxploitation film genre with its aim of putting Black actors on screen in a film industry that was (and has been) largely dominated by whites, works to displace the self/Other dichotomy with regards to race. Yet *Blacula* not only puts a Black vampire in the film's eponymous role, it also positions the Black vampire as primary focalizer. Like the 1950's and 60's *Dracula* Hammer Films, the lead vampire is validated as heterosexual, masculine, seductive, and even gentlemanly. While such character traits as these might have worked to position Christopher Lee's Dracula as all the more dangerous, for William Marshall's *Blacula*, they humanize his character.⁵ Furthermore, as a Blaxploitation film, *Blacula* plays with the generic conventions of the (vampire) horror film. The film's paratext (its title, its tagline: "His bite was outta sight", and the opening theme song) and the filmic discourse emphasize its spoofing of vampire films, and of the British Hammer vampire films in particular. Though Susan Sontag argues that camp is "neutral with respect to content ... disengaged, depoliticized – or at least apolitical," *Blacula*'s thematization of racial injustice and the humanization of its Black "monster" or (anti-)hero show otherwise (n. pag.). Like other

⁵ Indeed, the Hammer Films' rendition of the Dracula character remove the racially- and ethnically-stigmatizing connotations that Stoker's novel and Browning's film used in their characterizations of the vampire. For instance, the "danger" of Lee's Dracula does not lie in miscegenation, but rather for women to lose themselves to sexual desire and sexual liberation. But for *Blacula*, considering that the vampire has also been constructed through animality and non-normative gender and sexuality (concepts that are metonymically linked to racial Otherness), the normalization of his character in relation to these traits works to displace his Blackness and vampirism as Other as well.

Blaxploitation films, Blackness is not put into question, but rather the meanings associated with Blackness are. In this sense, the narrative alters the meanings traditionally associated with Blackness and vampirism, namely the vampire as a form of stigmatization of the racial Other, and of Blackness as savage and animalistic. Although Crain's film displaces the stigmatizing associations between Blackness and monstrosity, it nevertheless relies on normative gender and sexual performances in order to humanize its Black "monster," which play into (white) hegemonic discourses that construct the (racial) Other. While it could be argued that the film's use of camp and parody might "play" with the film's representation of identity categories, *Blacula* ultimately stabilizes the racial binary in its use of traditional allegory, pointing to racism and racial injustice, and therefore, to Blackness in opposition to whiteness.

According to Harry Benshoff, "[i]n Blaxploitation horror films, the monster often becomes an allegory for the historical experience of African Americans" (2000, 38).⁶ Though Crain's film relies on the extra-diegetical reality of the African American "experience" of racial injustice in relation to Blackness, the film solicits a deconstructive reading of the meanings previously associated with racial and monstrous signifiers, in part through the framing of vampirism along racial lines in the opening scene. Indeed, in Crain's film, white supremacy makes the "monster," in both a figurative and a literal sense. Mamuwalde journeys to Transylvania in 1780, hoping to find an ally in Count Dracula to end the slave-trade. Although the Dracula/vampire narrative was until then a predominantly "white" narrative (especially in the Hammer Film tradition),⁷ Dracula is overtly (re)configured as a white supremacist, whose viewpoints Mamuwalde consistently opposes. When Mamuwalde makes his appeal, Dracula responds with disbelief: "To totally cease the slave trade?! ... Slavery has merit, I believe" (1:55). After the Count declares that he would pay good money to own Mamuwalde's wife, the

⁶ Benshoff's use of the term allegory is not intended to be post-structuralist. He then adds: "*Blacula*'s vampirism is an explicit *metaphor* for slavery" (emphasis added, *idem*).

⁷ This is what Richard Dyer argues in *White*. I will return to this below.

prince tells the vampire that he is “behaving like some animal,” to which Count Dracula replies: “Let us not forget, Sir. It is you who comes from the jungle” (2:42). Such an exchange rewrites white supremacy as “monstrous,” while it also ironically points to the problematic way in which the concepts of animality and savagery were used to characterize racial Otherness. While the two characters debate the signifiers to which these terms are properly applied, they also engage in a verbal banter involving vampire puns. For instance, Dracula tells Mamuwalde that his wife is “delicious” and the prince tells the count that he finds his “cognac as distasteful as [his] manner” (2:35). Of course, these puns add to the campy nature of the film and its spoofing of the vampire narrative, but they also highlight the ways in which the film plays with double-meanings, laying the grounds for Dracula’s figurative enslavement of Mamuwalde as a vampire. Dracula’s reshaping of Mamuwalde’s body then, along with his re-naming of him as Blacula, highlight the ways in which Black bodies were consistently marked and shaped by white slave-owning discourses and practices. Blacula is not only locked in a box which is sold and transported to America, figuratively referring to the treatment of African peoples in the Transatlantic slave trade, but also, his awakening two centuries later allegorizes the ramifications of slavery with systemic racism in the Los Angeles police force. As Abbott notes, Blacula’s relocation to Los Angeles in contemporary 1972, along with much of the film being shot on location, are reminders of the 1965 Watts riots: “[T]he memory of the Watts race riots circulates throughout the film through references to police corruption, institutional racism, and the eventual invasion of Watts by the white police force in search of the black vampire” (83). The film, therefore, uses the figure of the vampire to allegorize the historical experience of African-Americans, while it highlights and destabilizes the ways in which the monstrous figure and the racial Other were constructed through the same signifiers and concepts.

Though Butler’s and Gomez’s vampires appear to belong to a non-human identity category in which the “human” constructions of racial differences no longer bear meaning, in

Crain's film, vampirism functions differently for the white Dracula versus the Black vampire. The renaming of Mamuwalde as Blacula is symbolic of this differentiation. The name is a combination of his maker's name and his skin color. In "christening" him as Blacula, Dracula demonstrates that vampirism is typically reserved for white (or pale) skin tones and that dark skin and vampirism within the same body is an oddity, and therefore, in need of a specific designation.⁸ More than the power to name and shape Mamuwalde's body, Dracula is apparently *free* to use his vampirism as he chooses. For instance, the moment he reveals himself to be a vampire is after he and Mamuwalde have exchanged insults and the prince expresses a desire to leave. For Dracula then, vampirism is not portrayed as an instinctual or animalistic desire for blood, but rather as an additional means to demonstrate and exert his aristocratic power over others. For Mamuwalde, however, vampirism is intended as centuries of torture and imprisonment rather than a form of empowerment. Dracula "curse[s]" him with "wild hunger" and "lust" which are never to be satiated, as he is meant to remain in the coffin in which Dracula locks him forever. Though Blacula is later released and able to feed, he is not always able to choose his victims in the same way that Dracula does. For instance, his first two victims – an interracial gay couple – are those who open his coffin 200 years after Dracula's curse. When one of the characters cuts himself, Blacula rises and appears to be irresistibly drawn towards the blood. The camera cuts back and forth between the two men bandaging the wound and medium and close-up shots on Blacula while his nose and his mouth twitch and he moves slowly towards them. All of Blacula's subsequent victims are part of the Black community in the Los Angeles Watts neighborhood. In this sense, Blacula's vampirism

⁸ Here, I am reminded of hyphenated identity categories as substitutes for national identity, such as "African-American," as if "American" alone should be reserved for whites. But Dracula's re-naming can also be interpreted as an allegorical reference to the re-naming that occurred for Africans who were kidnapped and sold into slavery. Unlike this historical tenor however, Mamuwalde is able to keep his original name and use it when he chooses to do so. His African name is not only a means to consistently humanize him in contrast to the vampiric name of Blacula, but it also serves to distinguish him from the African-American community in Los Angeles. I will return to other distinguishing characteristics later.

remains a metaphor for racial victimization throughout the film. His figurative enslavement involves this forced performance of vampirism, a repetition of white violence against Blacks, as imposed upon him through white supremacy. As Abbott argues: “Blacula’s own enslavement by Dracula is subsequently imposed upon the citizens of Watts” (83). Blacula’s vampirism – as it originates from Count Dracula and as this moment operates as the basis for the string of traditional allegorical references – appears as a perpetuation of slavery, not just upon Mamuwalde, but also upon a Black community 200 years later.

In another sense, and in parallel with Blacula’s position as the anti-hero and primary focalizer of the film, his vampirism is also a means of empowerment. Yet the question remains whether or not the anti-hero’s vampirism is configured as his individual empowerment and a propagation of white violence or as a means to combat racial injustice. In order to interpret the film’s figurative use of vampirism in relation to its allegorical reference to the 1965 Watts riots, one must also consider how *Blacula* repeats the traditional plotlines of the Blaxploitation genre. Gary Morris writes:

The plots of most of these films ... fall loosely into two overlapping categories. First are the stories of the pimp or pusher at a crisis point, caught between the needs of his people (black nationalism) and sellout pressure from The Man ... The second is the straight-on revenge drama, in which a character – often female, more violent and less conflicted than her male counterpart – single-handedly destroys a white-based power structure that’s harmed her, her family, and by extension the black community. (n. pag.)

Blacula contains aspects of both of these “overlapping categories.” As an anti-hero, enslaved by “The Man,” Blacula can be said to “push” addiction (to blood), or to “sell out” to white hegemony by adopting Dracula’s enslaving practices and feeding on the Black community of Watts in his turn. The narrative implies this interpretation by showing how Mamuwalde/Blacula interacts with some of the other things that he inherits from Dracula, namely his cape and his wealth. After feeding from his first victims, he discovers the cape, smooths it out, and holds it affectionately to his heart before throwing it around his shoulders. The cape will later aid him in his performance as a vampire – he raises it before attacking and

before transforming into a bat. Although his wealth is not as apparent as his predecessor's since he continues to dwell in the warehouse where he awakes, he proudly orders French champagne for a table at a nightclub, even though another character tells him that such an expense "won't be necessary" (37:40). Moreover, Mamuwalde's transformation into Blacula – with fangs out and additional facial hair – appears as a conscious, deliberate choice, one that he even enjoys.⁹ After feeding off of his first two victims and donning the cape, he recalls Dracula's curse, looks at the two bodies, and laughs machiavellically. These gestures implicitly characterize Mamuwalde/Blacula as proud of the power and wealth he has inherited.¹⁰

Though the (anti-)hero is not "female," the superhuman strength and power that Mamuwalde inherits from Dracula are also what enable him to defend himself and fight back against a "white-based power structure," which here is the mostly white police force of Los Angeles. For Harry Benshoff, it is the second plotline cited by Morris that was part of the film's promotion. He writes of *Blacula* (and other Blaxploitation horror films) that:

audience sympathy is often redirected away from [authority] figures and toward the figure of the monster, a specifically black *avenger* who justifiably fights against the dominant order – which is often explicitly coded as racist. Ad campaigns for the films assured patrons they would see Blacula set a "death trap for *revenge*" and partake in an "orgy of *vengeance*." (2000, 37)

Shortly before the climax, the film pits the predominantly white police force (they are all white except for Dr. Thomas – more on his character below) against Blacula's "army" of vampires, while Blacula later fights off one white policeman after another on his own. Earlier scenes depict Blacula's attacks on Black women as either a defense mechanism or as a form of empowerment against white power structures or those who might discover his vampirism. The

⁹ It is worth adding that Mamuwalde expresses no remorse regarding his vampirism, unlike the characters of Edward Cullen and Blade. For instance, before Dr. Thomas discovers his identity, he speaks in favor of vampires as the most "fascinating creatures."

¹⁰ Of course, one could argue that he does not inherit wealth because he was already wealthy as a prince. However, while his financial means are never explained, and if one considers the allegory of enslavement – the erasure of his African heritage and its replacement by Dracula's recreation of his identity – it seems clear that any wealth he holds comes from Dracula's belongings which were bought by the interracial gay couple who Blacula kills and transforms.

first Black woman he attacks is a taxi driver who runs into him and angrily blames him for the accident, proceeding to call him “boy” (24:53), thus repeating racist and demasculinizing discourses. The second has taken his picture, which risks revealing his identity due to his absence from the photo. Blacula’s third and final “attack” on a Black woman is rather an effort to save her, the woman he loves, Tina (who he believes to be the reincarnation of his wife Luva), dying from a gunshot wound from a white policeman. Significantly, aside from his very first victim, the spectator never witnesses Blacula biting a white character. When faced with the white police officers who pursue him at the film’s climax, he merely uses his superior strength to strangle, to strike, or to throw them. Rather, it is the Black vampires that Blacula has transformed who attack and “turn” white characters, such as police officers and a morgue intendent. In this sense, vampirism gives Mamuwalde the means to fight against “white-based power structures,” which he then passes on to other members of the Black community. As Benshoff writes, despite Blacula’s preying on the Black community of Los Angeles, the film sides with Blacula as he defends himself from the white Los Angeles police officers (2000, 37).

Importantly, the question of how the narrative destabilizes the signifying relationship between dark skin and monstrosity is not only shaped by the white characters in the film, but also by the other Black characters. Mamuwalde/Blacula’s skin color is characterized not only in relation to Dracula’s, but also in relation to the other Black male hero of the film: Dr. Thomas. Significantly, in Crain’s version of the Dracula narrative, the Van Helsing type character who hunts the vampire is a Black man and works as an L.A. police detective. This characterization troubles the “revenge” plot that was promoted by the film’s advertisement campaign, for if Dr. Thomas and Mamuwalde merit comparison as the two (anti-)heroes of the film, Dr. Thomas’ Blackness ensures that Blacula is not merely used to allegorize racial Otherness and racial injustice in contrast to whiteness (that of Dracula and then of the police

force). More than simply a matter of Dr. Thomas' own skin color and his characterization as a member of the LAPD, his detective work regarding the mysterious deaths – victims of Blacula – does not identify the vampire in relation to his skin color. He draws no conclusions based on the fang marks that appear on Blacula's victims, other than that they are the mark of a vampire. Unlike Van Helsing's character in Stoker's novel and Browning's film, his work does not involve ensuring the purity of blood against a diseased and hypersexual ethnic Other. Rather, Dr. Thomas merely reads fang marks on corpses as the need to ensure that no more "innocent people" are "killed" (1:16:55). Dr. Thomas functions not only as a Van Helsing type character who must identify the vampire and stop his murderous actions, but also as a Black police officer similar to Shaft, working to defend the Black community. As Richard Maynard notes: "Shaft was outspoken, especially to the cops, traditional nemeses to all private investigators and urban blacks. Yet he could gain the confidence of the only nonracist guy on the force and work with him in a private alliance" (n. pag.). Though Dr. Thomas is a member of the police force rather than independent, he is "outspoken" to the white chief of police, telling him at one point that it is "strange how so many sloppy police jobs involve black victims" (32:17), while also "gaining his confidence" regarding the existence of the vampire and working with him to stop Blacula. Yet, even here, the narrative posits a parallel between Dr. Thomas and Mamuwalde/Blacula since they both battle institutional racism, and admittedly do so within and even through "white-based power structures," Dr. Thomas within and through the LAPD police force and Blacula through vampirism.¹¹ The end of the film supports this interpretation since

¹¹ There are other parallels between the two characters as well. Dr. Thomas' character also aids in pointing to the ways in which Black masculinity can be read in problematic ways. The two Black characters are each faced with inscribed readers – both white and Black – that read them belittlingly. In addition to their confrontations with white characters who reject their readings with regard to institutional racism (Dracula's response to Mamuwalde's opinion of the slave trade, and the police chief's response to Dr. Thomas' argument regarding "sloppy" police work), both are insulted with racist discourse by other Black characters for lacking politeness. Like the taxi driver's insult of Mamuwalde, Dr. Thomas is accused of being a "rude nigger" by another Black man (24:29). As they are each in love with two sisters (Dr. Thomas' girlfriend is Tina's sister), it would seem then that very little distinguishes the vampire from the human who hunts him, aside from clothing. (More on this below.)

Mamuwalde's/Blacula's death is depicted as tragic. He dies voluntarily, committing suicide by walking into the sunlight as background music plays a slow, sad tune.¹² Ultimately, regardless of the fact that Dr. Thomas remains standing "on the side" of the (white) police force during this final scene, his character ensures that Black skin is not encoded as either mere victim or victimizer.

The way in which the narrative builds up to Blacula's death as tragic is through his love story with Tina, which serves to humanize and create sympathy for the character, and additionally works to displace the concepts of monstrosity and Otherness from Blackness. Although vampire love stories are quite common today, *Blacula* may have been the first popular narrative to characterize its vampire as such.¹³ Like Christopher Lee's Dracula, Marshall's vampire passes as a handsome, charming, and gentleman-like vampire. But significantly, he does not "seduce" or bite a number of women out of hunger or sexual desire. His sexual desire is rather directed towards one woman alone: Tina, who he believes to be the reincarnation of his wife, Luva. It is only the film's opening credits that depict Blacula as a serial seducer, preying on women, and this is done in cartoon-style with black and red shadowy outlines (in reference to James Bond title sequences, such as the 1969 *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*), as if to distance the character within the narrative from the character framed by the paratext. More than this, the love story is not merely a secondary plotline, but rather shapes the narrative, and thus, Mamuwalde's/Blacula's characterization as a vampire. Since his wife Luva is sentenced to death by Dracula, Mamuwalde's figurative enslavement is rendered all the more cruel and tragic. His discovery of Tina (played by the same actress) 200 years later appears as

¹² The final image of the film is Blacula's smoking flesh melting away with maggots. While it could be argued that this disrupts the notion of the vampire's tragic demise, it may also simply be another reference to the Hammer Film tradition where Dracula's body decomposes at the end of each film.

¹³ According to Jerry Rafiki Jenkins, "*Blacula* not only engendered the blaxploitation horror genre, but it also helped shape the *Dracula* adaptations by John Badham and Francis Ford Coppola in 1979 and 1992, respectively, by making the vampire more human than monster" (2019, n. pag.). Indeed, Coppola's adaptation sells itself as the most faithful of its kind with the title *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, but one of the major differences between the novel and the film is the love story between Dracula and Mina.

a way to repair the injustice inflicted by Dracula, namely the separation from his wife. If Blacula's first two victims are simply a result of his need to feed after 200 years in a coffin, the rest of his victims are all related to his search for and seduction of Tina. His collision with the taxi driver is the result of his pursuit of Tina, and part of his anger with the woman is due to his inability to follow Tina after the accident. Since his photograph is taken while he is with Tina, his attack on the photographer is also configured as a way to keep his identity a secret from Tina and her entourage. The transformation of Tina is staged as a means to save her from a gunshot wound. Saddened at not being able to leave her the choice to become a vampire, he tells her: "Forgive me, now this is the only way" before biting her (1:25:05). Yet her transformation is short-lived – a different police officer finds her and stakes her. Mamuwalde/Blacula is thus obliged to watch his Luva/Tina die three times at the hands of "white-based power structures." Having lost his only "reason for living" (1:29:53) with Tina as well as the chance to repair the injustice of Dracula's "curse," Mamuwalde chooses to end the conflict with the LAPD and to commit suicide – a choice which might then be considered a tragic acceptance of the power of white hegemony.

Although *Blacula* disrupts the links between "monstrous" and racial Otherness, in part by using a heterosexual love story to humanize its vampire, it also plays into (white) hegemonic discourses by reinforcing heteronormativity. Mamuwalde's performance of Black masculinity is one of the ways in which he is implicitly characterized as Other, even vis-à-vis most of the Black male characters that surround him. For instance, Mamuwalde wears his long black cape over his black suit, the only vampire signifier that remains while he passes as human. While it could be suggested that the cape signifies his enslavement by Dracula, as well as his repetition of the Dracula role, it also marks him as distinct from the Black male characters that surround him. His black suit additionally serves to display the wealth that distinguishes him from the urban Black community. Accompanied with his gentlemanly demeanor, Mamuwalde's

performance of Black masculinity seems out of place in the 1970's context of L.A. As one Black male character says of him, "That is one strange dude" (41:08). In this way, the cape marks Mamuwalde as "strange" if not foreign, while it also illustrates the ways that definitions of Black masculinity had shifted to what they were in a 1970's urban environment.¹⁴ Arguably, Mamuwalde's character demonstrates the performativity of (Black) masculinity; however, the film also reproduces stereotypical characterizations of Black femininity. Jewelle Gomez writes that *Blacula* tries "to reinterpret the vampire myth for black culture, but ... still adhere[s] to the formulaic design: (black) woman as handmaiden or (black) woman as temptress/bait" (1997, 89). Following the trend in previous vampire narratives (and one we continue to see in horror films today), Crain's film uses the vampire to "punish" hypersexual and non-normative gender and sexuality. Though *Blacula*'s attack on the photographer is configured as necessary to protect his identity, she is also the most scantily clad and flirtatious of the female characters the film depicts. (The camera in this nightclub scene contributes to the construction of the Black female as "temptress/bait" by offering a few cuts of close-ups on women's headless torsos while they are dancing.) The taxi driver's aggressive and angry reprimands of Mamuwalde suggest that it is not simply her use of the word "boy" that threatens to dehumanize and demasculinize, but also her masculinized behavior which "merit correction" by the vampire. One of the white male characters – a mortician – even suggests this line of thinking

¹⁴ It is also worth noting that Mamuwalde's stylization of/through Black masculinity is metonymically related to the distinction between "Africanness" versus "African-Americanness." In other words, Mamuwalde's "strange" actions are not merely configured as outdated but also as foreign. Mamuwalde validates his African identity when telling Tina of his belief that she is his lost wife Luva. He tells her that their people were "hunters," as if pointing to an implicit link between his past and his present as a vampire (50:17). Citing Leerom Medovoi's essay on the film, Ken Gelder writes that Medovoi "sees *Blacula* as the embodiment of an 'originary black masculinity' that is specifically linked to a premodern, prediasporic Africa: at a time before the black Atlantic. The vampire's problem in Los Angeles (and the thing that so enrages him) is that modern African-American identity seems much less caught up with origins and authenticity, which means that the kind of cultural 'authority' it once commanded has now been lost. The film, in other words, plays out a catastrophic encounter between the ancient and the new that is generically typical of vampire films" (83). In this sense, the source of *Blacula*/Mamuwalde's anger over the disconnection between "modern African-American identity" and "originary black masculinity" is the same as that which caused him to lose his past life and identity, namely the African slave trade and white supremacy.

by insinuating to Dr. Thomas that she deserved to die: “Fine job for a woman, runnin’ a cab. If you ask me, she was lookin’ for somethin’” (29:52), thereby echoing the victim shaming and blaming of women who are raped. Although the film often uses white characters to voice racist and sexist comments in order to counter these perspectives, in this case, Blacula’s attack on the cab driver appears to reinforce his white hegemonic discourse.

These examples demonstrate the ways in which the film normalizes specific performances of Black masculinity and femininity, and they also point to how gender and white hegemony intersect. Judith Butler argues that “homosexuality and miscegenation ... converge at and as the constitutive outside of a normative heterosexuality that is at once the regulation of a racially pure production” (1993, 167). Some critics have suggested that, because Blacula attacks an interracial gay couple, the film is complicit with the Blaxploitation genre’s demonization of non-normative sexuality.¹⁵ Although the film might use the homosexual couple to highlight the film’s camp aesthetic (one of the characters even declares that Dracula’s old belongings are “the absolute crème-de-la-crème of camp” [10:29]), Blacula’s attack might appear as the necessary erasure and reconfiguration (only the Black character survives as a vampire) of the only characters who do not perform heteronormativity. It is also possible to see Blacula’s attack on the couple as a “punishment” for their interracial relationship. While Blacula bites this one white male before moving onto his partner, a Black male, it is worth noting that he does not bite any white females. At the time of the film’s release in 1972, the Hays code (banning interracial relationships on-screen) had been abolished only four years prior. Moreover, anti-miscegenation laws had been outlawed only five years earlier. Though Black female vampires are depicted attacking white men, it is possible that the portrayal of a Black male vampire’s bite (a figurative reference to sex and even rape) of a white woman might have been viewed as a repetition of the stigmatizing “predatory black male rapist” figure (as

¹⁵ See Benschhoff, 2000, page 38.

seen in the 1915 *Birth of a Nation* and the 1933 *King Kong*, for instance). Blacula's role as a vampire then appears as a means to enforce sexual and racial normativity, while the Black female vampires (the photographer and the taxi driver) can threaten racial purity and heteronormativity, because they were already doing so as humans. Although Crain's film humanizes the figure of the vampire with its Black (anti-)hero, it does so at the cost of reinforcing heteronormative performances and white hegemony, as well as at the expense of (the) Other(s).

Likewise, even though *Blacula* destabilizes the link between monstrosity and racial Otherness and seeks to valorize Blackness, the film reinforces the racial binary through its construction of Blackness in opposition to whiteness. Of course, traditional allegory insinuates that there is only one figurative relationship between a metaphorical figure and its extra-diegetical, literal correspondent. Admittedly, Crain's film, posits more than one interpretative possibility for Blacula's vampirism – it can be read as both (or either/or) individual empowerment and perpetuation of white violence and racial injustice and/or a means to fight “white-based power structures” and systemic racial oppression. Regardless of how Blacula's vampirism is viewed, it is always constructed and configured through the lens of white hegemony as a counter-discourse, and therefore offers the (Othered) opposition that hegemonic discourse needs to constitute and reinforce itself. The inclusion of Dr. Thomas' character might suggest otherwise – that the racial binary is not simply represented through Black and white character confrontations which are doubled through the figurative dichotomy of the vampire versus the human. Even though the plot clearly pits the two characters on opposite sides (vampire versus human, criminal versus police detective), the film also places parallels between them, such that they both fight within and against the “white-based power structures” of slavery and systemic racism in the police force. In this sense, Crain's film offers an

understanding of Blackness as necessarily constituted and constructed by the very discourse it attempts to contest.

It is the somatic signifier of skin color that provokes the comparison of these two characters (among others), and it might seem as though the film couples fantastical allegory with historical realism. Indeed, if the vampire element of the film were removed, the depiction of white police officers confronting the Black community of Watts would position the narrative as part of the historical fiction genre. Thus, it is neither skin color nor racial identity categories that are being called into question in Crain's film. Moreover, in the medium of film, a character's skin color is apparent through the actor/actress who plays the part and, as Stuart Hall would argue, is inevitably "read" by the spectator, and perhaps even as necessarily linked to the categories of Blackness or whiteness since "we are all readers of race" (1996, n. pag.). Once again, for Hall, that differences in skin color exist is not up for debate – it is how meaning is made from these differences that can be called into question. Ultimately, Crain's film exemplifies Hall's argument. As part of the Blaxploitation genre, dark skin color on actors and actresses was necessary for the very constitution of the genre, which was also a necessity to make up for the lack of African American representation (in more diverse roles) on screen. The name of the genre itself calls attention to this distinction from mainstream cinema. In addition, the title of Crain's film, *Blacula*, immediately informs the spectator that the film will be about a Black vampire by soliciting intertextual associations with Dracula, vampires (as having pale skin), and Blackness (which is necessarily dependent on the somatic signifier of dark skin). Crain's film, thus, does not attempt to question skin color because it in fact relies on it. Nor does it seek to question Blackness (and its opposition to whiteness), though it does attempt to displace some of the problematic metonymical associations made with Blackness (and thus stemming from dark skin), such as animality. Hall's discussion of "race" as a "floating signifier" shows how the meanings associated with race have changed; signifiers "float,"

becoming detached from certain concepts (such as those attributed in scientific racism) and attached to others (such as racial injustice). Crain's film demonstrates this, as well as how the "floating signifier" of Blackness, in its opposition to whiteness, becomes a transcendental signifier through its return to that "ultimate transcendental signifier," which is here the "Black" body.

While the vampire can be read figuratively, Blackness cannot. Vampirism can "float" as well, standing for white violence and racial oppression, rather than a threat to racial purity. So while the metaphorical figure is actually doubled, one figure is recognized as figurative and the other is not. The vampire narrative can allegorize slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, as well as riots between police and a community. Crain's film shows that the somatic signifier of dark skin can also "float" and be used in conjunction with the vampire, while doing so can displace the meanings traditionally associated with vampirism, particularly those that have been metonymically used to construct racial Otherness. Yet Crain's film also fixes the meaning of dark skin as inherently connected to Blackness and the ways in which this identity category is metonymically linked to whiteness. This fixing of meaning between skin colors and identity categories operates not only through the narrative's use of traditional allegory, but also through the filmic discourse. Richard Dyer notes that "the horror of vampirism is expressed in colour" (210). "Because vampires are dead, they are pale, cadaverous, white, ... deathly white, ... the vampires' whiteness conveys their own deadness" (210). Dyer hereby demonstrates the way in which the somatic signifier of pale, white skin has traditionally operated as a metaphor for death. Since Crain's film does not seek to play with this particular traditional aspect of vampirism, other visual means were applied in order to convey death or the state of being undead along with dark skin. Green make-up is worn by some of the vampire extras in both the opening scene with Dracula and in the warehouse scene in Los Angeles. (See Figures 14 and 15 in the Appendix.) Green skin can symbolize bodily decay and erase the link between

the somatic signifier of skin color and the racial binary. However, not all of the vampires in each scene wear green make-up, nor do the two main vampire characters, Dracula and Blacula, since clearly the film relies on pale and dark skin color in order to construct its allegory. As if it were necessary to visually distinguish the human Mamuwalde from the vampire Blacula (whereas fangs suffice for Dracula), the Black vampire appears with additional facial hair, along with fangs, and the audible signifier of growling. (See Figure 16.) Benshoff notes how this is problematic: “The lingering racist discourse of Negro bestiality is also evident in these films’ makeup codes. Black monsters tend to be more animalistic than white monsters: when Blacula gets his blood lust up, for example, he becomes almost lupine, with a hairy face and brow, a trope usually not used for more debonair white vampires” (2000, 42). In this way, Blacula’s body bears the mark of animality that Dracula’s does not. The opening scene prepares us for Dracula’s transfer of animality (“wild hunger”) to Blacula, in part through Mamuwalde’s own observation – that Dracula is “behaving like some animal.” Yet for Dracula, this identification remains a simile, on the level of discourse alone. For Blacula, however, the figure operates as a metaphor for the Black body, so that once again, Blackness is opposed to whiteness. Crain’s film thus illustrates the ways, as Hall argues, that race persistently appears to leave the realm of discourse and maintain its link to the body. It also demonstrates a recognition of how the vampire figure has been used to stigmatize racial Otherness in a figurative way, but a denial of the ways in which Blackness has been constructed to do the same.

Fledgling

Octavia Butler’s 2005 novel *Fledgling* reinvents the vampire and uses the figure to allegorize miscegenation and, in the process, destabilizes race and heteronormativity. Shori is a Black vampire, but one that is half-human and half-vampire, and like Blade, able to withstand the

vampire vulnerability to sunlight. Also like Blade, Shori is a unique “hybrid,” but as she later discovers, she can and intends to “breed” with other vampires and to pass her helpful human traits on to her offspring. Yet this is precisely what Shori’s enemies wish to prevent. For them, the Ina – the name Butler gives to her vampires – are a distinct and superior species to humans who may be a source for food and sex but should never be allowed to mate with them. It is not just Shori’s “humanness” that is an affront to these vampires, it is also her dark skin and hair, a sharp contrast to the extremely pale coloring and white blond hair of the Ina who existed before Shori’s birth. Shori thus threatens species and racial mixing through her human genes and the somatic signifier of her dark skin color. But moving beyond Crain’s film, in addition to the figurative representation of the human / non-human and the racial binary and their metonymical links, Butler’s narrative uses the vampire to question other identity categories, particularly gender and sexuality, and through them the definition of the “family.” Butler aptly uses the vampire (“Ina”) perspective in order to challenge “human” constructions and interpretations of identity categories. Because Shori suffers from amnesia and has no memory of either of these points of view – having to relearn their conceptions as well as how they “read” her body – Shori’s voice as the homodiegetic narrator is essential in destabilizing any opposition between the two perspectives as well as in confronting each group with their contradictions. While the “reading” or the characterizations of Shori’s body are regularly called into question, the narrative consistently relies on the body as pre-discursive, such that the inner / outer metaphors through which identity categories are essentialized are reinforced and naturalized rather than displaced. Butler’s novel might not reaffirm the Black body as human through white hegemony in the way that Crain’s film does, but it does fix the somatic signifier of skin color to the body which in turn becomes the “ultimate transcendental signifier.”

In its allegorization of racial injustice, *Fledgling* follows *Blacula* in its reversal of the vampire figure, particularly with regards to the construction (or the potential erasure) of the

Black body through white supremacy. Unbeknownst to her at the novel's beginning, Shori has just lost everything – her home and her Ina and human family and community have been reduced to ash, and her memory and all knowledge of who (and what) she is have been erased – due to white supremacist vampires who do not believe that she should exist. The massacre, as well as the attacks that follow (the massacre of her mother's community is followed by the loss of her father's, and then by two more attacks on homes and communities where Shori resides), not only echo the practice of genocide, but also, given that Shori loses her previous “self” and must begin her life anew, these white supremacist vampires perform the same function as *Blacula's* Dracula. As with Mamuwalde's enslavement and 200 year-long sleep, they erase Shori's previous existence, disconnect her from her past, force her displacement, and cause her to live in dehumanizing, animal-like circumstances. During the first few days after she wakes from the massacre, she lives in a cave, hunts and devours raw deer and (we later learn) a human, and she lives without language – forgetting the names of the objects and beings she encounters as well as her own.¹⁶ It is here that Butler appears to draw from previous configurations of the vampire as constructed through animality. Given the reversal of the vampire/human binary from the Ina perspective, it is rather humans who are characterized as animalistic and are thus treated in demeaning ways by certain Ina.¹⁷ Because Shori is part human, these Ina position her on the human side of the Ina/human binary and animalize her. The Silk family, brought to trial by several Ina communities under the accusation of murdering the entirety of Shori's family (and having failed to murder her), represents this vein of Ina (or white) supremacy. The elder of the Silk family questions Shori's right to speak in such a situation: ““You're not Ina! ... You're not! And you have no more business at this Council than

¹⁶ Importantly, it is both Shori's physicality as Ina and as a dark-skinned human that allow her to survive. Her humanness and dark skin enable her to do without the shelter of her home and to withstand sunlight while her vampirism allows her to heal quickly from what would otherwise be mortal injuries, as well as to have the strength and the speed to hunt with her bare hands. More on this later.

¹⁷ Aside from Shori's days living in a cave and the terms “canine teeth” and “venom” that are used to describe them, the narrative does not characterize the Ina as animalistic.

would a clever dog!” (238). Later, one of the elder’s sons reiterates his father’s rhetoric, calling Shori a “black mongrel bitch” and asking rhetorically, “What will she give us all? Fur? Tails?” (300). Given Shori’s dark skin color and Russell Silk’s inclusion of “black” in his insult, Butler’s narrative, like Crain’s film, highlights the ways in which animalizing rhetoric was used in scientific racism. As in the scientific discourses of eugenics and degeneration (see Chapter Two), Russell uses metaphors that are nevertheless denied as such and are rather meant to be literal.

More than instantiating anti-miscegenation discourse through traditional allegory, Shori’s “black” skin works with the blending of the narrative’s use of figurative versus literal meanings, mirroring the debate regarding species and race that operates within the diegesis as well as in nineteenth-century scientific discourse. In one sense, Shori’s supposed inferiority to the Ina is “doubled” as Butler moves beyond a framing of the vampire/human binary as a simple metaphor for the racial binary. For instance, the Ina family, the Silks, that attacked Shori’s family, in the ultimate attempt to kill Shori, are not only prejudiced against humans – and therefore, the part of Shori that is human – but also against her Blackness. While Shori is later assured that skin color means little to the Ina and that racial categories are merely a human construction for them (148), she then learns that some Ina do adopt the human perspective on her skin color, or more specifically the lens of white supremacy. After capturing a human who was hypnotized by Ina to attack her, Shori questions him:

He surprised me. “Dirty little nigger bitch,” he said reflexively. “Goddamn mongrel cub.” Then he gasped and clutched his head between his hands...

“Didn’t mean to say that,” he whispered. “Didn’t mean to call you that.” He looked at me. “Sorry. Didn’t mean it.”

“They call me those things, don’t they?”

He nodded.

“Because I’m dark-skinned?”

“And human,” he said. “Ina mixed with some human or maybe human mixed with a little Ina. That’s not supposed to happen. Not ever.” (173)

The human's reading of Shori is ironic because he adopts the rhetoric of the Ina, who have evidently adopted racist discourse from humans. But more than this, this reading of Shori is not only based on racist human terms and perceptions, it also demonstrates that these Ina see Shori's dark skin as a sign of her humanness. Yet the racist slurs applied to Shori due to her skin color are dehumanizing and illustrate Butler's play with language and identity categories considering that animalizing rhetoric ("mongrel cub") often characterizes the more traditional figure of the vampire. For these Ina, vampire signifiers can only co-exist with the somatic signifier of white skin. In this reading, Shori's dark skin signifies her inferiority as a human and as an *inferior* human. One Ina, siding with the Silks, argues with another Ina who wishes to unite Shori with his sons: "'You want your sons to mate with this person. You want them to get black, human children from her. Here in the United States, even most humans ... look down on them. When I came to this country, such people were kept as property, as slaves'" (272). As Ali Brox notes, "Racial discourse becomes the means through which the Ina/human species conflict is articulated, and this discourse creates a hierarchy that Butler challenges her characters, and readers, to overcome" (396). Yet it is precisely their use of racial discourse that points to the fact that there is no other discourse that the Ina can employ to define their prejudices – they must adopt and rely on the terms of the very people that they critique and to which they feel superior. The use of racial discourse to refer to "species conflict" constitutes a reversal and an underlining of the ways in which (human) racial discourse has relied on the categorization of species, or the scientific discourse of species, to "articulate" and define the difference between races.¹⁸

Indeed, in another sense, Russell Silk's remarks underline the metonymical link between (anti-)miscegenation and speciesism, or the ways in which anti-miscegenation

¹⁸ An example of speciesism in scientific discourse is the term of "hybridity." Interestingly however, while Butler never uses this term to refer to Shori, critics, such as Brox (and myself), often do.

discourse relied on the notion that separate races were in fact separate species. Most Ina seem to agree that they are a separate species from humans, in part because they cannot sexually reproduce with humans, only with other vampires. Yet Shori's part vampire and part human status, along with her dark skin, destabilize and threaten the division between, as well as the very notion of, species and races. Butler's characterization of Shori points to the racist polygenetic argument of the nineteenth-century in which distinct racial groups were perceived as separate species, unable to reproduce healthy mixed-race descendants (see Chapter Two). Brox writes, "[t]ellingly, much of Butler's text focuses on Shori's choice for mates while the Ina who oppose her mixed blood concentrate on preventing her from ever reproducing because they fear that her child would prove that Ina and humans are a single species" (397-8).¹⁹ Indeed, beyond the topic of Shori's potential mates, the focus of the Ina trial that dominates the third part of the novel strays from the mere question of whether or not the Silk family is guilty of murder onto whether or not Shori is Ina. Because, from the Silk perspective, if Shori can be proven not to be Ina, the council will also accept that she should not reproduce and that the Silk's crime of murder (and attempted murder) can be more easily forgiven. Shori is thus as much "on trial" as the Silk family is.

Although the narrative does not include the future of Shori's family with the Gordon Ina men and their children, Butler's novel demonstrates the ways in which the species versus race debate was contingent on other ideological concepts and identity categories, as well as the double bind within which Shori finds herself. During the trial, not only is her species status brought into question through animality, but also her age and intelligence. She is accused of being a "child, clearly too young to know how to behave," of having "no more business at this

¹⁹ Arguably, even though the narrative later focuses on Shori's possible mates, her own "origin" through genetic engineering renders a blurring of the Ina/human species divide somewhat difficult. In this, *Fledgling* differs from Butler's earlier trilogy, *Lilith's Brood*, where an alien species, the Oankali, mate with humans through a combination of sex and genetic engineering. As sex and genetic engineering occur through the same means (or at the same time), *Lilith's Brood* blurs the distinction between the two practices and thereby between the so-called species divide.

Council than would a clever dog,” and of being mentally incapable of making a claim against the Silk family due to her amnesia (271, 238).²⁰ After having murdered one of Shori’s human “symbionts,” one of the Ina, Katherine Dahlman, who sides with the Silk family, argues that Shori’s reaction shows that she is not Ina. She addresses Shori in front of the court: ““You say your symbiont has just died. If that were so, you would be prostrate. You would not be able to sit here telling lies and arguing. True Ina know the pain of losing a symbiont. We are Ina. You are nothing!”” (272). Shori’s narration makes the double bind in which she finds herself clear: “[Katherine] believed I would either lose control and disgrace myself before the Council – possibly by attacking her – or if I didn’t, she could use my apparent lack of feeling to point out how un-Ina I was. She won either way” (274). One of her Ina allies underlines that in order for Shori to win her case against Katherine and the Silk family, because of their claims against her and because of her part-human status – one that is reinforced through the somatic signifier of her differing skin color – she must out-perform the others in their Ina identity: ““You, more than anyone, must show that you can follow our ways. You must not give the people who have decided to be your enemies any advantage. You must seem more Ina than they”” (sic, 266). Preston Gordon’s comment insinuates that “being” Ina is a matter of cultural practices and performance, which contrasts with the Silks’ essentialist discourse in which the body of the Ina is reflected in their behavior (““Your scent, your reactions, your facial expressions, your body language – none of it is right”” 272). Butler’s narrative highlights the ways in which identity categories – including species versus race – are maintained through a fantasy of essentialist metaphors, somatic signifiers and performativity. Moreover, like Wiseman’s film *Underworld*, the novel’s repetition of the species/race discourse (and its reference to the nineteenth-century monogenetic versus polygenetic debate) within the context of a fantasy narrative works to highlight the fantasy of the discourse itself.

²⁰ Shori learns that she is 53 and will not reach Ina adulthood for another two or three decades.

Well before Shori's confrontation with the speciesist and racist Silk family, Butler's rewriting of the vampire through Shori highlights the ways in which species and racial differences are constructed through metonymical links to other identity categories which are themselves contingent on ideological perceptions and even on fiction. Significantly, Butler's narrative complicates (and perhaps resists) the notion of the vampire as well as Shori's belonging to this category through multiple means: the way in which the narrative reconfigures the definition of the vampire in contrast to its "fictional" representations, and Shori's own lack of knowledge regarding vampires as well as her characterization as a human/vampire "hybrid." Shori first meets the human, Wright, a 23-year-old white man, who initially sees her as an eleven-year-old girl. Shori's sharp teeth and bite cause Wright to use the label of vampire: "'You're a vampire, you know.' I thought about that. The word stirred memories. 'What's a vampire?' He laughed. 'You. You bite. You drink blood'" (12). Wright later asks her to "'show'" him her "'teeth,'" to which he responds "'you *are* a damned vampire'" (14). With these characteristics, Butler's narrative retains the traditional characterization of a vampire as having fangs and drinking human blood. However, all that Wright "remember[s] about vampires" does not seem to correspond to Shori who, above all else, knows she is not a "fictional being" (15-16). Before Shori meets other vampires, who represent and voice the ways in which Butler has restyled the figure, she continues to learn how Wright, and by extension other humans, see her. Aside from being told that she is a vampire, Wright also immediately informs her that she is "'way too young ... Jailbait. Super jailbait,'" to which Shori does not respond because she does not "know what 'jailbait' is," nor how old she is (12). Through her relationship with Wright, Shori comes to understand that she appears younger than she is and that she must remain hidden from Wright's human acquaintances. Beyond the intersections between vampires and age stereotypes, it is through Wright that Shori remembers the identity category that humans associate with her skin color and she realizes she must re-

learn racial categories. At one point he asks her, “‘Ordinary sun exposure burns your skin even though you’re black?’” Shori is initially confused: “‘I’m...’ I stopped. I had been about to protest that I was brown, not black, but before I could speak, I understood what he meant” (31). Shori’s confusion points to the arbitrary nature of the term “black” in referring to those with darker skin tones, as well as how her skin color holds socio-cultural meaning to humans that distinguishes her from the white Wright and, as she later discovers, from vampires as well.

Through Shori’s meeting with the Ina, particularly in her first encounter with her father, Iosif, Butler stages the ways in which the body can be mis-read by confronting human perceptions with the Ina’s. When Shori meets Iosif, he “corrects” Wright’s reading of Shori’s somatic signifiers and gestures. Iosif tells the pair that Shori is in fact a 53-year-old human-vampire “hybrid,” though she is still considered a child by the Ina, and that she is the result of the Ina’s “latest and most successful effort” in genetic engineering (66). Importantly, however, Iosif does not have all of the “answers” to Shori’s questions and, as she later discovers, some of the information he shares is erroneous. For instance, he tells Shori that “human racism mean[s] nothing to the Ina because human races mean nothing to them” (148). To the Ina, Shori’s darker skin is not supposed to signify racial difference, nor any of the connotations that Blackness might carry. Of course, Shori learns that this is not the case with all Ina. Iosif’s “knowledge” of the Ina culture and history also contrasts with what he admittedly does not know regarding their “origin.” So while on the one hand, he claims that the Ina are a species separate from humans, on the other hand, he does not know how “separate” they are and can only speculate:

“I think we must be related to [humans] ... We’re too genetically similar to them for any other explanation to be likely. Not all of us believe that, though. We have our own traditions – our own folklore, our own religions ... There’s a recently developed belief among some of our younger people that the Ina landed here from another world thousands of years ago. I think it’s nonsense, but who knows. I suppose that idea’s no worse than one of our oldest legends. It says we were placed here by a great mother goddess who created us and gave us Earth to live on until we became wise enough to come home to live in paradise with her. Actually, I think we evolved right here on Earth

alongside humanity as a cousin species like the chimpanzee. Perhaps we're the more gifted cousin." (67)

Through Iosif's and other Ina perspectives, Butler mirrors the epistemological and ontological conceptions and queries of "humanity" with regards to its "origin" and its distinction from other "species." Much like the irony involved in the Silk family's adoption of "human" racial prejudices despite their belief that humans are their inferiors, Iosif uses the human/animal binary in the same way that humans do, all while suggesting the Ina's apparent superiority. Indeed, Iosif repeats Darwinian discourse which – although it challenged Western religious ontologies and suggested that humans were much closer to animals than previously thought – grounds species (and potential racial) differences in pre-discursive and somatic signifiers. The Ina perspective regarding Shori and identity categories both disrupts and questions some "human" constructions while reinforcing others. (I will return to this below.)

Although Iosif's emphasis on the physical differences between Ina and humans is contingent upon the supposed species divide, Butler's rewriting of the figure with its physical differences from the traditional vampire allows her not only to undo the stigmatization of animality, but also of disease and hypersexuality. While Butler's Ina do not threaten identity categories through the transformative bite that comes from the traditional vampire, they rather do so by displacing the metonymical links to disease and hyper- (or perverse) sexuality that are inherent to the more traditional vampire figure and its victim. So whereas Blacula's bite almost immediately results in the transformation of a human into another vampire (leading the police chief to use the term "epidemic" [1:01:28]), the Ina, as Iosif tells Shori, "'can't magically convert humans into [their] kind,'" (63). Other Ina are born through the "mating" of several Ina brothers with another family's group of sisters (more on this below). Moreover, while Blacula is able to use his vampirism as a means to assert his masculinity after having been demasculinized by Dracula, the Ina recognize their dependency on humans and they give

something to their “symbionts” in exchange for the blood they take.²¹ Not only do these dynamics correspond to the ways in which Butler plays with the reader’s expectations regarding the vampire, but it also undoes the stigmatizing association between the vampire and disease. As Iosif explains, the Ina “keep [humans] who join with us healthier, stronger, and harder to kill than they would be without us” (63). These vampires prolong their symbionts’ lives “by several decades,” and their “venom” also strengthens humans’ immune systems, making it “less likely” for symbionts to contract “one of humanity’s many autoimmune diseases” (*idem*). The term “venom” here is then partly reversed – though it does result in the symbionts’ physical dependency on their Ina, it does not function as a poison for humans which endangers their lives. In these ways, Butler’s narrative appears to remove the connotation of “contamination” from the vampire to the human.²²

Butler’s rewriting of the vampire’s physical relationship to humans (as well as to other vampires) destabilizes heteronormativity and the patriarchal family structure. As Susanna M. Morris notes, Butler’s vampires “challenge normative notions of how to be” (156). I would add that they challenge the understanding of their sexuality as non-normative. I have already noted how “natural” Ina reproduction occurs. Not only are several Ina involved in the mating process, but also an Ina child is said to have several Ina mothers and fathers. Though their reproduction occurs heterosexually, the sexual relationships within the same family, along with the family structure itself, are not heteronormative. More than having multiple Ina partners, Iosif informs

²¹ Of course, the name “symbiont” reflects the mutual dependency the humans and the vampires develop for each other.

²² I say “appears” because one critic has argued that the novel’s vampires can nevertheless be read as HIV positive. Marty Fink writes: “Though AIDS is never mentioned explicitly in *Fledgling*, the novel’s treatment of queer sexualities, consent, desire, and race-related anxiety allows us to read Butler’s vampires as a culture of the HIV-positive. The refusal to name the pandemic also offers the self-reflexive possibility of disrupting the vampire’s metaphorical function of demonizing and dehumanizing people living with HIV/AIDS” (416). Perhaps Fink is right in that the narrative seems to point to AIDS in Iosif’s reference to “autoimmune diseases.” In any case, while Fink might argue that Butler does not remove the concept of disease, suggesting in fact that her vampires repeat previous constructions of the figure, as syphilitic for instance, he seems to contend that in Butler’s re-stylization of the vampire, she also removes the stigma associated with AIDS, much in the same way as her vampires perform non-normative sexuality all while questioning its definition as non-normative.

Shori that vampires have a physical need for multiple human “symbionts” from whom they feed and share sexual pleasure, and these symbionts ““may be of either sex”” and are also considered as part of the Ina family (67). Iosif’s lesson does not stop Wright from “bitter[ly]” lashing out at Shori later when he realizes she has adopted a second symbiont, a woman: ““Swing both ways, do you?”” (85). To Shori, Wright’s belittling definition of bisexuality and his desire for a monogamous relationship are not applicable to her and her physical needs, nor to her perception of sexuality. Yet Wright is aware that a monogamous relationship with Shori would be problematic to other humans because of her physical appearance as a 12-year-old human child, while to vampires such as Iosif, ““there is nothing improper about [their] relationship”” (68). Ironically, due to her age appearance and gender (as well as her dark skin), an outside human perspective would also assume that the power dynamic in the relationship between Wright and Shori is the opposite of what it is. Yet precisely because of Shori’s age and gender as an Ina, she is not only more powerful than Wright, but also more so than Ina males. One of Iosif’s symbionts explains this to Shori and Wright:

“Ina children, male and female, wind up with more potent venom, but the female’s is still more potent than the male’s. In that sense, the Ina are kind of a matriarchy. And a little thing like Shori might be a real power ... Ina men are sort of like us, like symbionts. They become addicted to the venom of one group of sisters. That’s what it means to be mated. Once they’re addicted, they aren’t fertile with other females, and from time to time, they need their females.” (109)

By rewriting the vampire’s physiology, Butler challenges heteronormativity and reverses the power structure in the sex/gender system, empowering her main character in the process.

Along with her skin color, age, and “species” status, the fact that Shori is female (rather than male) adds to the binary reversals as well as the valorization and empowerment that Butler gives Shori, although she must continually fight for her subject position (as well as simply to stay alive) against those who would impose a hegemonic perspective. Butler empowers her Black female vampire “hybrid” by positioning her as the homodiegetic narrator whose voice dominates the narrative. Shori narrates her own story, and in so doing, blurs the self/Other

dichotomy as it has traditionally operated either through the human or the vampire point of view. Despite this more “powerful” subject position, Shori ultimately has little power of self-characterization, and the narrative is shaped around how other humans and Ina see her. Of course, this is largely due to her amnesia. For instance, the elucidation of her identity is delayed in part due to her forgetting of language, which also serves to underline certain words and the way meaning is created. While Shori slowly re-associates signifiers with signifieds, “look[ing] at ... things, let[ting] the sight of them remind [her] what they are called” (3), her lack of knowledge additionally calls into question the way that language operates in its construction of identity and the hierarchies that identity categories create. Shori must be reminded that her brown skin color classifies her as “black” rather than “brown” (31). This quickly follows the first time Shori looks in a mirror and notes that she has brown skin. As Ali Brox remarks, “the reader is not conscious of Shori’s race until” that point (396).²³ As Brox notes, Butler often “delays the racial identification of her characters,” (*idem*) and in *Fledgling*, this delay parallels the lack of information regarding Shori’s vampirism and her knowledge of vampires. At the moment Shori remembers how her skin color categorizes her, she is reminded of how this somatic signifier means something else in relation to vampirism. She tells Wright: “I think I’m an experiment. I think I can withstand the sun better than ... others of my kind. I burn, but I don’t burn as fast as they do. It’s like an allergy we all have to the sun. I don’t know who the experimenters are, though, the ones who made me black” (31). Shori’s comment evokes both empowerment – she can withstand sunlight more easily than other vampires – and powerlessness – what she does not know and how she was passive in the process of her creation, which mirrors how other characters interact with and characterize her. Indeed, Shori’s

²³ Admittedly, this comment should be nuanced depending on the edition of the novel. The back and front cover of the Grand Central Publishing edition (2005) of *Fledgling* give much away regarding Shori’s identity. The blurb on the back cover tells the reader that “Shori is a mystery,” while it then proceeds to elucidate the mystery, explaining what Shori looks like (“a little black girl”) versus what/who she is (“a fifty-three-year-old vampire”).

amnesia, her age, and then later her dark skin color as well, are all used by Ina as means to question her subject position and voice. The physical empowerment that Butler gives Shori – as an Ina female “child” with stronger “venom” and as part Black human – make her a threat to the white hegemony that is replicated by Ina culture, and make her a target.

Butler’s novel thus follows Crain’s film in its empowerment of a Black protagonist and its validation of Blackness in opposition to white supremacy, and it also reinforces the Black body, but through very different means. For instance, Butler’s delay in introducing the skin color or the “racial identification” of her main character displaces the importance that is otherwise given to the somatic signifier and its signifieds. On the one hand, Blacula’s dark skin is immediately discernible (due to the medium of film), is not put into question, and is quickly linked to the historical experiences of Africans and African-Americans (in the Trans-Atlantic slave trade). On the other hand, Shori’s skin color is not made apparent until later in the narrative, and its evocation is done in such a way as to question the meanings that are traditionally associated with it. Unlike Crain’s film where dark skin color on Mamuwalde contributes to his identification as African, and then later to his belonging to the African-American community along with other Black characters, Shori’s skin color does not mark her as African-American, but is rather used as a means to differentiate herself from other Ina. If we return to the quote above in which Shori remembers that she was an “experiment,” she explicitly compares herself to “others of [her] kind,” refers to the “allergy” that [they] all have,” and that someone “made [her] black” (*idem*). The language she uses explicitly demonstrates that Shori identifies herself, first and foremost, as Ina. Dark skin appears to be simply an additional physical trait that is added to her Ina body (and, of course, this reinforces the illusion of the body as pre-discursive – more on this below). Nor does Shori seek out members of the human African-American community, and when she does meet Black humans, their exchanges remain focused on their Ina/human symbiont dynamic rather than what they might have in

common. Thus, if skin color is secondary to Shori and arbitrary to most of the Ina and their human symbionts, then it might seem that the novel works to de-emphasize race.

However, this is contrary to the fact that the entire plot is structured around Shori's skin color, and more so than in Crain's film. Like *Blacula*, Shori is re-created through white supremacy and the narrative begins with her "re-birth."²⁴ But whereas *Blacula* involves two plotlines, one that involves the allegorization of racial injustice and the other the love story between Mamuwalde and Tina which only bears an indirect link to the former and has otherwise little to do with race, the reconstruction of Shori's life revolves around the physical differences linked to her skin color. Her skin color is a necessary element in the allegorization of anti-miscegenation discourse (as previously discussed). Here, the metaphorical references to the extra-diegetical are consistently clear since the Silk family repeats nineteenth-century anti-miscegenation and species/racist discourses. However, although the narrative's use of the species divide, in conjunction with race, highlights the illusion of both constructions, this discourse exceeds the binary of the white supremacist plot, of the racist Ina versus those who are not racist. Indeed, while the Silk family's perspective is clearly demonized through the narrative's discourse, Shori's father Iosif's is not. It is he who initially tells Shori that the Ina are "another species ... a cousin species like the chimpanzee," adding: "Perhaps we're the more gifted cousin" (67). Iosif's "like the chimpanzee" is not meant as a simile – rather it is meant to situate the Ina on a Darwinian chain of being, one on which the Ina are the superior species. Given Iosif's (and other Ina's) coloring – "blond and very pale-skinned – not just light-skinned like Wright, but as white as the page of Wright's books" (61) – and given that scientific racism

²⁴ Because she does not remember her name, Wright calls her Renée, referring to her "re-birth." Shori is later told that her "'human mother claimed the right to name [her] ... "Shori" is the name of a kind of bird—an East African crested nightingale"' (132). As is the case in *Blacula*, Shori's name is not only significant because it reflects the "right to name" in opposition to the "white" Ina (and Wright), but also, like Mamuwalde's name, Shori's name carries the connotation of an African "origin." In addition to the symbolism of the nightingale – which is rather fitting for a peaceful vampire – Shori's name represents the mother's role in "making" Shori through both genetic engineering and naming. The role of the mother figure in "making" and naming is also important in Gomez's *The Gilda Stories*, as I will show below.

consistently placed parallels between dark-skinned peoples and apes, the narrative inadvertently reinforces racial categories through speciesism.

In addition to the plotline, Butler's narrator rarely refers to the skin color of the human characters unless it is to note their "dark skin" color similar to her own, and to use this as a marker of difference. For instance, Shori remarks upon meeting two Black human symbionts: "Two of them, Esther and Celia, had skin as dark as mine, and I looked at them with interest. They were the first black people I remembered meeting. And yet the genes for my dark skin had to have come from someone like these women" (76). Here, Shori shows that she has adopted "black" as an identity category, and she repeats the inner/outer bodily metaphor, linking skin color to genetics (and thus, in conjunction with the Ina discourse, to species difference). With regards to the Ina characters she meets, they are frequently referred to as "pale." Rather than potentially creating a kinship between Shori and the other dark-skinned characters, the narrator's discourse signals that only "different" skin color is worth mentioning, suggesting that "dark" or "pale" are metonymically defined through the "norm" of whiteness.

Judith Butler notes this idea in her discussion of Nella Larsen's novella *Passing*:

Blackness is not primarily a visual mark in Larsen's story, not only because Irene and Clare are both light-skinned, but because what can be seen, what qualifies as a visible marking, is a matter of being able to read a marked body in relation to unmarked bodies, where unmarked bodies constitute the currency of normative whiteness. (1993, 170-1)

While the Ina's extreme "whiteness" is marked, suggesting that they too are "different" from humans, this practice still points to the normative human position as white, both figuratively or within the allegory and extra-diegetically.

Moreover, as Brox notes, "much of Butler's text focuses on Shori's breeding potential" (397-8), and this "potential" is based on her skin color which is continually reinforced through contingent biological metaphors. Shori's "breeding potential" also exceeds the anti-miscegenation allegory, or rather it is her "breeding potential" that is used as a counter-discourse in opposition to racial purity. The Silk family adopts human racism and white

supremacist ideology, seeing the signifier of Shori's skin as a mark of an inferior biological status. Other Ina families – and in particular the Gordon family who become Shori's primary contenders as future mates – perceive Shori's skin color as a positive attribute, believing it will allow their children to be more resistant to sunlight. "The Ina who recognize the value of Shori's daywalker ability focus on becoming Shori's choice for mates" (Brox 398). Despite the fact that this reading constitutes a reversal of the Silk family's racism, imparting value to Shori's dark skin rather than the contrary, it demonstrates that Shori's skin color necessarily functions as a signifier, one that is consistently read in biological terms. While Butler re-signifies the floating signifier of dark skin as valuable and even as a sort of "super-human" quality, as if to convey a reversal of eugenic beliefs and practices, Shori's dark skin is thereby invested with more than the cultural meaning that humans supposedly assign to it; her skin color is given, as well as reinforces, physical signification as well. According to Iosif, Shori's dark skin is what enabled her to survive the fire and daylight that wiped out her family. Though the character of Blade in Norrington's film is also a dark-skinned "hybrid" human and vampire called a "daywalker," this capability is never associated with his skin color, but rather with his "humanness." More than this, Shori is "a faster runner than most" of the Ina (66), suggesting that Butler drew from stereotypes of individuals with Black African heritage as having superior athletic ability. So although Blade's dark skin reinforces racial Otherness through the repetition of stigmatizing metonymies parading as metaphors (such as animality and hypermasculinity), Shori's dark skin reinforces that "ultimate transcendental signifier," the Black body, through its metonymical links to other signs of "genetic codes." Not only does Shori's dark skin participate in the counter-discourse against white hegemony (and thus the reinforcement of the racial binary), but also Shori's consistent grounding of dark skin within the body ultimately reinforces the Ina's whiteness – a whiteness which contingently operates as a transcendental

signifier that is fixed through the illusory metaphors of their extremely pale skin color and their characterization as a “superior species.”

The Gilda Stories

Like both Crain’s *Blacula* and Butler’s novel, Jewelle Gomez’s 1991 novel *The Gilda Stories* contributes to a counter-discourse to the white hegemony of fantasy narratives (and of the vampire narrative), in part by situating Blackness in opposition to whiteness through allegories of racial injustice. Similar to Butler, Gomez’s narrative portrays the ways in which race is contingent upon other identity categories, such as gender and sexuality. Whereas Gomez’s novel more than Butler’s works to disrupt and displace naturalizing metaphorical associations, avoiding the link between skin color and genetics for instance, I argue that *The Gilda Stories* nevertheless naturalizes Blackness as a communal experience that is rooted in African “origins,” which reinforces the metaphoric pre-discursiveness of the “Black body.” Just as *Fledgling* does, Gomez’s novel re-signifies vampirism at the same time that it removes the stigmatizations associated with racial Otherness as well as with non-normative gender and sexuality. Given that Gomez’s novel precedes Butler’s, she did not have the latter’s reconfiguration of the vampire to draw from. Creating a vampire that escaped the signifying processes of the traditional Western figure was specifically her aim. In her 1997 essay, “Recasting the Mythology: Writing Vampire Fiction,” she writes: “The challenge for me was to create a *new* mythology, to strip away the dogma that has shaped the vampire figure within the rather narrow Western, Caucasian expectation, and to recreate a heroic figure within a broader, more ancient cultural frame of reference” (88). She continues: “My vampires are less grounded in European cultural traditions than most. Gilda is an African-American” (*idem*); and, as she stresses later in her essay, her vampire is a woman, two identity categories that

remained relatively absent as central figures in vampire fiction up until that point.²⁵ Like Shori, Gilda is empowered through her vampirism which she also generally uses as a means to help rather than harm her “prey.” The narrative similarly empowers Gilda through its narrative perspective – though Gilda is not a homodiegetic narrator, she is the novel’s primary focalizer. As Miriam Jones notes, Gomez “reappropriates the cultural space of genre fiction from the subject rather than the object position” (152), displacing Gilda’s multi-layered Otherness – as a Black woman, a lesbian, and a vampire – to the subject position. Furthermore, with the novel’s title, Gomez’s narrative suggests that identity is not a stable, fixed category – there is not merely one Gilda story but several (just as there is not merely one Gilda – more on this below). However, Gilda’s multiple stories of her travels throughout 200 years in America work to assemble experiences as an African-American which conversely unify the identity category of Blackness. Thus, although Gilda is partly an outsider to the African-American “human” community, her vampirism allows her to see and present African-American identity as unified and homogenous, which is passed down through generations and is consistently linked back to the “Black body” and its link to the African continent.

As with the creation or the re-birth of Blacula and Shori, Gilda is also transformed into a vampire through racial injustice. But rather than allegorizing vampirism as a metaphor for white supremacy or the character’s transformation for the (white) hegemonic (re)construction of the Black body – such as the enslavement of Mamuwalde – vampirism represents a means for Gilda to escape slavery. The novel’s opening depicts a young Gilda, initially nameless (“the Girl”), as a runaway slave in 1850 Louisiana. “The Girl,” on the point of being raped by a bounty hunter who finds her sleeping in a barn, stabs and kills him before the vampire Gilda discovers her and takes her in. During this first chapter, it is this older Gilda who observes “the

²⁵ It is worth noting that Gomez’s novel and its publication were (and arguably still are) significant to the “canon” of vampire narratives in that very few works of this genre appeared from women writers, African-American writers, and lesbian writers.

Girl” before deciding that she should take the older vampire’s place and namesake. Since the older Gilda does not feed from the Girl at this point (and not at all until the latter has agreed to become a vampire), the traditional vampire figure is displaced. It is not the vampire who penetrates or threatens penetration, but the human bounty hunter. A flashback to the Girl’s mother telling her that (slave-owning) whites are “‘just barely human’” – “‘They suck up the world, don’t taste it’” (11) – reverses the human/sub-human binary in relation to race, positioning the white man as metaphorically vampiric. The future Gilda sees him as “the beast from this other land,” and the narrator additionally reports that the bounty hunter’s “head swell[s] with power at the thought of invading her” and he is “stiff for conquest” (*idem*). Gomez draws on the metonymical links of the body with land through the dynamic of colonization (invasion and conquest). But where the logic of colonization insinuates the opposition between civilization and the wilderness or “savagery,” Gilda sees the “colonizing” bounty hunter as a “beast,” which – as in *Blacula* and *Fledgling* – displaces the animalizing metaphors from the racial or “monstrous” Other to the character who represents white supremacy. Moreover, it is the human Girl who penetrates, who draws blood and takes a human life, rather than the vampire. Gilda’s (or “the Girl’s”) stabbing of her white hunter is also a reversal – specifically a reverse penetration in relation to his attempted rape of her – that foreshadows Gilda’s future power as a vampire. Yet it is by her becoming a vampire that Gilda is able to escape the (slave) system that otherwise marks her as a nameless object. For the young Gilda, it is ironically only in becoming a vampire that she is able to approach “humanity” or the state of being “human” since her skin color precludes her from being identified as other than less-than-human, a possession that can be “invaded” and “conquered.”²⁶

As the use of the metaphorical “beast” to refer to the bounty hunter suggests, Gomez displaces the traditional vampire/human binary in relation to race and gender through a series

²⁶ I will return to the relationship between Gilda’s skin color and her vampirism below.

of metaphorical and metonymical substitutions involving the young Gilda's flashbacks of her with her mother. As the "man mov[es] stealthily through the dawn light toward her," the Girl's dream and memories become momentarily indistinguishable: She "clutche[s] ... the hand of her mother, which turned into the warm, wooden handle of the knife she had stolen when she ran away the day before" (9). The narrative blends the Girl's "dream/memory" of her with her mother with the bounty hunter's attempted rape so that, even though the two situations and power dynamics are starkly different, they become intimately connected (12). At the moment the man is on the point of entering her, "she enter[s] him with her heart which was now a wood-handled knife" (11). Having introduced the metonymical relation between the Girl's mother's hand and the wood-handled knife earlier, the metaphor "heart" substitutes the mother-daughter bond which can only be understood as such through the metonymical relationship to the knife. With the knife imagined as her mother's hand and her heart, vampirism is configured as a reversal of heteropatriarchal hegemony, in part because the knife is not used in the traditional manner to symbolize phallic power, but rather as a means to temporarily ("now") use "her heart" as a tool for self-preservation. The potential violence of the rape is not replaced with the violence of murder, but rather with what appears to be an act of love. The figurative construction of this act points to the ways in which vampirism offers a manner of communing with one's "victim" and – for Gilda and her vampire family – using the mother/daughter bond as a means of empowerment and resistance to white patriarchal hegemony. Moreover, the signifier of the bounty hunter's blood and its "draining from him" (*idem*) additionally foreshadow the Girl's future vampirism, not only through the image of his flowing blood after her penetration of him, but also through another meaning that the Girl attributes to it through another memory with her mother:

It was like the first time her mother had been able to give her a real bath ... The intimacy of her mother's hands and the warmth of the water lulled the Girl into a trance of sensuality she never forgot. Now the blood washing slowly down her breastbone and soaking in the floor below was like that bath – a cleansing. (12)

The simile between the “soaking” in blood and the soaking in water, accompanied by the signifiers of the bath and the mother’s hands and the concepts of “intimacy” and “sensuality” that the Girl gives them, are also key in shaping the narrative’s reconfiguration of vampirism as well as in highlighting the figurative process. Indeed, Gomez displaces the traditional figure of the vampire at the same time that she disrupts traditional allegory. Because there is initially no vampire in this scene, and because the older Gilda’s vampirism does not become apparent until much later in the chapter, the figurative meanings above and their pointing towards vampirism as an allegory are necessarily delayed. So although this moment of “cleansing” in blood rather than water is the first step in the Girl’s re-birth as a vampire since this is the moment that Gilda finds her, it is only through the additional figurative level of the fantasy narrative involving vampires that the reference becomes clear.

While Butler plays with reader expectations by delaying a reference to Shori’s skin color, Gomez delays the revelation of her characters’ vampirism as well as of the Girl’s future as both vampire and as “Gilda” as if to highlight the illusory nature of identity categories. Despite the narrator primarily focalizing through the older Gilda (a vampire) in the first chapter, the word “vampire” does not appear except to deny its validity. For instance, “Gilda had never said the word *vampire*” (32), and she later tells the Girl when she offers to transform her: ““There are only inadequate words to speak for who we are. The language is crude, the history false”” (43). Gilda thus distinguishes acts, gestures, as well as physical differences from the labels that others might impose, which reflects the ways in which the narrative also refers to other identity categories. Nor does the paratext of the novel’s first edition (Firebrand, 1991) offer many clues regarding its characters. The front cover depicts a black and white portrait of a young Black woman dressed in late nineteenth- to early twentieth-century apparel under the novel’s title, which appears to be a photograph of the eponymous character. A quote from the narrative on the back cover might provide more hints vis-à-vis the vampire with its mention of

the “sharing of blood” and a “fear of not dying.” Yet even the quote – Gilda’s reported speech, telling a “secret” – foregrounds other elements of the “secret” that thus seem to be more important to Gilda and thereby to the narrative as a whole:

Gilda laid the secret open with great detail. She described her first bath, the scent of her mother’s sweat, the feel of Bird’s arm around her waist, the sound of laughter from the women at Woodard’s, the thrill of moving beside the wind and how the smell of the wind had changed in the years since she’d taken to the road. She even described the rush of life she felt as she shared the blood, leaving dreams in exchange. She told of mourning friends and family long dead. And of her fear of not dying, of not being one with the universe again. (Gomez 1991)

Gilda’s revelation of her “secret” does not involve telling her listener that she is a vampire, but rather shares her sensorial experiences, in which she first emphasizes her relationships with other women. Even here, Gilda’s sexuality is not identifiable as Bird is a gender-neutral name. Gilda’s “secret” thus remains largely intact for a first-time reader.²⁷

Moreover, the initial confusion between the two Gildas, along with the process of naming involved with the Girl, emphasizes the performativity of identity categories rather than the ways in which the name could function as a metaphor for each character (as it does in *Fledgling* and *Blacula*). For instance, there is nothing indicative in the back-cover quote that might substantially differentiate the younger from the older Gilda, and the narrative appears to play with the initial confusion between the two Gildas, given that the first Gilda introduced in the narrative has a “pale face” (12) (unlike the women depicted on the cover of each edition). The sharing of the name encompasses their shared vampirism and sexuality (both acts and supposed identity categories), their lover Bird, and similar life experiences (at Woodard’s and on the road) and emotions (the “fear of not dying”). The name also points to the ways in which the name necessarily requires the acts and gestures of two characters, with the second repeating those of the first. Etymologically, the name Gilda means both sacrifice and tribute. This one

²⁷ The 2005 edition of the novel (Perseus Distribution Services) offers a much more explicit cover, depicting a hand smearing blood on a windowpane. If not immediately placing the novel as part of the vampire genre, it suggests the narrative belongs to the horror genre (quite misleadingly, in my opinion). This latter edition also depicts a Black woman’s face on the cover, as does the latest edition from City Lights Books (2016).

name then refers to the two characters' functions in this first chapter at the end of which the first Gilda transforms the Girl into a vampire and disappears. She leaves the Girl with her Lakota vampire lover, Bird, who interprets the "exchanging" of Gilda's life for the Girl's new life as a vampire as a sacrifice. (Heartbroken with the loss of her lover, Bird angrily tells the Girl that Gilda "'traded her life for yours'" [49].) It is the second Gilda who operates as a tribute to the first. But it is not until Bird accepts her lover's wish for death and for the Girl's replacement of her that Bird acknowledges the namesake and interpolates her as Gilda that the second accepts to adopt the name. Likewise, the narrator follows Bird's interpolation of Gilda – it is then, at the moment of this realization of the first Gilda's death that the Girl becomes Gilda in the narrator's discourse as well. In order for Gilda to function as a tribute to the first Gilda, she must repeat the acts and gestures of the first. Not only does Gilda adopt her namesake's style of dress – wearing pants in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century – and manner of walking that often cause the two female vampires to be mistaken for men, but she also later adopts Bird as her lover.

The repetition of the Gilda name, in addition to Gilda's empowerment as a vampire, further highlight the fantasy of race and racial differences and their contingency on other identity categories. Indeed, given that the first Gilda does not share the same skin color as the second, the younger Gilda demonstrates through her repetition of the first Gilda's acts and gestures that her skin color does not point to any particular meaning except those that others attribute to it. The second Gilda adds to the subversion of white patriarchal (hetero)normativity performed by her namesake by dressing and behaving in such a way as to be read not only like a man, but more specifically a white man (106). Gilda's adoption of the name and of the first Gilda's queer and vampiric lifestyle and family thus point to the arbitrary ways in which skin color is read. Gilda's gift of telepathy as a vampire makes her aware of other characters' readings – which are often misreadings – of her body. These characters demonstrate how

artificial meanings are attributed to Gilda's skin color and how her vampirism contributes to the displacement of gender and racial norms. For instance, in "Yerba Buena: 1890," Gilda feeds from a man on a side street and then "[speeds] away from him": "Gilda strolled casually, ignoring the fact that she was one of the few women on the street. The men who moved around her looked curious but said nothing. They were startled by her dark skin and the force of her stride" (91). While Gilda must (and does) pass as human, she is unable and unwilling to pass in other ways. That Gilda is unable to pass as white is evident. Nor does she attempt to perform her race and gender as white men expect her to – she is not only "one of the few women on the street," but also "the force of her stride" does not correspond to stereotypical Black femininity (of the 1920's in the South). Gilda's vampirism thus contributes to her defiance of racial and gender norms at the same time that this scene ironically points to the ways in which passing as "human" is contingent on gender and race (or the performance thereof).

Gilda's skin color (as well as her gender) complicates the ways in which Gilda relates to the vampire figure's use of passing (as "human") and its allegorical reference to racial and/or sexual passing. Returning to the ways in which the novel uses vampirism to allegorize freedom for Gilda, her vampirism not only gives her an escape from slavery, but also the freedom to challenge and displace racial and gender stereotypes. It is in these ways that the novel moves beyond the traditional allegorical structure involving metaphor. Indeed, not only is the allegorical association between Gilda's escape from slavery through vampirism delayed, but Gilda's vampirism allows her to debunk essentializing metaphors of the body. This is illustrated in the following chapter, "Rosebud, Missouri: 1921," when Gilda is confronted by two white men with whips who want to "teach one more niggah a lesson" (113). Having initially categorized Gilda as a Black woman through the somatic signifiers of her dark skin and female body, these men mistakenly assume that she will be an easy, inoffensive victim. The two men are no match for Gilda's vampiric strength and speed. Gomez highlights the

reversal of power between the white men and a Black woman: “That she hit him with his own whip seemed to startle him more than the pain” (*idem*). One of the men “gasp[s] when he [sees] the swirling amber of her eyes and the sinewy strength of her body, thinking that they’d been wrong, that it was a man. An Indian he thought” (114). The white men’s continual mistaken readings of Gilda’s body demonstrate the ways in which race and gender are essentialized through metaphors of the body’s exterior and its “inner self.” For these men (and their embodiment of white supremacy), Gilda’s “sinewy strength” and use of the whip cannot be associated with the female body. Moreover, her mysterious strength and “swirling amber” eyes distance her from Blackness and seem to correspond better to another exotic Other category: the “Indian.” So while Gilda cannot pass in the same way as white vampires, her character exposes (and embodies) the contingency of race and the capacity to produce problematic meanings from the somatic signifier of skin color.

That Gilda can only pass as an Othered “human” and can only play with racial and gender expectations as a vampire, suggests that there are limits to the freedom and the empowerment that the latter category provides for her. Miriam Jones notes, for instance that, “[w]hile lesbianism is arguably foregrounded, it is indivisible from categories of race and class: Gilda’s outcast status is situated within a nexus of exploitation” (154). The network of oppression through which Gilda must navigate is illustrated from one chapter to the next as well as within each chapter. Gilda starts as a runaway slave, ironically finding a safe-haven in a brothel. As a vampire, she moves to California where she is only safe from the eyes of racist onlookers with her vampire family. She then lives in Missouri (1921) where, although her small town is lucky to avoid the terrorizing of Ku Klux Klan “night-riders,” she witnesses the challenges that Black women face in accessing a decent education. From this lower middle-class Black community, she is later found in the poor urban setting of “South End” Boston in the 1950’s. As a hairdresser in the ghetto, she aids a young Black woman, a prostitute, to escape

with her life from her oppressive pimp (also a vampire). As these examples show, Gilda's vampirism, or the immortality it offers her, allows her to bear witness to the "exploitation" and oppression that Black women experience through race, class, and gender, from one generation to the next. Aside from Gilda's immortality and occasional use of superior strength, these chapters stray from the figurative function of the vampire as if to provide a more realistic and heterogeneous depiction of the Black female experience in various parts of America during these time periods. However, in the last chapter of the novel which takes place in 2050, Gomez returns to the vampire as metaphor. Gilda lives in a dystopian future in which the "wealthy" have discovered the existence of vampires and pay "hunters" to capture them in order to force them to transform their rich "masters," at which point the vampires are then killed. As Gilda hides in a cave, she reflects on her previous existence as a vampire: "It had been life freely given, not the travesty being demanded of them now. This horror was slavery come again" (235). Indeed, Gilda's experience of being hunted comes full circle, only this time it is not for her skin color, but for her vampirism. The narrative thus changes the figurative reference of vampirism from escape / freedom from slavery ("life freely given") to "slavery." In this way, Gomez highlights the fantasy of identity categories, illustrating that their meaning can change in time, and that patterns of oppression can be repeated through white patriarchal hegemony, regardless of the ways in which the Other is defined.

As some of these examples suggest, Gomez's novel highlights patriarchal oppression as it intersects with race and class, and vampirism provides a counter-discourse not only to white supremacy, but also to heteronormative patriarchy. In rewriting the vampire as African-American lesbian, Gomez's narrative works to reconfigure depictions of women and of lesbianism as envisioned by heteronormative (white) men. For instance, the figure of the mother maintains a primordial position in Gilda's mind while there is no mention of the father, and the text prioritizes female relationships. Jones writes that "[v]ampirism functions as a

metaphor for lesbianism in Gomez's text as well, but this is neither the decadent, threatening lesbianism of the nineteenth-century popular imagination nor the pseudo-lesbianism of the B-movies of the 1970s that take *Carmilla* as their point of departure" (153). Indeed, *The Gilda Stories* re-signifies the non-normative gender and sexuality of Stoker's novel (as well as of Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*). This is not to say that Gomez positions lesbianism as normative, but that she attempts to valorize homoerotic love and desire by repositioning it away from the interpretative framing of heteronormativity that operated through narrative perspective in the two nineteenth-century narratives. To this end, the narrative incorporates a scene that rewrites Stoker's "breastfeeding" exchange between Dracula and Mina. In 1955, Gilda is reunited with Bird. In this instance, it is Gilda who offers Bird blood from her breast as the two characters become lovers as well as "cement[] their family bond" (139). The moment also mirrors Gilda's turning by the original Gilda and Bird (where Gilda drinks from below the breasts of the women) and reminds the reader that Bird and Gilda share a mother/daughter relationship in addition to desire.²⁸ Gilda's initial flashbacks to time spent with her biological mother also refer to "intimacy" and "sensuality" (12). As Sue-Ellen Case points out in her linking of the vampire to the lesbian, "queer desire punctures the life/death and generative/destructive bipolarities that enclose the heterosexist notion of being" (384). Case's notion is reflected in a later part of the novel as well, when Gilda thinks of her current lover, Effie, also a Black lesbian vampire:

Gilda sensed the familiarity that had made her so attractive from the beginning. She was both plain and luminous, young and old, contrasts that embodied all of what their world was supposed to mean. The contradiction of who she was – both living and not living – shone through in her. (216-7)

²⁸ This moment subverts heteronormativity in several ways. Not only does it remove the male role in reproduction, but as Shannon Winnubst notes, "immortality has nothing to do with the phallus" (12). In other words, the figurative meaning of fangs also loses its connotation as phallic. And as Lynda Hall argues, "Gomez breaks incest taboos in depicting a blurred lover/mother/child, with desire circulating between women, independent from men" (401).

Here, Gilda's thoughts refer not only to the "meanings" that stem from binary oppositions, but they also suggest that Gilda does not seek to counter the power dynamic inherent in "heterosexist bipolarities." Rather, Gomez's narrative promotes their destabilization through a being who challenges the separation between oppositions. Moreover, like Butler's novel, Gomez's narrative reconfigures the heteronormative notion of the family, just as it rewrites the traditional vampiric act of feeding, as the above example of Gilda with Bird indicates.²⁹ As in Butler's novel, feeding or the taking of blood is configured as an exchange, but here, human "prey" do not risk addiction. While Jones argues that the "taking blood to feed" (from humans) "is about power and involves intense sensations," and while most of the "victims" that Gilda chooses are white men, Gilda is taught by her makers always to leave something that is "needed" by the human, such as "energy, dreams, ideas" (162, 45). So while Gomez's Black lesbian vampire reverses the typical white patriarchal power structure, the narrative also suggests that Black lesbian vampirism does not victimize and oppress like white male vampirism.

Gomez empowers her main character to challenge (white) heteronormative patriarchy, situating her text as a counter-discourse. At the discursive level, Gilda's move to primary focalizer (from the first to the second chapter) is marked by her becoming a vampire, as if to emphasize the shift from nameless object to subject with a "voice." Miriam Jones argues that this "shift" for Gilda is also "from the position of prey to that of predator" (157). Yet Gilda's empowerment is hardly a simple move to the opposite side of the prey / predator dichotomy. Unlike Blacula's use of vampirism as a means of enslavement, Gilda does not adopt the (figurative) position of the white male bounty hunter rapist. Though she chooses mostly white

²⁹ Importantly, Jenkins argues that this reconfiguration of family through the metonymy of blood is one of the ways the novel destabilizes race: "If blood is not the foundation of familial solidarity, as the novel suggests, then it is also the case that blood is not the foundation of racial solidarity" (2013, 317). Indeed, the sharing of blood through vampiric means is not the same as hereditary "blood," and, as Jenkins argues, family is characterized as a matter of choice.

men to feed from, she leaves something with them in exchange for the invasive act of penetrating them and taking their blood. This something is intended as a means to help them improve their lives and their “moral compass,” such as with the first white man she feeds from in Yerba Buena whose “greed for gold” would have led him to cheat while gambling: Gilda “quickly slipped in among his thoughts with the idea that cheating was merely a way of shortening the possibilities of his own life” (57). Jones notes that “through Gilda the text refuses the imposition of a narrative of oppression” (157). This “oppression” is not only avoided for Gilda through her empowerment as a vampire, she also does not “impose” “oppression” on others. Gomez further avoids the “narrative of oppression” by staging resistance to (white) patriarchal hegemony, and also by structuring the novel into multiple narratives (or “stories”) of Gilda’s life which are not all (and always) centered on racial and/or sexual oppression, allegorically or not. So on the one hand, Gilda works with Black women to help them escape racial and sexual oppression, extending her empowerment as a vampire and the means the position gave her to escape slavery. On the other hand, Gilda’s stories include moments of her life as a writer, an Off-Broadway stage director, a singer, becoming a maker, and finding a new lover. While Gilda’s reflections on racial and sexual oppression remain consistent, whether through flashbacks or through contemporary experiences (“The horror of slavery appeared to reap endless returns” 180), Gomez does not center her narrative around Gilda’s racial and sexual identity alone in the way that Butler’s novel does.

However, as Jones remarks, “[b]y building the narrative completely around the stable subject position of Gilda as a self-conscious alternative to the productions of hegemonic literary discourse, Gomez’s text displays its own fixed hierarchy of discourses” (166). In showing “us the face of the real monster,” *The Gilda Stories* is “conservative” (154) – the novel does promote a simple binary reversal, similar to many feminist works of fantasy fiction that depict matriarchal societies as more peaceful and communal than their patriarchal counterparts,

thereby imposing and reinforcing essentialist thinking with regards to women. Although the text does not essentialize the differences between humans and vampires, although it does not use Gilda as a synecdoche for all vampires, and although it displaces the dehumanizing metaphors used to define Black lesbian women, it nevertheless reinforces its own stigmatizing metaphors. A conversation between Gilda and Anthony, a member of Gilda's extended vampire family, illustrates this, as the latter explains to her that there are some vampires who are different from those she has learned from:

“There are many here who enjoy the terror we can bring to others” ...

“Human nature remains with us, I'm afraid” ...

“What else can we call one who thrives on ripping out another's throat, or on deceiving people into ruin or servitude. I would say they are ghouls” ...

“On the road I met many more beasts on two legs than on four. My fears were not of wolves or mountain cats. They have an understanding of the reasoning of nature. I found it comforting to share that reasoning that needs no words. But with men there is no reasoning at all sometimes.” (67)

Anthony's discourse destabilizes the definition of the human and its opposition to the vampire since he insists that “human nature remains with [vampires].” Gilda's remark reverses the construction of the human/animal binary by pinpointing animalistic behavior with “men” and reason with animals and “nature.” Their conversation highlights the ways in which these binaries are defined through metonymy. “Human nature” is “enjoy(ing)” power over others, and it is also, when combined with vampirism, “ghoul”-like. Gilda links human nature and “ghouls” to animality and the lack of reason. Though this characterization displaces the stigmatizing metaphors of animality and monstrosity onto other identity categories (the “ghoulish” vampire and white human men) and arguably destabilizes the distinctions between the human, the vampire, and the animal, it nevertheless reinforces the meanings of “human nature,” the “beast,” and even of “the reasoning of nature,” and the illusion of their pre-discursive existence. Similar to the “ghoul” label that Anthony gives to certain vampires, Bird later reverses another binary that is metonymically linked to the human/vampire binary when

she tells Gilda not to hesitate in killing Fox, the vampire pimp who terrorizes the Black community of South End, Boston:

“I don’t know that I can do it ... deliberately ... to one of our own.”
“Don’t be sentimental here; he is not among the living. We are. He seeks only to drag others into death and thrives on watching their descent.” (157)

Although Gilda is tempted to spare Fox because they are both vampires, Bird disavows their similarity by re-positioning the living/dead dichotomy. While her use of “living” and “death” is, of course, figurative (both within the diegesis and through its relationship to the extra-diegetical), she reinforces the binary between “good” versus “bad” vampires, the “us” versus “them,” by displacing the notions of “living” and “dead” as only defined through a physical state. In this sense, Gomez’s vampires lose their subversive power to the living/dead dichotomy as the “undead.” Moreover, Gilda may not operate as a synecdoche for all vampires, but she does for all queer and non-white vampires. Not surprisingly, the only white male heterosexual vampire (Samuel) depicted in the text is on the other side of the binary to which Bird refers, as is the only Black male heterosexual vampire (Fox). Both characters are misogynistic, claiming ownership over other women (vampire or human), and Samuel also expresses racism towards Gilda, calling her a “black demon” (98). Thus, while the novel rewrites the vampire and vampirism in relation to racial stigmatization and Otherness, it operates a simple reversal between the racial and sexual binaries in conjunction with the vampire/human dichotomy.

Despite Bird’s interpolation of Gilda as a “living” vampire, Gilda acknowledges feeling somewhat Other to her fellow vampires, due in part to her dark skin. Although Gilda’s actions and her characterization displace the conjunction between racial Otherness and monstrosity (along with other binaries), Gilda feels continually Other among each community she joins – whether vampires or African-Americans – even though her vampire “family” pushes her to disregard race as arbitrary. Ironically, despite Anthony’s assertion that vampires retain their previous “human nature,” he maintains that vampires should not be concerned with “mortal

questions” involving race and gender. He tells Gilda that she mistakenly ““sees Samuel’s behavior ... through mortal experience”” while Samuel is not ““a man”” (210). Though Gilda points to the performativity of gender through her own actions, disregarding race and the identity category of Blackness is not something she wants to do:

The inattention of her contemporaries to some mortal questions, like race, didn’t suit her. She didn’t believe a past could, or should, be so easily discarded. Her connection to the daylight world came from her blackness ... She had been attacked more than once by men determined that she die, but of course she had not. She felt their hatred as personally as any mortal. (180)

Gilda’s thoughts indicate not only that she feels a sense of belonging to the vampire community and to the Black community, but also that her belonging to the latter is contingent on white supremacy and racism. Moreover, Gilda sees her skin color, her race, and her “blackness” as indistinguishable from one another. Though it is the somatic signifier of her dark skin that leads to experiences of racism, these experiences are what allow her to “[*feel*] their hatred as personally as any mortal” (*idem*). Gomez’s narrative is similar to Butler’s novel in which vampires also deny race as a human construction; but where Shori makes no attempt to join African-American communities, Gilda does. While Shori values her dark skin for its link to other genetic characteristics, refusing to identify as Black because of its contingency on human identity (so that she can fully identify as a vampire), Gilda valorizes her skin color, her “blackness,” as ties to her past human life.

More than experiences of racism as a uniting factor between Gilda and other dark-skinned humans, it is precisely Gilda’s need to feel a connection to her past, the past, or a supposed “origin” which not only reinforces her sense of a Black community, but also fixes “the Black body” as biologically distinct through its past connection to Africa. In Gomez’s text, the floating signifier of dark skin color is used not only as a means to construct a sense of communal experience through racism, but it is also consistently a marker for the pre-discursive

Black body as African, and therefore, as geographically distinct from other bodies.³⁰ Even more so than Octavia Butler's, Gomez's narrator refers to the dark skin color of her characters and also rarely mentions the pale skin of the white characters. Although the narrator and the characters through whom she focalizes describe varying hues of dark skin, suggesting more diversity and heterogeneity than the Black/white binary in Butler's novel, this also underlines how the narrative is fixated on the differences of skin color, particularly their difference from "unmarked bodies" which "constitute the currency of normative whiteness" (J. Butler, 170-1). As Stuart Hall argues, skin, hair, and bone are the somatic signifiers which are consistently called upon as markers of race, essentially operating as a transcendental signifier that, in Gomez's case, is consistently metonymically tied to the African continent. When Gilda looks at herself in a mirror in 2020, her image "remind[s] her of what the Fulani people had always known: the spirit was just that – an intangible thing that did not die with the body. Her essence as an African still shone through her soft, wide features" (223). Although Gilda's initial thought appears to separate the spirit from its ties to the body, the following sentence suggests otherwise – that it is precisely her "soft, wide features" that remain an eternal signifier of her "African" "essence." Gomez's text not only reproduces metaphors of the inner/outer body here, but it also allows for Gilda's identification as Fulani (through her mother's reports) to operate as a synecdoche for the continent of Africa. Thus, the body is called upon to confirm the

³⁰ There is a moment in the novel that might appear to contradict this assertion. Sorel, a white vampire, suggests that he is also part African. Gilda responds with:

"Then there are strains of Africa in your blood as well?" Gilda asked, peering more closely at the pale skin and dark eyes.

"In what great, civilized nation are there not?" Sorel leaned forward and tapped the rim of her glass with his own. (79)

Jenkins argues about this moment that "Sorel suggests that every human has African blood in them; therefore, 'white' people are also 'black'" (2013, 317). Despite Sorel's distinction of "great, civilized nation[s]," his rhetorical question and the communal gesture that follows do seem to be reminiscent of the nineteenth-century monogenetic argument (See my discussion of this in Chapter Two). But Jenkins overlooks Gilda's scan of Sorel's face – her search for somatic signifiers as signs of "Africanness." And although one could argue that Sorel's response questions the validity of somatic signifiers, Gilda – and consequently, the narrative – continually reinforce the metaphorical function of dark skin color and certain facial features as signs of "Africanness," as I demonstrate below.

transcending “spirit” or “essence” of Africanness. Though it may seem that Gilda maintains a closer relationship to Africa than her contemporaries because of the earlier time at which she was born, these characterizations are consistently used with regard to Black human characters, such that a connection to Africa transcends generations and is always apparent on the body. Gilda shows this when she looks at the Black women that surround her in 1981: “Gilda looked into Ayesha’s face and those of her friends and saw Aurelia, Bernice, her mother and sisters. It was a link she searched for in each new place she lived” (196). In a sense, Gilda’s thoughts suggest that the Black woman’s face operates as a synecdoche for all Black women. As such, in Gomez’s novel, the floating signifier of skin color (or rather of race, as Hall would argue) “floats” across and transcends geographical space and time.³¹

Bird has similar thoughts when observing Gilda in 1955, ultimately revealing the ways in which a sense of community is created through shared experiences in opposition to white hegemony, and the ways in which the metonymical relationship between the body and its “origin” is frequently used to ground each character’s links to their communities. Though Bird’s presence in the narrative illustrates more diversity than the strictly Black/white binary in Butler’s novel, she is often characterized as similar to Gilda and as part of an “us” versus “them”: “She remembered her first sight of Gilda as a girl – she had looked so African with her dark brow and deep eyes ... The same penetrating gaze filled their eyes almost as if the years away from their home soil had not damaged them. She had found this kind of tribal unity with her people, too” (155). Bird’s thoughts use Gilda’s somatic signifiers (“her dark brow and deep eyes”) as metaphors for her geographical and racial identity as “African,” and they suggest

³¹ It is worth noting that the novel engages in a similar use of the body as both a marker and a grounding of pre-discursive racial differences in a 2000 short story that reads as if it were an excerpt of *The Gilda Stories*. Gilda is in Chicago in 1927 and meets Lydia who tells her that, in addition to being African American, she is part Wampanoag (like Jewelle Gomez): “Gilda looked again at Lydia and recognized the bone structure. The blending of African and Indian lines was so common in this country, yet Gilda had forgotten. She’d seen many women who looked like they might be Lydia’s relatives” (2000, 31).

that these traits surpass distance and time away from their “home soil.”³² Moreover, Bird finds kinship with Gilda in their shared experience of separation from their “home soil,” as well as their discovery of “tribal unity” with “[their] people.” In the same way that the geographical becomes biological, culture becomes nature and vice versa – as Hall argues, they “operate as metaphors for one another” (1996, n. pag.). “[R]ace as a signifier” “constitut[es] a system of equivalences between nature and culture” (*idem*). Discussing the anthropologist Dan Green’s work, he adds that “it is the body which became the totemic object, the very visibility of the articulation or linkage between nature and culture” (*idem*). Though Gilda’s as well as Bird’s travels and living amongst diverse groups of people (and vampires) throughout time and the space of the United States might suggest that the two become part of several different communities or cultures, the narrative consistently returns to the body and the somatic signifiers that ground the characters’ “connections” to one another, and ultimately, their race(s).

Crain’s *Blacula*, Butler’s *Fledgling*, and Gomez’s *The Gilda Stories* use and sometimes displace the conventions of the vampire narrative in order to highlight the ways in which the racial Other has been constructed and Othered through its metonymical relationship to the human/monster (or vampire) binary. Even though their rewritten vampires might not always be as subversive of normative practices as the Dracula figure, they each use allegory in a way that questions the metaphorical correspondences found in traditional allegory of vampire narratives. They highlight the ways in which the racial binary and the human/monster binary

³² The reference to “home soil” in the context of a vampire narrative can be confusing since traditional vampires (such as Dracula) must carry soil from their homeland with them in order to survive. Gomez’s narrative includes this convention and Gilda carries soil from Mississippi where she was born. But for Gilda and Bird, “home soil” can also refer to the soil where their ancestors come from, Fulani and Lakota land respectively. At this moment in Bird’s thoughts, when she is reminiscing about Gilda as a young girl, it is tempting to think she is referring to their home soil in the South (Mississippi/Louisiana). Yet her thoughts of Gilda as “African” and their “tribal unity” with “[their] people” suggest otherwise – that “home soil” refers to the land from which they have been separated, and importantly, separated by white supremacy and colonization.

have been metonymically constructed through the stigmatizing metaphors of animality and hypersexuality, displacing the human/animal binary and – in the case of Butler’s and Gomez’s novels – heteronormativity as well. Through their vampire characters, they allegorize the ways in which the Black body has been constructed through white hegemony, and empower their Black vampires to resist and oppose the racist and oppressive practices of white supremacy. Each narrative operates as, in addition to staging, a counter-discourse to white hegemony as well as its reproduction in fantasy narratives. But it is here that each text also reinforces the racial binary, even though they displace the terms in which Blackness is defined. Crain’s film and Gomez’s novel both blend historical fiction regarding African American oppression with their vampire allegories. But they also, like Butler’s novel, use a more traditional allegorical structure vis-à-vis race and racism which grounds racial differences in an extra-diegetical “reality” rather than exposing the ways in which they are fantasized. Following recent theories of race, Judith Butler notes that “‘race’ is partially produced as an effect of the history of racism, that its boundaries and meanings are constructed over time not only in the service of racism, but also in the service of the contestation of racism” (1993, 18). In this sense, race is constructed by and reinforced in racially stigmatizing vampire narratives (such as Stoker’s novel) as much as it is in vampire narratives that counter this stigmatization by affirming and valorizing Blackness. These narratives validate Blackness in contrast to whiteness and racism through the notion of a homogenous Black community, as well as in grounding Black identity with the Black body – and in Gomez’s novel, the Black body and the Black community are metonymically constructed and reinforced. Importantly, while Hall does not suggest that only certain “races” are defined through the somatic signifiers of skin, hair, and bone, in Crain’s, Butler’s, and Gomez’s texts, it is consistently the Black body alone (and not the white body) which is used as a “totemic object” “where unmarked bodies constitute the currency of normative whiteness” (Hall; Butler, 1993, 170-1). Much like Edward’s quasi-divine paleness

in the *Twilight* narratives, for instance, Butler's white-skinned Ina can be divine and other-worldly. Blacula's body, in contrast to Dracula's, is animalized, Shori's body is essentialized through "Black" genetic stereotypes, and Gilda finds signs of "Africanness" in conjunction with dark skin. In these ways, the Black body is continually made to bear the mark of race in opposition to whiteness, contributing to the fantasy of its pre-discursiveness (as well as its extra-diegetical existence). Its somatic signifiers become transcendental through metaphors that appear to surpass the discursive: the inner/outer body and its "origin." In the following chapter, I move away from the vampire and look at other "monstrous" figures used to allegorize and point to the performativity of race in narratives where Blackness and other non-white categories are only made present figuratively.

Six

Performing Race through Racial Discourses

This chapter develops the discussion in preceding chapters by examining monster narratives that humanize the monster and allegorize racial differences and racial stigmatization, but without integrating specific (somatic) signifiers that are supposedly grounded in the “real” world (physical and extra-diegetical). The narratives analyzed in this chapter allegorize race through racial discourses (such as the scientific discourse of disease and the legal discourses of passing, segregation, and anti-miscegenation), and point to the ways in which race is performative. The allegorization of race through racial discourses highlights de Man’s theory of allegory since discourses rely on narrative and thus on time, rather than purely on metaphor. For de Man, allegory “contains a constitutive temporal element” and is constructed through “the *repetition* ... of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority” (1969, 207). Allegory highlights the illusion of identity as transcendental and stable through time. Likewise, in her theory of performativity, Judith Butler argues that “gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an

exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (1990, 191), which both creates and highlights the illusion of a stable gender identity. The narratives discussed in this chapter underline the metonymical relationship between signs and, like with allegory, the ways that these signs bear an illusory relationship with each other. These texts also emphasize the "gap" between language and "reality," the diegetical and extra-diegetical in that they stage these discourses using arbitrary somatic signifiers. The metaphoric vehicle used to signify the tenor of racial Otherness can only operate as such through its metonymical relationship to another sign within the text. For instance, the somatic signifier of skin color is not made to bear a particular meaning, or at least not the same connotations that it has traditionally held extra-diegetically. Nor are there specific "monstrous" somatic signifiers that operate as metaphors for racial or sexual Otherness, whether linked to the traditional figures or not. So while the figures of the vampire and the werewolf have traditionally been characterized as animalistic with their sharp teeth, claws, and shape-changing into animal form, and although the vampire's fangs have often been a vehicle for sexual deviancy, the "monstrous" characters studied in this chapter – namely the mutant, the zombie, and the cyborg – do not bear somatic signifiers that have been systematically used to metonymically construct racial Otherness. Marvel's *X-Men* (the comic books and films), Andrew Currie's 2006 film *Fido*, and Ridley Scott's 1982 *Blade Runner* and the novel on which it was based, Philip K. Dick's 1968 *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, rewrite monstrosity and continue the trend of "humanizing" the monster (or the posthuman trend of destabilizing the "human"), without repeating the same stigmatizing signifying practices of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fantasy narratives. Rather, these narratives rely primarily on the staging or the allegorization of the process of Othering, the metonymical construction of race through time, in order to situate their monstrous characters as figurative representations of the racial Other.

With the exception of the zombie, the monstrous figures discussed in this chapter (as well as in the next) differ from the vampire figure in that they are “born” as such, rather than having been transformed. Arguably, the vampire’s transformative power and threat to the supposed stability of identity categories is more subversive to white hegemony than monstrous figures whose corporeal traits have either remained stable or have been prescribed since “birth.” Nevertheless, the allegorization of racial difference is all the more pertinent here, since race is constructed through physical traits (whether visible or not) that are not easily modified (if at all). Importantly, it is not for this reason that “monstrous” difference is necessarily essentialized in these narratives, nor that it operates through figurative means to ground racial difference as transcendental. As I argued using Stuart Hall in the previous chapter, physical differences (visible or not) can be acknowledged to exist between individuals, but it is how some of these differences are given meaning that is often problematic. Likewise, the “monstrous” characters analyzed in this chapter show that meanings can shift, can be made arbitrary and even irrelevant within the narrative’s context. For instance, the mutants in *X-Men* are an extremely diverse and heterogeneous group – no two characters are alike in their “mutant” physicality or superpowers, though some have animalistic characteristics, while others might point to the cyborg (the posthuman figure *par excellence*), and still others can be considered to be superhuman or god-like. However, the narratives rarely characterize and categorize their mutants in this fashion. Rather, the stories emphasize mutants as a group, different from humans – and yet their “mutantcy” can only be defined in terms of how it differs from the normative human. The zombie has two relatively distinct traditions and metaphorical functions – one that stems from Haitian voodoo and the Western stigmatization thereof where the zombie operates as a figure for the slave, and the other originates in George Romero’s films (the first of which is the 1968 *Night of the Living Dead*) in which the zombie is a consumer of human flesh and thus a metaphor for “brainless” consumer capitalism. The zombie is, therefore, an

example of how the meanings associated with a monstrous figure can shift. Currie's *Fido* not only includes and expands on both of these traditions, but also incorporates other significations that contribute to the allegorization of racial Otherness and the humanization of the zombie. Scott's *Blade Runner* positions the cyborg as the racial Other through its allegorization of passing, and the narrative systematically destabilizes the means through which passers are identified and used metonymically to define the human.

Passing is a practice that is also prominent in the *X-Men* films and one these texts share with the vampire narratives of the previous chapters. Importantly, passing demonstrates that race is not grounded in the body but, like gender, is performative. Passing highlights the ways in which racial identity and identification rely on somatic signifiers that point to an "origin," whether this be through ancestry or anchored in the body's interior (in blood or, more recently, in genes).¹ The ability to pass then questions inner/outer bodily metaphors, the "origin" of racial identity and somatic markers as viable in the definition of the racial Other. While arguing that "race requires metaphor," Gayle Wald also asserts that "race itself must be continuously narrativized, or reproduced as a 'true' fiction, in order for it to be made 'real'" (6-7). Passing is thus one of the narratives that contributes to the understanding of race as "real." But like (gender) performativity, as it requires a series of acts and gestures that are constituted and repeated through time, passing can work to expose identity categories as illusory. Of course, stories of passing involve the reinsertion of the "liminal" body "back within the logic of binary understandings of race" (Ehlers 76), as I have shown with fantasy narratives such as Stoker's *Dracula* for example (see Chapter Three). Passing is thus both a potentially subversive act as well as a means to reinforce the monster/human racial binary. Moreover, narratives that allegorize passing not only illustrate the performativity of race through the presence or absence

¹ Like Stuart Hall, Mark Golub notes, "[m]orphological differences that are taken to constitute distinct racial kinds take their authority from an assumed connection to racial essences thought to reside below the skin, either in blood or, more recently, in the genes. Those physical features that serve as racial markers do so because they are taken as external signs of an internal racial truth" (585).

of visible signifiers vis-à-vis the subject who passes, but they also expose the presence and the repetition of signifiers enacted by and thereby constructing the category of whiteness. While passing requires a conscious performance that differs from Judith Butler's concept of performativity, Nadine Ehlers moves beyond the traditional notion of passing and its potential reinforcement of the racial binary, arguing that "through being read as 'belonging' to a particular racial category – that is, visually appearing and conducting one's acts, manners, and behaviors in accordance to disciplinary racial demands – *all* subjects are passing-*for* a racial identity that they are said to *be*" (7). Ehlers thus redefines racial passing in alliance with performativity, suggesting that it is through the repetition of certain acts and gestures, along with somatic signifiers, that racial identity is continually reproduced and reinforced. Ehlers' notion displaces the focus from the individual who passes in the traditional sense, from the reasons for passing and whether or not the pass is successful, to include those who deny their participation in racial performance. In other words, those who might police the boundaries of their racial categories not only contribute to maintaining distinctions between races, but also to defining those distinctions through their own performance. This is staged in the *X-Men* films, Dick's novel, and Scott's film, and I will show how the policing of bodies is enacted by those who belong to the normative "human" identity category, but also by those belonging to "monstrous" Othered communities.

Given that passing requires a conscious performance of the category being imitated, unlike performativity where the subject repeats stylized acts and gestures unconsciously, Butler's discussion of the practice of drag is more applicable as a link to passing than performativity.² However, drag does not imply a successful pass, but is rather a parody of the

² For Judith Butler, gender *performs* the body: "Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality" (1990, 185).

gender imitated. While the practice of drag is not directly applicable to racial passing, Butler's theorization of drag can be used to understand the ways in which the narratives discussed in this chapter allegorize race (along with other identity categories) through play, parody, and/or displacement. Though the *X-Men* texts, Dick's novel, and Scott's film engage in little self-conscious parodying, Currie's film plays with generic conventions and racial tropes. For instance, Currie's film parodies the zombie horror film and the romantic comedy, while his eponymous zombie is initially dehumanized through the film's allegorization of racial Otherness and then humanized through heteronormativity. As Butler notes of drag, "the parody is *of* the very notion of an original" (1990, 188). In a sense, a zombie's capacity alternately to enact the position of the racial Other, the father figure, the masculine hero, a heterosexual love interest, and the human, illustrates the illusory nature of these categories since they are all contingent upon the status of being alive. Whether considered dead or undead, the zombie's supposed "nature" or corporeality already provides a disjunction with the roles he plays. Butler later continues:

Just as bodily surfaces are enacted *as* the natural, so these surfaces can become the site of a dissonant and denaturalized performance that reveals the performative status of the natural itself ... The parodic repetition of gender exposes as well the illusion of gender identity as an intractable depth and inner substance. As the effects of a subtle and politically enforced performativity, gender is an "act," as it were, that is open to splittings, self-parody, self-criticism, and those hyperbolic exhibitions of "the natural" that, in their very exaggeration, reveal its fundamentally phantasmatic status. (200)

Butler implies then that drag highlights the "error" of metaphor in naturalizing the body's inner (signifieds) and outer (signifiers). Similarly, allegory points to the lack of "an original." And as de Man argues, allegory shares features with irony in that they both "speak Other" and "the relationship between sign and meaning is discontinuous" (Madsen, 1994, 30; de Man, 1969, 209). Irony, like parody, can function through "those hyperbolic exhibitions of 'the natural.'" In this chapter, I extend Butler's focus on gender to include the play with the "human" that these texts also expose as an "act," as "phantasmatic," through "enforced performativity" and

hyperbole, along with the “dissonance” between identity categories and various metaphors on which the “human” relies for its constitution.

However, Butler is cautious about citing the practice of drag and/or parody as subversive. She notes: “Parody by itself is not subversive, and there must be a way to understand what makes certain kinds of parodic repetitions effectively disruptive, truly troubling, and which repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony” (1990, 189). Arguably, the parodic repetition of norms is similar to passing in that it is also a repetition and a potential reinforcement of identity categories. That “repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony” is reminiscent of the “liminal” passing body and its reinsertion “back within the logic of binary understandings of race” (Ehlers 76). In her later work, Butler expands on her comment regarding drag and hyperbole. Here, Butler uses “allegory” as a synonym for exposure or a performance that “exposes” the construction of gender identity through loss: “drag exposes or allegorizes the mundane psychic and performative practices by which heterosexualized genders form themselves through the renunciation of the possibility of *homosexuality*” (1993, 235). Though there is no direct parallel to the identity category of race in Butler’s explanation, the allegorization of monsters in “drag” as the racial Other in these texts can be said to not only “expose” the lack of an “original,” but also the means through which the racial Other is constructed through the “loss,” or rather absence, of a stable white, “human” referent. Still, Butler warns that drag does not or cannot undo gender, but rather merely “exposes” the norms through which it is performed:

As an allegory that works through the hyperbolic, drag brings into relief what is, after all, determined only in relation to the hyperbolic: the understated, taken-for-granted quality of heterosexual performativity. At its best, then, drag can be read for the way in which hyperbolic norms are dissimulated as the heterosexual mundane. (237)

Butler thus appears to revise her previous statements regarding the identification of certain narratives as “disruptive” versus “domesticated.” My aim in this chapter is then not to

distinguish between texts that are of one kind or another. Admittedly, each narrative is “domesticated” in that, while it might “queer” identity categories in a figurative manner, its “monstrous” figures are largely “domesticated” as heteronormative. Rather, my contention is that their allegorization of racial Otherness, their parodying of identity categories and even of the processes through which they are constructed, only operates as “disruptive” within the diegesis and does little to destabilize the extra-diegetical “reality” of race. They, like Butler’s theorization of drag and its relation to gender, suggest that race cannot be undone but merely played with.

Likewise, I examine two “monstrous” figures in this chapter – the cyborg and the zombie – which have been cited as figures of the posthuman, a position which has been lauded for its capacity to question the “human” as an exclusive category, but which also has a contentious relationship with race. In her “Cyborg Manifesto,” Donna Haraway sees the cyborg as a way to destabilize “certain dualisms [which] have been persistent in Western traditions; they have all been systemic to the logics and practices of domination of women, people of color, nature, workers, animals – in short, domination of all constituted as others, whose task is to mirror the self” (1991, 177). In their “Zombie Manifesto,” Sarah Lauro and Karen Embry dispute Haraway’s claim by arguing that the zombie is a more appropriate figure for the posthuman, and though “the position of the zombie is [not] a liberating one ... the only way to truly get posthuman is to become antisubject” (87). Yet as Neil Badmington notes in his discussion of Jacques Derrida’s nuancing of the challenge to humanism and the “human”:

[T]he end of Man is bound to be written in the language of Man. Each “transgressive gesture re-encloses us” because every such gesture will have been unconsciously choreographed by humanism. There is no pure outside to which “we” can leap. To oppose humanism by claiming to have left it behind is to overlook the very way that opposition is articulated. (n. pag.)

In line with Derrida’s thinking, the posthuman figures studied in this chapter do not offer a means of escaping humanism – Scott’s and Dick’s cyborgs seek “liberation” but ultimately

fail, and Currie's zombie is reinstated as a "subject." But more than this, since only white actors play the parts of the "monstrous" racial Others in Currie's and Scott's films, these narratives reinforce the inseparability of the "human" from whiteness due to the relegation of the posthuman to a figurative level of meaning alone.³ In her critique of Haraway's essay, Malini Johar Schueller writes that the cyborg as "analogy" "enabl[es] the white feminist theorist to displace racial difference onto a safer notion of similarity" (82). In his discussion of the mostly white cast of the *X-Men* films, Neil Shyminsky cites Patricia Williams' work and argues that "a white body performing blackness symbolically, becomes a vehicle through which the other is metaphorically visible while literally *invisible*" (392). These narratives assert an ontological distinction between fantasy and "reality," where the diegetical world is a space in which the posthuman can interrogate racial differences, while the extradiegetical world appears as a "pure outside" in which racial Otherness continues to be uninterrogated.

Selected *X-Men* comic books and films (the 2000 *X-Men*, the 2003 *X-2*, the 2006 *X-Men: The Last Stand*, and the 2011 *X-Men: First Class*), Andrew Currie's *Fido*, Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* and Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* self-consciously perform race through parody, metaphor, and metonymy, exposing race as a signifying practice that is contingent on other identity categories. I examine the ways in which these narratives employ aspects of allegory (such as through the citation of and references to racially stigmatizing discourses), but without putting into question the process of interpretation and pointing to the (racial) sign as indeterminate. Thus, this chapter follows from the preceding chapter in that these narratives, while they do not rely on a shared (somatic) signifier and while race might be de-essentialized on a figurative level within the diegesis, their use of arbitrary signifiers as metaphors for racial signs suggests that these narratives also rely on a supposed

³ The cast of the *X-Men* in the *X-Men* films is also whitened in comparison to the diverse characters of the same group in the various comic book series.

literal extra-diegetical referent of race. In this way, they differ from de Manian allegory where “the sign points to something that differs from its literal meaning and has for its function the thematization of this difference” (1969, 209). Indeed, the texts might not reinforce race and the body as pre-discursive, but they nonetheless rely on an extra-diegetical “reality” where the ontology of racial Otherness appears to exist. So while these texts play with inner/outer bodily metaphors and the disjunction between performance and (non-) human identity, they do not “thematiz[e]” the “difference” between the “sign” and “its literal meaning”: the tenor of race outside the diegesis. Ultimately, I argue that while these narratives illustrate that race is performative, their staging of racial discourses does not involve a process of de-signification. Rather, they involve the more traditional notion of allegory in which the link between “monstrous” somatic signifiers in the fictional world is maintained with racial signifiers outside the texts. So while the trope of the monster as the racial Other works to undo the literal/extra-diegetical equation of the racial Other to the monstrous, the monster remains figurative and the racial Other is fixed as literal.

X-Men⁴

Arguably, it is difficult to make a claim regarding the *X-men* that encompasses the series as a whole. Having originated in 1963 as a Marvel comic book, the *X-Men* narratives (whether considered as separate comic book installments, story-arcs, comic book series, cartoons, and/or films) have existed for almost six decades, are multiple, diverse, have included several writers and artists, and is now commonly called the X-Universe.⁵ The notion that the comic books

⁴ A portion of this section on *X-Men* is a revised and expanded version of part of an article published in *The Visual Culture of Modernism*, Volume 26 of *SPELL* (2011): “Making the ‘Monstrous’ Visible? Reading ‘Difference’ in Contemporary Fantastic Film and Television.”

⁵ Writer Stan Lee and penciler Jack Kirby created the *X-Men* and collaborated on the comic books until Kirby’s departure in 1966.

could be read as an allegory for racial injustice and the then contemporary Civil Rights movement is not new:

Over the years, some have read a socio-political meaning into this complex relationship between [Professor X and Magneto], seeing the struggle between non-violent cooperation and bitter confrontation as nothing less than a fantastical allegory to the then-growing American civil rights movement, with the passive, peaceful Professor Xavier representing Martin Luther King Jr., and the righteous, but more militant, Magneto standing in for Malcolm X. (Mallory, 47)⁶

The time at which the series originated gives credit to this claim, but it is not the only way in which the series and its characters have been interpreted over the years. As Michael Mallory notes: “Mutantcy has become an open metaphor for societal oppression and the underclass, and it has been presented in such a way as to allow the reader to fill in his or her own blank” (19). He continues by quoting Joe Quesada, Marvel editor-in-chief: “‘I’ve heard people describe the idea of mutants in the Marvel Universe as sort of the class race wars that happened here in the states, or the idea of homosexuality, or just being different in general’” (*idem*).⁷ One of the reasons it is difficult to fix the allegorical connotations of the *X-Men* is due to the diversity of the characters and their stories. Mallory writes:

The X-Universe is an incredibly tangled web of characters and relationships that involve multiple identities, secret pasts, even more secret futures, which sometimes take place on alien worlds and in parallel time tracks or different planes of existence. Individual characters have frequently undergone transitions that go far beyond a new costume design. Some have died, only to return; some have leapt into other bodies; others have been cloned; quite a few of them have changed color, and a few have turned out to be neither mutants nor human at all, but rather robots, or, more precisely, “techno-organisms.” Virtually all have had their entire known histories rewritten at some point or other. (18)

Not only are each mutant’s physical manifestations of their mutantcy unique, but also, as Mallory notes, they undergo several changes throughout the various series, such that storylines are not necessarily reliable, nor are identity categories consistent. More than this, Mallory’s

⁶ The remarks cited in this paragraph use the terms of “allegory” and “metaphor” interchangeably, which shows the ways in which allegory is generally interpreted as an extended metaphor. Of course, my contention in this chapter/section is that the *X-Men* narratives do engage in traditional allegory.

⁷ Roger Sabin also writes: “The X-Men were complete personalities whose mutantcy could be viewed as a metaphor for adolescence, race or sexuality” (159).

reference to “new costume design” and “chang[ing] color” not only suggests that the characters’ appearances are not stable either, but also that their somatic signifiers could alter many times simply due to new pencilers and inkers. Such changes underline the ways in which the series stages debates regarding identity, but it is also for this reason that my main focus in this section will be on some of the franchise’s films and some of the comics on which they are based.⁸

The first four *X-Men* films (Bryan Singer’s 2000 *X-Men* and the 2003 *X-2*, Brett Ratner’s 2006 *X-Men: The Last Stand*, and Matthew Vaughn’s 2011 *X-Men: First Class*) follow the various comic book series in that they borrow storylines, and – though mutantcy continues to operate as an “open metaphor” for many kinds of difference – the narratives solicit readings as allegories of racial difference and oppression. As Deborah Madsen has noted, the slogan of the second film, “The time has come for those who are different to stand united,” “is resonant of the climate of civil rights struggle which coincided with the first appearance of the Marvel comics” (2006, 92).⁹ (See Figure 17 in the Appendix.) The films continually refer to racial discourses and practices, such as the legal discourses of immigration (*X-Men*) and passing (all four films), as well as the scientific discourses of disease (*X-Men: The Last Stand*), genetic experimentation (*X2* as well as the 2014 *X-Men: Days of Future Past*), and genocide (*X-Men*, *X-Men: First Class*, and *X-Men Days of Future Past*). More than this, they stage debates regarding the ways in which mutantcy should be read (or not). For instance, the films (like the comic books) posit against each other human and mutant ideas about reading mutantcy, without constructing a stable notion of mutant identity. While the films’ focalization

⁸ Of course, one could also argue that the series is similar to a soap opera in this manner, that the characters undergo so many changes (and are ostensibly immortal) only in order to keep the series going.

⁹ Perhaps the films’ allegorical angle stems in part from Stan Lee himself. Lee first said that he was initially not influenced by the civil rights movement. “‘However, once I had the characters worked out, and the minute I said I’m going to have society fear and hate them, I realized that this really was symbolic of the bigotry that is practiced in our society, and I thought this could be a metaphor for what was going on with the way people treated the blacks and the Latinos and the Jews and the Catholics and so forth’” (quoted in Mallory, 47).

through mutants appears to provide a “presence” for the attempted erasure and unintelligibility that results from human readings, conflicts among the mutants destabilize this process. The Other’s attempt to name her/himself does not work either. Part of the conflicts over mutant identity and how it should be “read” revolve around the issue of passing – an allegory to which the films continually return. Significantly, passing is also a discursive practice that is relevant to non-normative sexuality, and in this way, the films address both racial and sexual passing. The *X-Men* films thus highlight metonymical relationships between identity categories as well as the ways in which oppressive discourses and practices intersect and repeat themselves. In its parallels to performativity, the allegorization of passing in these films underlines the ways in which the mutant can only be defined as different from the “human,” while the “human” is also shown to be contingent on the mutant, as well as to rely on other metonymical relationships in order to constitute itself. This process of deferral, however, remains figurative in that the filmic discourse of the four films stabilizes the category of the “human” as white and heteronormative.

The various human interpretations of mutantcy portrayed throughout the four films represent a repetitive denial of any link that mutants might have to the “human,” or to the (normative) self. Indeed, the *X-Men* films allegorize the mutant as the racial Other in part through the problematic ways in which humans read and define mutants, as well as the means through which normativity must be repeatedly performed through repudiation. These readings echo the multiple ways in which the hegemonic order has constructed the racial Other through metaphor and metonymy. For instance, in Ratner’s *X-Men: The Last Stand*, mutants are framed as diseased through the film’s premise – a pharmaceutical company has developed a “cure.” The director of the company presents his product during a press conference: “These so-called mutants are people, just like us. Their affliction is nothing more than a disease, a corruption of healthy cellular activity ... Ladies and Gentlemen, I proudly present the answer to mutation.

Finally, we have a cure” (16:45).¹⁰ The director’s discourse situates “mutation” as previously unintelligible, an unanswered question and problem, suggesting that it is only through his “cure” that mutation becomes intelligible. Of course, it becomes intelligible through the metonymy of disease. While the director attempts to group mutants with humans under the label of “people,” his language divides the group into “us” versus “them” through “healthy cellular activity” versus “affliction” and “corruption.” His characterization of mutantcy in this manner is not surprising, given that one of the film’s opening scenes depicts the moment he discovers that his son is a mutant. The two previous films refer vaguely to mutant difference as genetic, at one point suggesting the mutant “X-gene” as hereditary (X2, 56:52). In this case, the father would have to admit that his son’s mutantcy might “originate” from within his own body. Moreover, his son’s physical manifestation of mutantcy (wings growing on his back) would operate as a somatic signifier of the internal X-gene. Rather than accepting this metaphorical construction of his son’s body, one which would metonymically implicate his own body, the father disavows this correspondence and instead constructs another metaphorical correspondence for his son’s wings, that of the disease. Allegorically, the narrative is reminiscent of the ways in which disease has operated as a metaphor for constructing the racial Other in scientific discourse, as Sander Gilman has noted with regards to syphilis and AIDS.¹¹ But more than this, these scenes illustrate the ways in which disease is alternately used to

¹⁰ The language in the same scene in the comic book on which Ratner’s film is based (Joss Whedon and John Cassaday’s *Astonishing X-Men Vol 1: Gifted* (2004)) is less divisive: “Mutants are people. No better or worse by nature than anybody else. Just people. People with a disease” (24). The speaker emphasizes “people” twice, eliminating the possibility of comparison to “anybody else,” before repeating “people” and adding on the element of disease. It is also worth noting that the speaker in the comic book is an Indian woman, a “renowned geneticist.” Though she appears in the film, her role is reduced – she is merely the assistant to the pharmaceutical company director who makes the press announcement and who is a white man. More on this later.

¹¹ See Gilman’s 1987 article, “AIDS and Syphilis: the Iconography of a Disease,” discussed briefly in Chapters Two and Four. Though the belief regarding syphilis and Blacks was that the disease did not affect them as much as whites, it still constructed the Black body as genetically different from the white body. This supposedly different relationship between the Black body and syphilis also did not stop the connotation of Blacks as diseased, in part due to the sexual transmission of the disease and thus the metonymical link to hypersexuality (a correspondence that has worked with AIDS as well).

characterize the mutant through metaphor and metonymy. Upon hearing of the “cure,” Storm asks ironically: “Since when did we become a disease?” (16:16). Rather than using the adjective “diseased,” her use of the noun illustrates the way the mutant (and the mutant body) then becomes synonymous with, an embodiment of, disease rather than “people with a disease.”

The comic book on which Ratner’s film is based – Joss Whedon and John Cassaday’s 2004 *Astonishing X-Men Vol 1: Gifted* – plays with the metonymical deferral of meaning with regards to defining the mutant in relation to disease even more so than the film, in large part through the medium of comic art. The geneticist who announces the cure to the press begins in a panel at the top of a page by asking “What is a mutant?” (22). Rather than immediately providing the answer, the following panel depicts the beginning of a hostage situation – an image that dominates the page and appears to visually answer the geneticist’s question as if to suggest that mutants are violent criminals (see Figure 18).¹² However, nothing confirms that the masked gunmen are mutants, despite one of the figures’ central position and size on the page. The gunmen’s leader’s face is revealed at the bottom panel of the following page – green with red eyes, suggesting he might be a mutant (though he is later revealed to be an alien) (see Figure 19). He speaks to the hostages, an audience, in panels that alternately show the back of his head and then his face, thereby visually juxtaposing the character and his dialogue (“Maybe we’re fanatics”) with the geneticist’s (“I will tell you what mutants are”) (see Figures 19 and 20). In additional alternating panels, the X-Men prepare for battle and their images as mutants offer a contrast to those of the gunmen. Their dialogue – “Time to make nice with the public, eh, Summers?” “We have to do more than that, Logan” (24) – highlights their consciousness

¹² The film also approximates disease with criminality. While the cure is initially offered as a choice for mutants, the government has it weaponized in order to stop mutants who are deemed criminal or a threat to the dominant order. More than this, the pharmaceutical lab keeps its cure on Alcatraz. Rather than symbolizing a fortress, this location reinforces the characterization of mutants as (potentially) dangerous criminals.

of the need for a positive public image and of how this must be performed.¹³ In addition to playing with the ways in which mutants are labeled through deferral and the juxtaposition of images, the comic illustrates the multiple confrontations between humans and among mutants regarding how mutantcy should be defined.

Reading the mutant body in opposition to the human can instantiate the ways in which religious discourse was used to frame whiteness as divine and to stigmatize racial Otherness as sinful and/or evil. Returning to the example in Ratner's film of the father who discovers that his son is a mutant, the son's tearful response to the gaze of his father, "Dad, I'm sorry," and his father's exclamation of "Oh God, not you," stage the scene as an ironic religious confession. Given that the somatic signifier of the boy's mutantcy are angelic wings, the scene rewrites the origin of one of the earliest members of the X-Men, called Angel in reference to his wings. The "fault" appears to lie with the child, whereas his future mutant name positions him as more divine than his father. This displacement away from the body of the father, along with the religious connotation, also appears in Chris Claremont and Brent Anderson's 1982 *X-Men* graphic novel: *God Loves, Man Kills*. After murdering his newborn mutant son, Reverend William Stryker reads his son's "monstrous" physical appearance as a metaphor for the "Devil," based on the metonymical link to man and woman as "created" "in [God's] image," and finds solace in displacing his own sinfulness as a tenor for the vehicle of his son's mutantcy onto his wife:

"But – could *I* have fathered such a creature? Was my life so wicked that the Lord sought to punish me through my son? And if so, why then let me live? If I was evil, shouldn't I have been condemned to eternal *damnation*? I prayed for guidance. It was given me. The evil – the sin – was *Marcy's*, not mine. She was the vessel used by God to reveal unto me Satan's most insidious plot against humanity – to corrupt us through our children, while they were still in the womb. The Lord created man and woman in *his* image, blessed with his grace. Mutants broke that sacred mold. They were creations, not of God, but of the Devil." (39)

¹³ As the X-Men's new leader, Summers' plan is to sell their image as superheroes. The team and their new costumes are revealed on the following page.

Stryker's reading of his wife's body draws from the Biblical notion of the "original sin" as belonging to the first woman: Eve. Just as Eve functions as a synecdoche for women, so too does Stryker see his wife as the vehicle or the "vessel used by God to reveal" "Satan's most insidious plot against humanity." The graphic novel then stages how Stryker's crusade against mutants becomes sanctified through public opinion and political discourse, instantiating the ways in which nineteenth- and (early) twentieth-century religious discourse influenced state and federal legislation.

The first *X-Men* film involves allegorical references to legal discourses surrounding passing, immigration, and segregation, highlighting the ways in which these discourses were metonymically contingent on one another, as well as on other means through which the mutant (or racial or ethnic Other) could or should be fixed in opposition to the (white American) human. One of the first scenes of the film takes place in a US Senate regarding the potential ratification of the Mutant Registration Act that would require all mutants to identify themselves and legally register as mutants. David Kirby reads this scene, as well as the film's climax, in the light of anti-immigration laws:

Eugenicists of the 1920s were worried that immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe were diluting America's gene pool, and they successfully lobbied for federal legislation to restrict immigration. The film hearkens back to these legislative battles with its "mutant registration act" storyline. In addition, the film's anti-mutant meetings symbolically take place on Ellis Island with the film's climactic showdown taking place on top of the Statue of Liberty. (101)

Kirby's reading points to the irony of an anti-mutant meeting taking place on Ellis Island – a space that symbolizes immigration, and the welcoming of immigrants in conjunction with the Statue of Liberty – since the mutant functions here as a metaphor for the racial and/or ethnic Other. Though his focus is on immigration, the "'mutant registration act' storyline" can also refer to the One Drop Rule and certain state laws which required citizens to "register" their "racial heritage" (such as Virginia's 1924 Racial Integrity Act – see Chapter Three) which were also an attempt to avoid "diluting America's gene pool" through their connection to anti-

miscegenation and segregation laws. But in Singer's film, Senator Kelly's argument is framed around the question of danger – "Are mutants dangerous?" (6:20).¹⁴ His answer to the question is provided through examples in which he defines the human (and the American) through the spatial boundaries of buildings and bodies. He tells Congress of a mutant that can walk through walls, asking, "What's to stop this girl from walking into a bank vault, or the White House, or into [our] houses? And there are even rumors ... of mutants so powerful that they can enter our minds and control our thoughts, taking away our God given free will" (7:05). Of course, Senator Kelly's last example ironically points to the X-Men leader, Professor Charles Xavier, and the camera highlights this through an over-the-shoulder shot of the Professor as he watches the Senator speaking. His first example is also ironic when read in the light of scenes in the second film: the young mutant girl who can walk through walls uses her ability to escape human military invaders of her own home, while the mutant who does pass as human in order to enter the White House and threaten the life of the president is later revealed to have been under the control of a human. In any case, Senator Kelly defines mutants through their invasiveness of what he determines to be "human" and the latter's metonymical reliance on specific spaces: the body/mind and private property. He continues by adding: "I think the American people deserve the right to decide whether they want their children to be in school with mutants, to be taught by mutants" (7:30). In addition to distinguishing mutants from "the American people," his comment evidently gestures towards (school) segregation and demonstrates that the Mutant Registration Act would undoubtedly lead to other laws designed to exclude mutants and restrict their movements.

For Magneto, the mutant villain of the first and third films, the Mutant Registration Act is not merely the first step towards segregation, but also towards genocide. Significantly, the

¹⁴ One might suggest that this is the question, or one of the questions, that is supposedly "answered" by the cure in the third film.

first scene of the first film provides the back story for the young Magneto and creates an analogy between his Othering as a Jew during World War Two and his Othering as a mutant – combining historical realism with science fiction. The young Magneto is forcefully separated from his parents by Nazis in a concentration camp. Very little color is used in the scene except for the yellow stars that Magneto, his parents, and the other Jewish-identified characters wear, as if to emphasize the labeling that the Nazi soldiers used to define and control those believed to be different. The scene is what Adam Lowenstein calls “the allegorical moment” in modern horror film: “a shocking collision of film, spectator, and history where registers of bodily space and historical time are disrupted, confronted, and intertwined” (2). Lowenstein’s term reflects the disjunction between the “futuristic” mutant present in a historical moment, or the blending of historical realism with the science fiction and superhero genres, as well as the way in which the scene conveys family and communal tragedy and the boy’s trauma. Furthermore, as he partially destroys a metal gate that separates him from his parents, Magneto’s power appears to demonstrate the way in which mutant power is pitted against boundaries imposed by humans. In Singer’s film and those that follow, Magneto then reads the human desire to name and define mutants, to segregate, and to “cure” them, in the light of his experience as a Jew, recalling the Nazi practice of segregating, enslaving, experimenting on, and exterminating the Jewish Other. Although the scene serves as a vehicle to reveal Magneto’s power, it also serves as a basis for the films’ allegory of mutants as the racial or ethnic Other and for the issue of passing. Through its metonymical link to the Mutant Registration Act (historically, allegorically, and diegetically), these two scenes underline the humans’ stigmatizing repudiation of the mutant Other.

Some of the comic books on which the films are based have staged Magneto’s fear of anti-mutant rhetoric and/or legislation that leads to genocide, at times using allegory as an extended metaphor that points to several historical instances of racial / ethnic oppression, and

at others blending this traditional form of allegory with historical realism. The 1981 “Days of Future Past” storyline by Chris Claremont and John Byrne (which inspired the Mutant Registration Act of the first film as well as formed the basis of the story for Bryan Singer’s 2014 film *X-Men: Days of Future Past*), pinpoints the Mutant Control Act of 1988 as the beginning of the extermination and internment of mutants. The text and images work together to construct the narrative as an allegory of both the Holocaust and racist US legislation. As the narrator in the second panel of Figure 21 (see Appendix) explains of the dystopian future: “In North America, in the year 2013, there are *three* classes of people: ‘H,’ for baseline human – clean of mutant genes, allowed to breed. ‘A,’ for anomalous human – a normal person possessing mutant genetic potential...” (n. pag.). The word/image relationship in this panel may seem to have little in common and might initially approach what Scott McCloud calls a “parallel combination” where “words and pictures seem to follow very different courses – without intersecting” (154). But the image anticipates the text of the third panel: “‘M,’ for mutant, the bottom of the heap, made pariahs and outcasts by the Mutant Control Act of 1988. Hunted down and – with a few exceptions – killed without mercy” (n. pag.). The image of the second panel reflects Kate Pryde’s (wearing the “M” label) “pariah” status while it is also reminiscent of segregation on public transportation. The classification of people and their controlled breeding points to the eugenic practices of early twentieth-century American scientists and the Nazis. The labels worn on the characters’ clothing function as somatic signifiers which prohibit passing, and are reminiscent of the star that Jews and other outcasts were obliged to wear in Nazi Germany as well as of the One Drop Rule which worked metonymically with anti-miscegenation laws and which ensured against passing. The image in the third panel extends to that of the second as well as adds to (an “additive” word/image relationship for McCloud) the text of the same panel in that the mutants’ pariah status has culminated in their “internment,” and along with the textual reference to genocide, thereby

allegorizing Nazi practices with the Jewish Other.¹⁵ The last two panels of the page display a massive cemetery which function as a visual signifier that metonymically reinforces the narrator's reference to genocide in the third panel.

In Chris Claremont and Brent Anderson's 1982 *X-Men* graphic novel, *God Loves, Man Kills*, genocide is also allegorized, though its opening scene combines the figurative meaning with its historical reference and, like the opening scene in Singer's *X-Men*, provides the basis for the graphic novel's allegory of mutants as the dehumanized racial Other.¹⁶ The medium of the comic book is primordial here since the text and images reinforce the allegorical reference and the double-layering of meanings.¹⁷ The text on its own – the narrator's and the characters' speech – depicts the murder of two children at an elementary school by a team of people who call themselves "The Purifiers" and claim that the children "have no right to live" (8-9, see Figures 22 and 23). The reason for their claim is not given in the text, but in the images. On the one hand, the children are Black and the Purifiers are white. The murders thus appear at first glance to be racially motivated. With the somatic signifier of skin color, not only does the second panel on the third page (page 10, see Figure 24) – depicting their bodies hanging from a swing set – confirm this opening scene as a reference to a lynching, but also it provides an additional meaning to the connotation of purification. Like the reference to "clean" human bodies in contrast to "contaminating" mutant genes in "Days of Future Past," "The Purifiers" then become reminiscent of racially purifying practices – both legal (such as was the case with eugenics or the sanctioned genocide performed by the Nazis) and illegal, given that they additionally operate as a visual metaphor for the Ku Klux Klan. On the other hand, the children

¹⁵ The interned mutant characters are also obliged to wear collars which inhibit their superpowers. Collars are also worn by zombies in Currie's film and, as I will show later, operate as a metaphor for the animal and the slave, or the animalization of the slave.

¹⁶ Much of the second *X-Men* film, Singer's *X2*, is based on this graphic novel, but with some important differences. For instance, Stryker is a military man rather than a religious leader, and the opening scene (which is discussed here) is absent from the film.

¹⁷ McCloud would call this word/picture combination "*Interdependent*, where words and pictures go *hand in hand* to convey an idea that neither could convey *alone*" (155).

are mutants, yet this allegorical meaning is not introduced until the third page. Though one of the children's eyes light up in a superhuman fashion before his execution (see Figure 23), it is only upon turning the page after the first spread that their mutant identity is confirmed in the first panel with the derogatory "Mutie" label hanging around their necks (see Figure 24). Even more so than the opening scene of Singer's first film, this graphic novel scene represents Lowenstein's "allegorical moment" because – although Lowenstein refers specifically to the medium of cinema – it is also "a shocking collision ... where registers of bodily space and historical time are disrupted, confronted, and intertwined" (2). Indeed, the tragic nature of the opening scene is reinforced through the doubled reference to the lynching of African-Americans (and children) through both historical realism and allegory, where the children's status as mutants operates as a metaphor for their race. A comment from Wolverine later in the narrative underlines the ways in which the human repudiation of mutants as less-than-human points to the dehumanization of the racial/ethnic Other: "Take Stryker's remark about mutants not bein' human to its ultimate an' we've no rights under the law. No right to *have* any rights or protection. We could be exterminated, like rats. Legally murdered" (18).¹⁸ Contributing to the allegory of the mutant as the racial/ethnic Other – denied the same rights as white Americans – his remark demonstrates the metonymical relationship between law and the construction of the "human" (and the erasure of the Other), as well as the power of legislators to ensure that the (white) human remains an exclusive position.

In addition to performing the "human" through the continual repudiation of the mutant Other through legislation that defines mutantcy, controls reproduction and movement, and legalizes genocide, the *X-Men* films frequently return to the debate surrounding passing in part

¹⁸ Wolverine's simile with "rats" is significant, since Nazi propaganda depicted Jews as rat-like vermin (Spiegelman 113-5). It also highlights the ways in which the racial / ethnic Other has been dehumanized through the metonymical link to animality (as I have shown in previous chapters), and what is more, here, an animal that is also metonymically linked to disease. (See my discussion of this in Tod Browning's film *Dracula* in Chapter Two.)

because passing threatens the distinction between humans and mutants, and thus the means through which the “human” constitutes itself. In contrast, passing for mutants illustrates the ways in which they continually try to control how they are perceived (or not) by humans. In the second film, *X2*, having initially passed as human to his family, Bobby (or the Iceman) decides to “come out” to them. The ensuing discussion not only highlights the conflicts between humans and mutants over how to define the latter category, but it also allegorizes the stigmatization of the sexual Other in particular, ultimately pointing to the ways in which racial and sexual oppression intersect and repeat one another. Bobby’s mother asks him: “When did you first know you were a...?” (55:50) Finding herself unable to pronounce the word “mutant,” her character expresses what humans might feel towards mutants: that they are either unintelligible or impossible to define, or that they are so abject that she is unable to say their name. The absent word also solicits the allegorical substitution of an extra-diegetical category of Otherness (such as “homosexual”). In opposition to how mutants (and those present in the scene) choose to identify themselves, Bobby’s mother attempts to construct a narrative, a reason for Bobby’s mutantcy that represents a denial of his biological link to herself and her husband (much like the father and director of the pharmaceutical company in the third film). She says, “This is all my fault” (54:30), as if his mutantcy were the result of a poor upbringing in which he did not learn to be fully human and something Bobby could educate himself against (“Have you ever tried not being a mutant?” 57:15). As the word “gay” could easily be substituted for “a mutant,” this scene points to the discourses and practices, both psychological and medical, that have attempted to “cure” homosexuals.¹⁹ In contrast, Bobby and his fellow

¹⁹ It is important to note here that the narrative’s emphasis on the genetic nature of mutantcy does not necessarily imply that the category’s extra-diegetical equivalent of queerness is biological. Rather, the genetic implications of mutantcy work to highlight the ridiculousness of the mother’s arguments, which are also problematic in relation to queerness. Moreover, Joss Whedon’s *Gifted* cites queerness as a category that, like mutantcy, should not be grounded in the biological. Speaking to the doctor who invented the “cure” for mutantcy, Emma Frost reproaches her sarcastically: “Nothing but noble intentions, yes. You’re a veritable Oppenheimer. What’s next? Eliminating the gay gene?” (110).

mutant friends try to valorize his identity. Rogue tells his family, “You should see what Bobby can do,” and he proceeds to proudly demonstrate his power. But ultimately, his family rejects him. Though his mother says, “We still love you Bobby,” her “still” indicates that their love is contingent on his human status, while his brother calls the police and claims that “dangerous” mutants are threatening them. The scene ends with a confrontation between the mutants and the police (in which Bobby’s family does not intervene), effectively reinforcing the brother’s characterization and framing of the mutant Other as criminal.

For the “human” to be able to constitute itself in opposition to mutantcy, passing must be seen as threatening, dangerous and transgressive, even as criminal. Aside from merely speaking before the Senate in favor of a law that would frame mutants and passing in such a light, certain humans go so far as to manipulate mutants in order to ensure that other humans continue to read the mutant as a metaphor for the “monstrous” Other. The first scene of the second film opens with horror film coding – the filmic discourse briefly adopts the human point of view in order to emphasize this – with scary, dramatic music and brief shots of a mysterious figure in a trench coat, hat, and sunglasses, as part of a group touring the White House.²⁰ The character eventually reveals himself to be a particularly frightening-looking mutant (Nightcrawler) with blue skin, a long pointed tail, and sharp teeth. Nightcrawler’s power of teleportation enables him to reach the US President and threaten his life in the name of “Mutant Freedom.” Nightcrawler is thus made to embody the fearful mutant described by Senator Kelly in the first film. More than this, his message of “mutant freedom” is staged through Nightcrawler’s performance. The President can only conclude that “mutant freedom” means a threat to his life, and thus metonymically to the safety of other humans and the sanctity of the government (perhaps even to democracy or “human freedom” itself). The spectator later learns

²⁰ Once the attack becomes apparent to the human characters, the music used is part of Mozart’s “Requiem”: “Dies Irae” (or “Death Aria”).

that Nightcrawler was being controlled by the human William Stryker, who uses the attack in order to convince the President that Professor Xavier's school passes as a military offensive base for mutants and needs to be destroyed. In this scene, Nightcrawler is thus made to play the role that corresponds to the somatic signifiers of his body. His actions reinforce the link between his devilish-looking tail and sharp teeth. Yet in fact, Nightcrawler's character is quite the opposite: docile, peaceful, and extremely pious. Here the film plays with spectator expectations (at least the spectator who is not familiar with the comic books) of who is or is not the "passing monster" and de-essentializing Nightcrawler's body in the process.

At the same time, however, certain mutants are complicit with this depiction of themselves as "monstrous" through passing, using it as a form of empowerment against humans. Indeed, Magneto and his clan of mutants believe that passing can be used to transgress human boundaries, while they also attempt to impose their own reading of themselves. Mystique is the prime example of this ambiguity as she is able to morph into any appearance. At one point in the second film, Nightcrawler asks her why she does not use her powers to pass permanently as human, to which she replies: "Because we shouldn't have to" (1:11:28). Such a response suggests that Mystique sees passing as complicit with (white) human hegemony. However, while she may advocate the importance of NOT passing as a vindication of her right to freedom, the moment when Mystique chooses to reveal her "natural" appearance is rather with the intention of instilling fear in her human adversaries (in the first trilogy). Rather than assert her own reading of her mutant identity, she thus reinforces the human stigmatization of mutants as monstrous. Furthermore, her desire to be recognized and valued in her natural mutant form (blue with yellow cat-like eyes) appears at odds with her need to assert her mutant power of passing, because Mystique's mutant identity relies in part on the alternation between her more "monstrous," animal-like appearance and a human appearance.

Moreover, the double nature (or duplicity) of her body represents the struggle that certain mutants (Magneto and his clan) have in naming themselves and asserting their mutant identity. Like the humans who wish to disavow any link between themselves and mutants, several scenes in the first four films demonstrate the ways in which mutant identity requires the disavowal of humanity upon which it is nevertheless metonymically dependent for its constitution. Referring to the way in which the normative subject constitutes its identity through the exclusion of the Other, Judith Butler writes that it is through “repeated repudiation” that “the subject installs its boundary and constructs the claim to its ‘integrity’” (1993, 114). Through their primary focalization through mutants, the films illustrate that the Other’s “claim” to subjectivity works in a similar manner. Butler continues:

This is not a buried identification that is left behind in a forgotten past, but an identification that must be leveled and buried again and again, the compulsive repudiation by which the subject incessantly sustains his/her boundary. (*idem*)

These mutants claim a subject position in opposition to the stigmatizing constructions that the humans use to define them. At the same time, their strategies illustrate Butler’s point – the “buried identification” with the human must be continually repeated, “leveled and buried again and again.” For instance, each mutant has two names – one that is their human name, and one that is their mutant name and represents their specific power. In this case, the name functions as a substitute, a metaphor, for the mutant’s power when it is not visible, a means to be consistently “out.” Those that wish to assert their mutant identity must eventually reject their human name. This process is illustrated in the fourth film, a prequel to the others, in which the narrative centers on the young Eric and how he “becomes” Magneto; it is a process that involves the eventual rejection of his human name in favor of “Magneto.” As the other films suggest, this rejection of the human name is not a singular event, but as previously mentioned, one that must continually be repeated. When one of Professor X’s students tells Magneto his human name, Magneto responds by asking, “No, what’s your REAL name?” (1:14:01, X2).

Pyro's subsequent assertion of his mutant name corresponds with a rejection of his "human" identity; it is the moment he decides to leave the more "humanized" X-Men and join Magneto's clan. Similarly, in the third film, Mystique is in prison, questioned by the police who address her by her human name, Raven. Mystique refuses this interpolation and replies: "I do not answer to my slave name" (10:10, *X-Men: The Last Stand*). For Mystique, acknowledging any link to humanity is not only to accept the hierarchical system in which she would be positioned as inferior, but also implicates a loss of freedom and in her case, the freedom to not pass as human.

Similarly, a group of mutants in the third film attempts to reject their human appearance through a mutant tattoo. The tattoo is also a manner of rejecting the possibility of passing; it constitutes a way for the mutant to be always and continually "out" as a mutant in that it replaces any absent somatic signifier of mutantcy. For these mutants, the tattoo enables a recuperation and valorization of the human's negative interpretation of the term "mutant," in a manner similar to the appropriation and re-signification of the term "queer" by queer activists. This self-imposed "brand" represents a desire to claim ownership over one's own body, in opposition to the notion of slavery. In labeling and "outing" themselves, the tattooed mutants create their group, their subject position, asking to be read in a certain way and reading other mutants accordingly. Nevertheless, this rewriting is dependent on the negative connotations which the tattoo or brand initially carries. Magneto himself seems to recognize this: when asked by the tattooed mutants where his tattoo is, he responds by showing them the tattooed number on his arm that he received in the Nazi concentration camp, saying, "No needle will ever touch this skin again" (18:53, *X-Men: The Last Stand*). For Magneto, a tattoo or brand, whether imposed by the dominant culture or self-imposed, can be read in the same way. He also seems to suggest that the Nazi imposed branding can replace the mutant tattoo, which highlights the

analogy he makes (and that the film narratives make) between his status as ethnic Other and as mutant Other.

In opposition to this transgressive use of passing which merely appears to reinforce the mutant/human binary, the X-Men's notion of passing seems more subversive. Indeed, it counters the human interpretation of passing as transgressive and monstrous. As Jean Grey argues in front of the Senate as they debate the "Mutant Registration Act," passing is a means of protection from the stigmatization, and even the violence, from humans. For Professor X, passing allows mutants to have access to the same rights as humans – his school, which passes as a "School for the Gifted," allows mutant children to receive an education, to take class trips to museums, for instance. Passing allows mutants access to spaces that might otherwise be denied them. However, within this freedom, there exists a dimension of control and docility. Examples of this occur during the class trip to the museum. A young human girl sticks her tongue out at a mutant boy who reciprocates by sticking out his green, forked tongue thereby revealing his difference. Storm immediately responds by reprimanding him, saying "Not here" (7:17, X2). Similarly, when two human boys attempt to show off to a mutant girl by bullying her male friends, the two mutant boys then "show off" by displaying their mutant powers. While the two mutant boys show that the the human boys' masculine performance is ridiculous, it becomes clear that passing for human requires a performance in which gender cannot be displayed in the same manner as humans. Professor X quickly intervenes by removing the mutants from the museum before they are discovered. Thus, while passing allows freedom in relation to social boundaries and spaces, boundaries are imposed within the group in terms of when and where it is acceptable to reveal one's difference. Evidently, certain acts and gestures which are permitted to humans are not permitted to mutants.

In another sense then, the X-Men's notion of passing also works with human control because their desire to pass means the (temporary) erasure of their mutant power in order to be

read as human. Despite the fact that Professor X encourages his mutant pupils to think of their powers as a gift, he also preaches the need to “control” these powers; and his character repeats this idea throughout each of the first four films. For Professor X, mutant power needs to be disciplined by the mind. His advocacy for the power of the mind over the body certainly evokes the Cartesian mind/body dualism. As Judith Butler suggests, this dualism has often been “redescribed as culture/nature” (1990, 176) and thus recalls the racial binary as well, where whiteness is linked to culture and civilization, and racial Otherness is linked to animality and savagery. Professor X thus seems to encourage his students to control the “beast within,” not only to aspire to appear as human but also to be “human.” Never does Professor X acknowledge the privileged position from which he speaks; not only is his mutantcy not visible on or through his body, but it is also part of his mind.²¹

Professor X is thus a more ambiguous character than he initially seems, one who demonstrates that prejudice can exist within a group that otherwise appears united against discrimination. The fourth film and prequel depicts this through his ambivalent relationship with Raven/Mystique. While the film serves to construct the character of Magneto, it also centers around Raven’s body and the debate between Charles (Professor X) and Eric (Magneto) as to whether or not she should pass. As the childhood friend of Charles, Raven comes to adopt a specific female human form in order to remain by his side in public. Yet, she struggles with this, telling Charles early in the narrative in response to his suggestion that one should be proud to be mutant: “Mutant and proud! Or is that only the pretty mutations or invisible ones, like yours? But if you’re a freak, better hide!” (12:03) Raven’s remark initially refers to humans in general, but she eventually realizes that this is Charles’ manner of thinking as well because he pushes her to stay in her human form. In contrast, Eric encourages her to maintain her “natural”

²¹ One could argue that Professor X’s privileged position is minimized through his disability (he is in a wheelchair). But one could also argue that his physical disability functions as a metaphor for the concentration of his power in his mind alone.

form and to stop “hiding.” Raven’s choice in the end to follow Eric/Magneto appears to express a need to stop passing rather than a hatred of humans or of the X-Men. Thus, Charles comes to represent another form of human prejudice and control. In pitting Eric’s positive view of mutantcy and mutant appearance against Charles’ desire to minimize difference, the narratives’ thereby problematize the distinction between the “monstrous” or “evil” mutant and the “good” “humanized” mutant.

Although it can be argued that the *X-men* narratives ultimately reinforce biological essentialism through their emphasis on the genetic difference between humans and mutants, the narratives also stage debates about the diverse physical manifestations and the meaning(s) of this difference. Though the genetic difference is given a name – the “X-gene” – it remains, as Mallory says, “mysterious,” (18) as does its link to the “human.” The notion of mutant “origin(s)” as “human” is one that is both asserted and rejected in various ways throughout the films and comic books. On the one hand, mutants are sometimes labeled as a separate species with the name “*homo superior*” (*The Uncanny X-Men* #1, 15).²² The class trip to a museum of natural history in the second film creates a parallel between the evolution of the Cro-Magnon to the *Homo sapien* and the human to the mutant. On the other hand, Professor X’s voice-over at the beginning of the first two films frames mutant difference as part of “human” evolution and even of “humanity”: “Mutation, it’s the key to *our* evolution” (emphasis added, 00:25, *X-Men*). Here, Professor X groups mutants and humans together with the all-encompassing “our.” In the second film, he states: “Across the planet, debate rages: are mutants the next link in the evolutionary chain? Or simply a new species of humanity...?” (*X2*, 00:50). Though each question insinuates a different relationship, they both imply a metonymical connection to the “human,” the former through time and the latter through the shared heading of “humanity.”

²² The label appears in the very first issue of the first comic book series. But significantly, it’s the label used by the villain, Magneto.

These unanswered questions are also linked to the diversity of human responses – such as curing a disease, controlled breeding and genocide – which additionally highlight the different ways that the “X-gene” is given meaning.

More than this, the “X-gene” is also “mysterious” in its physical manifestations. No two mutants are alike in their superpowers nor in how or whether or not their power is visible. Within the diegeses, the narratives portray disjunctions between somatic signifiers and a mutant’s character. Recall that the Nightcrawler is an extremely devout character whose body might otherwise mark him as “devilish.” The Beast is another example in that his body (and mutant name) point to animality as well as to the reversal of Darwin’s theory of human evolution as progress away from the animal. Yet, the Beast is a scientific and technological genius who graduated Harvard at the age of 15, which destabilizes the metaphorical link between body and mind as well as the metonymy between the concepts of animality and intelligence.²³ With regards to the ways in which the narratives function as allegory, the connection between the “X-gene” and its visibility on or outside the body is not a straightforward metaphor that represents the extra-diegetical and traditional inner/outer bodily metaphors that are used to categorize people in terms of gender or race. Rather, the mutant can only be defined as distinct from the “human” based on the ways in which the human is positioned as an exceedingly exclusive category, which then puts into question the notion that the “human” is the “norm.” In any case, this supposed distinction from the “human” cannot be determined in the absence of a visible signifier. In this sense, the narratives also refer to the “hegemonic presumption” that “unmarked bodies” (where what “qualifies as a visible

²³ The third film also plays with the concept of animality and the Beast’s body. Now the Secretary of Mutant Affairs, he meets Wolverine for the first time and tells him, “I hear you’re quite an animal” to which Wolverine replies, “Look who’s talking” (15:50). Interestingly, the Beast is played by Kelsey Grammar (in the third film) who initially made his fame on the series *Cheers* and then, playing the same character, on *Frasier*. As a psychiatrist, his character – especially when compared to the other characters on *Cheers* – was pegged as the intellectual. Though he is covered in blue make-up in the third *X-Men* film, spectators familiar with the actor and his previous role might continue to draw from that connotation, which would add to the gulf separating the Beast’s somatic signifiers and superpower from his character.

marking” and a “marked body” has been previously determined) “constitute the currency of normative whiteness” (Butler, 1993, 170-1). Not only do the narratives’ portrayal of passing illustrate this problematic assumption, but Claremont’s *God Loves, Man Kills* also shows that the so-called passing of “unmarked bodies” is contingent on the passer’s knowledge of their own body. An ironic twist at the climax of the graphic novel reveals that Anne, Reverend William Stryker’s “right-hand” and lead “Purifier,” is a mutant – knowledge which neither she nor Reverend Stryker had previously had. Despite having participated in and aided Stryker’s genocide of mutants, Anne struggles to save her life by reminding the Reverend of her loyalty and faith, asking him if “the lives of the faithful mean *nothing* to [him]” (61). She thus attempts to de-essentialize herself by displacing the Reverend’s dichotomy of human versus mutant to the “faithful” versus the unfaithful as deserving to live rather than die.²⁴ In these ways, the *X-men* narratives play with the association between genetics, their somatic signifiers, and meanings.

However, this kind of play operates principally within the diegeses, so that – as Butler argues about drag – the narratives’ “repetitions” of racist discourses “become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony” (1990, 189). In both the comic books and the films, whiteness (or pale skin) is reinforced as normative, as Butler would argue, in that it is positioned as “unmarked,” as the absence of somatic signifiers referring to race. In this sense, the texts seem to imply that mutantcy (and the signifiers that construct it) operates as the sole vehicle for the tenor of racial Otherness. Neil Shyminsky notes, for instance, that “despite the implication that mutants are *just like* African-Americans, it was not until twelve years after *X-*

²⁴ It is to no avail, of course, because the Reverend sees her sudden questioning of his crusade as a sign of her lack of faithfulness, and thus as proof of her mutantcy. The Reverend enacts his repudiation of mutants and his characterization of them as “hellspawn” by pushing Anne off of his elevated pulpit (see Figure 25). Her descent is both literal and figurative, as is the Reverend remaining in the higher position, closer to God and superior in the hierarchy he has created. Interestingly, the characters in the novella that Butler analyzes with regard to passing (Nella Larsen’s *Passing*) accomplish the same movement at the narrative’s climax. Having passed as a white woman and married a white man, Clare’s husband discovers the truth, at which point she falls from a window (or is perhaps pushed by her husband) to her death.

Men began publication that the team welcomed a visible minority to its roster” (392).²⁵ He continues:

Of the six founding X-Men, all were white Christians, five were men, and they count among their “feared and hated” ranks no less than two doctors and two millionaires. The lone woman, Jean Grey, is a red headed swimsuit model whose mutaninity manifests only in her invisible psychic powers ... [I]t is difficult to imagine how a beautiful white woman – not visibly othered and as unable to totally distance herself from that “invisible knapsack” of privilege – might actually lay claim to the same socio-political oppressions that an average black woman might. (*idem*)

As Shyminsky observes, the comic books did later diversify their group of X-Men with foreigners and racial minorities including the Canadian Wolverine, the Russian Colossus, the Irish Banshee, the German Nightcrawler, the Japanese Sunfire, the Native American Thunderbird, and the Kenyan/American Black Storm. However, of this list, the first three characters are white men (the fourth being blue) while Sunfire and Thunderbird were quickly written out of the series. Though she would later be joined by another Black character (the African-American Bishop in 1990), Storm remains the only well-known racially diverse character of the X-Men, and in this sense, she functions as a token Black character (just as Jean Grey initially functioned as the token female character).

The relative absence of racially diverse characters in the comic books is magnified in the films to such an extent that the move to the big screen has visibly “whitened” the group. Referring to the comic books, Ta Nehisi Coates writes that “[o]ver the decades, there have been gay X-Men, patrician X-Men, Jewish X-Men, Aboriginal X-Men, black X-Men with silver mohawks, X-Men hailing from Russia, Kentucky coal country, orphanages and a nightmarish future” (n. pag.). While Storm might remain the only non-white X-Men character in the comic series for some time, the frequent presence of the Beast and Nightcrawler (who only appear in one movie each of the first trilogy and never seem to fully integrate the group), two mutants

²⁵ Just as the Blade character’s addition to the Tomb of Dracula series in the 1970’s was part of the “short-lived explosion of minority heroes” in comic books, foreign, ethnic and racial minorities were added to the X-Men character list in 1975 (Brown 19).

with blue skin and animal-like characteristics, as well as Wolverine's and Cyclops' primary appearance in colorful costumes and masks, contribute to the X-Men's portrayal in the comics as diverse.²⁶ The films further homogenize the otherwise heterogeneous appearance of the comic book characters through the use of costuming – all X-Men wear the same black leather suit.²⁷ More than absences, Coates suggests that the 2011 *X-Men: First Class* involves erasures. He writes that the film “is a period piece for our postracial times – in the era of Ella Baker and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the most powerful adversaries of spectacular apartheid are a team of enlightened white dudes” (*idem*). The film takes place in 1962, but rather than referring to the Civil Rights movement, the narrative focuses on the “comfortably foreign abomination of Nazism” (through flashbacks to Eric/Magneto's past) and Communism (Coates, n. pag.), while Black and other racially diverse characters remain either strikingly absent or are the first to die.²⁸ Aside from Eric/Magneto's experiences as the Jewish Other during World War Two, ethnic and racial difference are completely ignored during the films. Though the first trilogy depicts Storm as struggling with human prejudice, never does she refer to racism. Indeed, unlike the comic books, racism does not appear to exist within the alternate reality of the X-Men, and certainly not within the US.²⁹ If mutantcy is the only reason for discrimination and

²⁶ See Figure 26 in the Appendix, for example, in the episode entitled “The Fate of the Phoenix,” reprinted in Roger Sabin's *Comics, Comix & Graphic Novels* (159). Of the eight X-Men on the two-page spread, only two characters, Professor X and Jean Grey, appear as white humans. Deborah Madsen also points out that the character Bobby in the film (known as Ice-Man in the comic books) is rarely called by his mutant name and never appears in the ice man-shaped form that the comic books depict (2006, 93).

²⁷ Grant Morrison also homogenized the X-Men costumes when he took over the series, but this was a year after the first film was released in 2000.

²⁸ Significantly, Charles and Eric recruit young mutants to join a team that will help the US government counter a team of “evil” mutants, and of the six recruits, two are Black while the others are white (since Mystique – played by Jennifer Lawrence – remains mostly in her “human” appearance and the Beast – played by Nicholas Hoult – has not yet turned blue). One Black character is immediately killed, while the other is recruited by the “evil” mutant team (more on this later) – leaving only the white mutants to represent the (racial) Other, at least one who is not hell-bent on taking over the world and murdering countless humans. Similarly, in the following film, Singer's 2014 *X-Men: Days of Future Past*, the murderous Sentinels have left no more than ten mutants alive. Among them are a few new and racially diverse characters, the Black Bishop, the Asian Blink, and the Native American Warpath. However, they remain unnamed in the film and are given little to no dialogue. They are also on the frontlines in the final battle against the Sentinels, making them the first to die while the more well-known white characters remain sheltered until the last moment (Professor X, Bobby, Kitty Pryde, and Wolverine).

²⁹ Shyminsky notes that a more recent Black character in the *X-Force* series, The Anarchist, refers to his skin color and the discrimination he suffers in addition to his mutantcy: “‘I’m a *black* mutant. In *this* country, that’s

oppression and it only exists within the diegeses, the illusion of a “postracial” era could continue.³⁰

However, the filmic discourse tells a different story, one that reinforces the binary between the “good,” whiter, and more “human” X-Men versus the “bad,” more racially diverse and more “monstrous” mutant characters. Professor X’s school promotes passing as a means to control one’s powers and, indeed, the X-Men’s manner of passing is complicit with the hegemonic order and coincides with the way they are depicted in the filmic discourse. For Shyminsky, this is also the case in the comic books, since “the personal goal of characters like the demonic Nightcrawler or animalistic Wolverine is the denial of their mutant power’s freakishness and affirmation of their humanity. Importantly, this sense of humanity is defined relative to the non-mutant norm” (396). Shyminsky rightly points out that the definition of “humanity” is contingent upon those characters who are defined as physically human. Due to the allegorical insinuations of the narratives, this human, “non-mutant norm” is white. He argues that “the X-Men’s battles are presented as normative white versus transgressive non-white, where difference is punished and conformity rewarded” (388-9). Since the X-Men visually present a normalized view of the Other – one that is not only more “human” than “monstrous,” but that is also largely white, middle to upper-class, and heterosexual – their promotion of passing is complicit with white hegemony in opposition to Magneto and his followers in the first trilogy, and even to some extent to Sebastien Shaw’s group in the fourth film.³¹ Shyminsky notes of the comic books that “while the X-men have faced a number of

like being black with a little black *added*” (quoted in Shyminsky, 389). Here, the comics make a similar rhetorical move to the narratives discussed in the last chapter where a character’s dark skin is depicted to be as much of a reality as their figurative vampirism – both of which are grounds for oppression within the diegesis.

³⁰ Evidently, since the political discourse of the Trump presidency, the public uproar over police shootings of Black Americans, and the advent of Black Lives Matter, the illusion of a “post-racial” era is no longer applicable.

³¹ The fourth film is able to promote sympathy for Eric/Magneto’s character by displacing his crusade against humanity onto another villain, Sebastien Shaw. Though Shaw is positioned as privileged (his fortune is exemplified through a submarine and a yacht) and racist/anti-Semitic (since he is initially introduced as a Nazi), his team of four mutants is visibly more diverse than the future X-Men. Aside from Shaw and Emma

non-mutant foes and their racist offensives, the majority of their enemies are other mutants who are punished for their refusal to participate in non-mutant society” (396). The films replicate this dichotomy between “human” versus “non-human” conformity and its metonymical link to “good” versus “evil,” as well as its metaphorical representation of the racial binary. In the first film, Magneto’s clan consists of three other mutants whose bodies are marked with animalistic characteristics: Toad, Sabretooth, and Mystique (who, unlike in the second trilogy, appears very rarely in the “human” form of the actress who plays her).³² Moreover, in the third film, the rather affluent atmosphere of the school is sharply contrasted with the world of Magneto’s recruits who appear to be part of an underground subculture. The third film’s mutant gathering takes place in an abandoned and dilapidated church; the mutants present are clothed and coiffed in such a way as to suggest poverty and homelessness. That Magneto finds new allies in such an environment coincides with the long-standing link between inner-city poverty and crime. But more than this, his three new allies are all people of color and one character’s gender is ambiguous. Clearly, the “punishment” that Shyminsky refers to, in conjunction with the characterization of “evil” mutant, are not merely in accordance with physical and behavioral proximity to the “human,” but also with distance from the norm of white heteronormativity.

Ultimately then, the narratives’ use of traditional allegory only stages racial injustice and oppression on the figurative level, while repeating and reinforcing the extra-diegetical construction of the racial Other, including the stigmatizing metonymical associations of animality, criminality, poverty, and non-normative gender and sexuality. Once the allegory of

Stone who are both white, they include Azazel (in red skin make-up) and Angel Salvadore (played by the Black actress Zoe Kravitz).

³² In the first trilogy, Mystique is played by Rebecca Romijn-Stamos. The actress does not appear without her blue make-up and appendages until the second film, on one occasion, and then a second time in the third film. The contrast between the two teams is also made explicit through the opposition between Wolverine and Sabretooth, who are often depicted in combat against one another. While both might be characterized as animalistic, Wolverine’s features can be easily hidden (his claws retract and his facial hair can be shaved), but Sabretooth’s cannot.

the ethnic, racial, or sexual Other is introduced, the narrative can continue to normalize its “good” mutants and repudiate those who do not participate in the normative practices of the white, heterosexual “human.” For instance, while Bobby’s “coming out” scene uses a narrative that is proper to non-heterosexual identities, the film continually reinforces his heterosexuality by depicting him with his girlfriend. The second film thereby suggests that homosexuality is acceptable as a metaphor, but not as a visual or literal depiction. In his analysis of the film *Addams Family Values*, Harry Benshoff writes:

In a case such as this, keeping homosexuality within the closet of connotation continues to marginalize and minoritize, even as it allows for other more general notions of queerness to be warmly received by mainstream audiences. (1997, 268-269)

While the allegory suggests that prejudice against homosexual individuals is wrong, the diegesis also suggests that homosexuality hardly exists, representing the “minoritizing” view that Eve Sedgwick outlines in her work, *Epistemology of the Closet*.³³ Likewise, racial Otherness can be “safely” referred to rather than destabilizing the dominant presence of whiteness on the screen, or by questioning the contingency of the “human” in relation to whiteness. Even in Claremont’s *God Loves, Man Kills*, the two black mutant children of the first few pages (Figures 22-24) appear to operate as mere tools for the introduction of the narrative’s allegorical reference to racial Otherness since they are quickly killed off and not replaced by other non-white mutants.³⁴ Using Patricia Williams’ “The Paradox of Race,” Shyminsky writes that “the performance of blackness ‘depends upon a dynamic of display that ricochets between hypervisibility and oblivion,’ and, in the case of a white body performing blackness symbolically, becomes a vehicle through which the other is metaphorically visible while literally *invisible*” (392). The “ricochet between hypervisibility and oblivion” is what

³³ See pages 1 and 83-86 where Sedgwick discusses the double bind between the “minoritizing” and the “universalizing” views of homosexuality.

³⁴ Again, it is not just their skin color, but also their deaths and the way in which they are murdered that reinforces the allegorical reference. But in this sense, the scene reproduces the construction of African-Americans through oppression and victimization.

occurs in *God Loves, Man Kills* as the identity category of Blackness is called forth and made “hypervisible,” but then is quickly disposed of through the children’s deaths. Meanwhile, the X-Men perform the “invisibility” of the racial Other since they actually perform white hegemony and its metonymical link to the “human.” As a result, the tenor of the humanized racial Other is rendered all the more elusive. Although the latter category is nevertheless a fantasy, the *X-Men* narratives participate in the illusion of its “reality.”

Fido³⁵

In its allegorization of segregation, Andrew Currie’s 2006 *Fido* uses the figure of the zombie to stage the ironic tension between the “hypervisibility” and the erasure of the racial Other, exposing the ways in which the (white) human is metonymically constructed in a much more self-conscious manner than the *X-Men* narratives. Even though the zombie parodies white heteronormativity, Currie’s film ultimately implies that the racial Other can only be humanized through white heteronormativity – the same illusion that the *X-Men* reproduce and the very discourses the film purports to critique. In its characterization of the zombie figure, *Fido* draws from both the now common Romero tradition of the mindless flesh-eating ghoul, and also refers to the zombie’s Haitian origin as a body brought back from death to serve a voodoo master, as a figure of the slave in other words. The film’s setting in the 1950’s-like suburb of Willard (a reference to Romero’s 1968 *Night of the Living Dead*) renders the alignment between the zombie and the racial Other as hired help quite clear. Although the narrative does not make explicit the year in which its action occurs, Michele Braun suggests that the film is an “alternate history for twentieth-century America”:

Instead of the civil rights movement and second-wave feminism of the 1950s and ‘60s, America spent the 1950s fighting the Zombie Wars and now survives as a post-zombie white middle-class utopia in which questions of racial and gender equality appear not

³⁵ Currie’s film is a Canadian production, but I include it among my primary sources because of its setting in the U.S. and its strong references to (1950s suburban) American life.

to have been asked. The zombies presence in this world allows it to occupy a disenfranchised role like that of the post-emancipation, pre-civil-rights-movement Black subject. (162)

Braun additionally underlines the film's depiction of zombies "performing all kinds of manual labor: they are newspaper boys and deliverymen, crossing guards, gardeners, garbage collectors, movers, and butlers," which points to the then (and current) "sustained limited employment options for Blacks and other minorities in America" (164).³⁶ Only welcome within the boundaries of Willard under these circumstances of menial labor, the zombie thus highlights the ways in which minorities have been used to stabilize middle-class suburban whites as normative. In this sense, the vehicular zombie figure mirrors both the "hypervisibility" and the repudiation of the abject racial Other through the zombie's "inclusion" in white "human" suburban space only as a visibly marked and performative Other.³⁷ At the same time, the zombie ironically performs this anti-subject position. In their "Zombie Manifesto," Sarah Juliet Lauro and Karen Embry discuss the ways in which the zombie configures and threatens consumer capitalism through its mindless, anti-subject status. Indeed, since zombies owe their existence to a "cloud of radiation" "from the darkest depths of outer space" (00:30), Currie's film makes reference to 1950's "red-scare" films, pointing to the zombie as both a metaphor for American conceptions of the communist worker and the anti-subject / slave-like status of exploited menial workers of consumer capitalism. While highlighting this contradiction, *Fido* thus also illustrates the intersection of race and class in its allegorization of segregation.

³⁶ Bernice Murphy notes that "Currie's film also manages to make some pertinent points about the containment culture of both that period and our own. The film evokes the upscale suburban developments of the present that rely on cheap migrant labor in the form of underpaid and often-illegal nannies, housekeepers, gardeners, and workers" (116).

³⁷ Of course, the zombies in Currie's film are doubly abject. As a "corpse," the zombie embodies another element in Kristeva's definition of abjection: "If dung signifies the other side of the border, the place where I am not and which permits me to be, the corpse, the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything" (3). In addition to configuring a threat to the self, Currie's zombies figuratively represent "the repudiation of bodies for their sex, sexuality, and/or color" (Butler, 1990, 182).

Currie's film approaches postmodern allegory in that its zombies are made to embody layers of intertextual references where the process of Othering is not only exposed as contradictory, but also as relying on a series of metonymical deferrals in relation to the "human." By exposing the ways in which the zombie / human binary is fragile through its contingency on other unstable identity categories and concepts, the film is a social satire that critiques racial injustice as well as gender and class. *Fido* uses irony, hyperbole, and parody to mock the means through which the racial Other is constructed. In this sense, it is not merely the zombie characters who are in "drag," but also the human characters, in that they both parodically perform the dissonance between the (anti-)subject positions to which their bodies assign them as well as those of the opposing category. For instance, Fido, the eponymous zombie character, performs in the same scene both the voiceless zombie and the heterosexual love interest, while in another he performs the roles of the indentured servant and the hero of the story. However, it is partly through the film's incorporation of another genre – the romantic comedy – that the film reinforces an extra-diegetical "reality" of the "human."³⁸ Though the "human" is played with and expanded in order to include the (racial) Other, the film resituates white heteronormativity as part of a liberal humanist fantasy in which the racial Other can be "recuperated" and "redeemed." The zombie's parody of the "original" is ultimately "domesticated," contributing to the illusion of white hegemony as the norm and the erasure of racial Otherness, which makes *Fido*'s subversiveness and use of the "monster" to represent racial injustice merely figurative.

Unlike the *X-Men* narratives, *Fido* is mostly focalized through the "human" perspective, laying out the stigmatizing characterizations and binaries used to define the zombie, as well as introducing the allegory of segregation, from the very start of the film. *Fido*

³⁸ Of course, the film plays with romantic comedy conventions as well, and is now considered as one of the first "Zomromcoms," a zombie romantic comedy. More on this later.

opens with a newsreel – like 1950’s-style science fiction and red-scare war movies – that demonizes zombies as “evil” “creatures with one destructive need: to devour the flesh of the living” in opposition to glorifying the world’s “savior” and founder of “Zomcon,” the corporation responsible for “containing” the zombie “threat” and for maintaining an idealized 1950’s white American suburban lifestyle.³⁹ This lifestyle is preserved and perpetuated through the division of space, the marking and the characterization of bodies as belonging on one side versus another. The opening “newsreel” reveals that Willard is surrounded by tall electric fences that separate the town from the “wild zone” where zombies roam freely, dividing “the zombies and the humans into ‘us’ and ‘them’” (Braun 163). Braun further notes that, “this segregation then allows a select few inside who can be controlled and exploited as labor” (*idem*). The division of space in relation to those who are permitted inside the bounds of Willard (humans and certain zombies) and those who must remain outside (other zombies) contributes to the metaphor of zombies as the racial Other as it draws from (racist) scientific discourse regarding civilization versus wilderness, savagery, and/or animality. As Mr. Bottoms tells Timmy Robinson at the film’s climax, “Outside is chaos, in here is order” (1:16:32). Timmy’s point of view shots reveal disheveled zombies in ragged clothes emerging from trees and uncut grass. Zombies that dwell in the “wild zone” are thus marked as “wild” whereas those that are permitted access to the town of Willard are “civilized,” or rather “tamed,” accordingly.

Here, the film illustrates the ways in which the division of space was (or has been) contingent on the “civilized” versus “uncivilized” binary in its Othering of minorities and Indigenous populations, in addition to highlighting the binary’s metonymical relationship to the dehumanizing concept of the “animal.” As part of the film’s reference to the zombie’s Haitian origin as a figure for the slave, the characterization of the zombie and the marking of

³⁹ Here, as Bernice Murphy asserts, the newsreel gestures towards Romero’s *Night of the Living Dead* (116). As previously mentioned, *Fido* also references Romero’s first film by setting its narrative in the town of “Willard,” the site of refuge that Romero’s human characters hoped to reach.

the zombie body in this manner add to its use as vehicle for the racial Other since the slave was also animalized. Although they remain animalized like their “wild” counterparts, Willard’s zombies are aligned with tame and “friendly” “household pets” (2:03) through the “domestication collar” which they are required to wear at all times and the leash which zombie owners must use to take their “pets” out in public. On the one hand, the film makes light of the zombie as pet. This is how Timmy Robinson – a lonely boy whose father continually pushes him away – bonds with the family’s new zombie. Timmy christens him with the dog name of Fido, affectionately calls him “boy,” plays fetch with him, and hoses him off in the garage when he gets dirty (with blood rather than mud). And Timmy continues to bond with Fido “during one wittily shot scene in a sweeping field that summons up every boy-and-dog story that brought a tear to the eye” (Dargis, n. pag.). On the other hand, the humorous tone darkens as the zombie’s animalization and characterization as a pet points to segregation and slavery. Indeed, the zombie’s exclusion is not simply framed in connection with the space of Willard, but also with the space of the home. Fido is not allowed inside the house after dark and spends each night chained to a tree in the backyard.⁴⁰ To emphasize Fido’s status as external to the Robinson home, the house’s interior space is delineated in ways that mark him as socially inferior. For instance, Helen Robinson scolds Timmy at one point for bringing the zombie into his “father’s garage,” while a later scene depicts a dismayed Bill Robinson when he discovers Fido sitting in his “La-Z-Boy.” As a “non-being” in Bill’s view, Fido cannot be in any way associated with certain spaces and objects that are part of “human” – and more specifically, a masculine, middle-class, “man of the house” – status. (I will return to this.) Moreover, the collar functions as both a form of mental control and as a means to inflict pain for

⁴⁰ When Timmy Robinson’s parents initially discuss this rule for their new zombie, Fido is nameless and referred to with the pronoun “it” (15:38). It is not until later that Fido is gendered and, therefore, partially humanized. More on this later.

“misbehaving.” As the holder of the remote control for Fido’s collar, this is one of the ways that Bill ensures he remains – at least temporarily – the patriarch of the Robinson household.

Interestingly, the collar also signals the exchange of one kind of mindlessness for another – the move from the mindless consumer zombie of the Romero tradition to the mindless slave zombie of the Haitian tradition where it is rather the body of the zombie/slave that is “consumed.”⁴¹ In addition to constructing the zombie body as “evil,” “wild,” and animalistic, zombies are marked in relation to their status as commodities, pointing to another dehumanizing metonymical concept used to construct the slave and the racial Other, namely the object or the process of objectification. Just as slaves and indentured servants have formed a cheap labor force for the middle to upper class, zombies are also the means by which humans can acquire social status. For instance, in a typical “keeping up with the Joneses” fashion, Helen Robinson cannot stand the thought of confessing to her new neighbors, the Bottoms, that she and her husband, Bill, have no zombies: “‘They have six zombies, Bill. Six! What was I supposed to tell her? ... So I told her we have one’” (13:50). As objects that can be bought and sold, the zombie is a commodity that does not have any human value, but does, indeed, have exchange value. *Fido* takes the objectification of the slave figure even further by likening zombies to machines – they can be taken into a shop for “tune-ups” and be treated as toys.⁴² As products of Zomcon, each purchased zombie comes complete with the domestication collar and remote control. When Bill meets the zombie Helen has purchased, he loses no time in testing the remote control linked to Fido’s collar. In a giddy school boy-like persona, he pushes buttons as Fido writhes and roars in pain.

⁴¹ The film’s use of the zombie to critique capitalist consumer culture is also evidently owed to the Romero tradition, particularly his 1978 *Dawn of the Dead* in which zombies more explicitly reflect humans as mindless consumers.

⁴² Currie’s zombies are reminiscent of another posthuman figure, the cyborg, and contemporary film and television series which depict the beings as servants, slaves, sexual objects and/or a means of entertainment, such as Scott’s *Blade Runner* as well as the Swedish *Real Humans* and HBO’s *Westworld*.

Like commodified objects, zombies bear the “brand” of their “manufacturer,” another somatic signifier that points to the objectification and animalization of the slave as well as the ways in which the power of white patriarchal hegemony often functions through economic and social class structure. Most zombies wear the same uniform with the Zomcon logo, a “Z” in a circle. As with the first *X-Men* film, the logo might recall the yellow star label that Jews were forced to wear in Nazi-occupied territory during World War Two. Since the zombies in Currie’s film do not (or cannot) attempt to pass as “human,” the logo not only reinforces the zombie’s other somatic signifiers (as in “Z” for zombie), but it also works to claim ownership and control over the zombie body, as in “Z” for the Zomcon brand and the “branding” of animals and slaves. As it is meant to stand for “Zomcon” rather than “zombie,” as if the being’s name has been erased and substituted for another, the logo exemplifies the ways in which the zombie has no social status outside of “its” belonging to the company and/or owner. As Orlando Patterson might argue, *Fido*’s zombies reflect the socially dead, non-human status of the slave as existing only “through and for (the) master” (50). Similarly, the Zomcon name and logo underline the ways in which the company was founded and continues to build its economic status through the zombie. Many other purchasable items can be seen with the Zomcon logo throughout Willard, such as Bill Robinson’s car, which not only reinforces the alignment between the zombie and the object, but also the extent at which the Zomcon company runs the economy of Willard and (since we are to imagine the town as a microcosm for the “great land” of the U.S. [1:34]) perhaps even the country.⁴³ Since Zomcon also handles the capture and imprisonment of “bad” zombies, decides who goes to the “wild zone,” as well as what story is reported in the media, the film demonstrates the ways in which economic power can also

⁴³ Of course, there is an irony here. If consumer capitalist culture can “brand” itself as the expression of freedom and individuality (through the brands that one chooses to consume) in opposition to the forced uniformity and lack of individuality through communism, then Currie’s human characters appear to be “owned” by Zomcon almost as much as the zombies. Though the human characters do not wear the same universal zombie uniform, they must conform to Zomcon rules and are figuratively “marked” by zombie/Zomcon as well. More on this later.

become social, legal, and governmental. Once again, Zomcon's power is constructed through the body of the zombie and its opposition to the "human." Given that Zomcon is also the only means through which a human character can ensure that they do not become a zombie once they die – by purchasing an extremely expensive burial with a separate head coffin – the company's control over this binary is also quite literal.

While the zombie/human binary from the human perspective (or rather the Zomcon perspective) is clearly defined in the "newsreel" that opens the film, the narrative also quickly points to the zombie's ambiguous nature, not as "either/or" but as "both/and" – "both alive and dead" for instance. Emphasizing the indoctrinating aspects of the newsreel, the film continues in an elementary school classroom (where the newsreel has just been screened) in which the new Zomcon head of security, Mr. Bottoms, tells the young pupils that "zombies may look human, but make no mistake: these creatures have only one goal and that is to eat your flesh" (5:10), as if to ensure their distinction from the "human." Yet Timmy immediately highlights one of the ways in which the zombie is difficult to categorize. Pushed by his teacher to ask Mr. Bottoms a question, he asks if zombies are alive or dead, a question that threatens the validity of the newsreel and its ability to define the zombie. Timmy receives an evasive answer from the Zomcon boss; if one questions the Zomcon system, and – as Mr. Bottoms later warns the Robinsons – if one gets too close to a zombie, then "we'd all end up dead" (5:20).⁴⁴ The same can be said for other "liminal" identity categories, such as "old people," whose age and supposed closer proximity to the "death" side of the "alive" or "dead" binary, make them dangerous. They "can't be trusted" and must live in a senior citizen home that was once a

⁴⁴ As the end of the film makes clear, Mr. Bottoms is incorrect in his assertion, for it is rather those who remain certain of how a zombie should be defined that become zombies themselves. (I will return to this later). In this sense, Currie reverses the traditional relationship between knowledge and the risk of death in zombie cinema. In Romero's movies and those that were inspired by him, humans initially struggle with a lack of definition. Humans who do not understand what these beings are, how they come to be, what their goal is, and how one can stop them, often become victims themselves. Part of this lack of knowledge is due to a lack of communication and/or conflicting messages received via increasingly rare television and radio broadcasts.

“prison” (28:35). Not only does the narrative thus highlight the fragility of the definition of the “human” through its metonymical links to age, but it also illustrates the ways in which any figurative distance or difference from this strict definition is cause for stigmatization.

Likewise, other identity categories and the hierarchical order between them also work to define what is “human,” and any “threat” to this order (or the “order” that Mr. Bottoms refers to maintaining in Willard) is likened to the “threat” of the zombie. Indeed, the preservation of the 1950’s suburban American lifestyle is contingent on each “human” and “zombie” knowing their place. This includes the role of each member in a nuclear family, along with the position of the zombie. For Mr. Bottoms, if Timmy gets too close to Fido and does not keep him from devouring the neighbors, Timmy is also a “threat” who then risks expulsion to the “wild zone.” Helen is also accused by Mr. Bottoms of being “pretty friendly with [Fido]” (57:40). Michele Braun notes that, “it is the women and the children in the film who embrace the equally powerless zombie in recognition of a shared humanity” (162), highlighting the ways in which the zombie’s positioning as racial Other is connected to various forms of Otherness, such as gender as well as age. For instance, Timmy’s masculinity is put into question through his lack of friends and unwillingness to join the Zomcon cadets. Women must also “know their place.” It is no coincidence that Mr. Bottoms tells Bill Robinson that his wife is getting too close to their zombie after she dares to tell Mr. Bottoms to “get [his] own beer” (56:35). From the Zomcon perspective, Helen’s “proximity” to Fido (both literal and figurative) corresponds to her straying from her role as submissive housewife – both the zombie and the transgressive woman are a threat to the white patriarchal order. At another point in the film, Mr. Bottoms tells the Robinsons that he would not hesitate to “take” his wife’s “head off in a second if [he] had to” (29:30). Dee Dee Bottoms’ uncomfortable laughter and response that “he always says that,” illustrate that stepping outside the figurative boundaries of the Willard “way of life” means crossing over from the “human” side of the spectrum to the “zombie,” where

(stereotypical) gender roles are non-existent. Fido, for instance, is not initially assigned a gender by the Robinsons and is rather referred to as “it,” and Mr. Bottoms continues to call him as such.

Part of the process of humanization for Fido then comes through the “human’s” metonymical contingency on gender identity as well as his redefinition of it. As Lauro and Embry have written, the Romero zombie figure typically threatens identity categories through both “its” anti-subject status and “border crashing,” or the zombie’s violation and subsequent redefinition of (“human”) space (91). Fido’s gendering challenges the anti-subject versus subject dichotomy in relation to the human / zombie binary, and although Fido might not “crash” into any literal borders within the narrative, he does undo the figurative borders of the 1950’s style hegemonic order that Zomcon has tried to impose on zombies and humans alike.⁴⁵ While Zomcon attempts to offer “a better life through containment” in contrast to the “excess” or chaos of zombies (3:02), Fido resituates this dichotomy, specifically through his “zombieness.” When Fido’s collar malfunctions (or is deliberately turned off), he shows discretion in his choice of victim. Not only are these victims a threat to Timmy, but they also demonstrate “excessive” behavior in their policing of the Zomcon patriarchal order. The first victim is Mrs. Henderson, the cranky old lady who lives across the street from the Robinsons and likes to remind Timmy that the lawn is not the proper place to leave his bike. Aside from policing the property of her neighbors, Mrs. Henderson likes to spy on and criticize them. Her invasiveness is then, in a sense, punished by Fido. Fido also punishes the Zomcon Scout boys (called “the bullies” in the film) who, in addition to bullying Timmy, are ridiculous in their attempt to display (hyper)masculine attitudes. Of course, the Zomcon boss, Mr. Bottoms, is himself a victim of his need to control the zombie/human binary. It is precisely the moment at

⁴⁵ However, one could also argue that his recuperation in the sex/gender system reinforces the human/zombie binary and its relation to the “human.” More on this below.

which he attempts to maintain this boundary by placing Timmy in the “wild zone” that Mr. Bottoms is punished for his “excessive” need for “containment” and succumbs to Fido’s bite. The Zomcon factory itself becomes overrun with zombies that have escaped the wild zone and the control of their collars. Excess is thus redefined as the excessive need to control and maintain the boundaries between the “human” and the zombie, while a new kind of order appears to be established by Fido and his fellow zombies in their redefinition of the “zombie” in relation to the “human.” (I will return to this below.)

Fido further resituates the zombie/human binary through the human’s (or the notion of “humanity” and its) metonymical construction in relation to the concept of emotion. Drawing from Romero’s tradition of critiquing “human” society by placing parallels between zombies and humans, the folly of human behavior in Currie’s film is not characterized as mindless consumerism, but rather another form of “mindlessness”: the lack of emotion that certain human characters display towards their loved ones and neighbors. Mr. Bottoms advises, for instance, to not “let ‘em get too close,” while the “them” to whom he refers is unclear since he simultaneously reports a willingness to behead his wife if need be (29:35). Mr. Robinson is another prime example. Rather than rejoicing in the fact that his wife is pregnant, he laments his inability to pay for another “proper” funeral (one which involves having a separate head coffin to ensure that one does not return as a zombie). He also consistently avoids any display of affection with his wife and shuns spending quality time with Timmy. Fido then, in proving that he does not lack consciousness, needs only to prove that he does not lack emotion. For while Fido does eat Mrs. Henderson and the two bully boy scouts, they also lack emotion in favor of the “control” that Zomcon promotes. Fido demonstrates devotion to Timmy and attraction to Mrs. Robinson. In Currie’s film, zombies are indeed capable of emotion, perhaps more so than many of their human counterparts. The film thus points to the “human” as performative – a zombie as more “human” than human characters themselves certainly

suggests that defining the human is contingent upon the presence of “humane” values and behavior, and that human identity itself is not a “natural” essence.⁴⁶

Another way in which Fido is humanized works precisely within and against the segregating practices of Willard and the Robinsons. Not only does the film stage the ambiguities or tensions that could occur among white families and their Black servants in the segregated South in terms of where to draw the line between admitting “them” into the home versus considering “them” as part of the family, but it also highlights the fragility of white masculinity and the position of the patriarch due to their reliance on metonymical links to certain spaces and objects. Fido begins to occupy “human” designated spaces, and, in particular, those belonging to Mr. Robinson, gradually adopting the role of “man of the house” through his occupation of Bill’s masculine spaces, such as “his” garage and La-Z-Boy chair. While Bill realizes that Fido is taking his place as husband and father and struggles against it, he can ultimately do little to stop it, ironically because of Fido’s servant status. When, for example, Bill discovers Fido cleaning his car, he abruptly pulls the sponge from the zombie’s hands and replaces him, declaring that “this is a *man*’s job” (emphasis added, 44:17), as if he cannot abide a zombie touching his beloved vehicle. But he is then obliged to abandon the chore in favor of another golfing outing with a friend, leaving Fido and his family to accomplish the task. In another instance, when Bill expresses shock at seeing Fido in one of his suits, Helen retorts, “What was I supposed to do? Buy him a new one?” (38:50). As a servant, or sub-member of the Robinson family, Fido is not worth a new suit. Yet, it is precisely because of this status that he is able to begin symbolically (and later, literally) replacing Bill as head of the family. In these ways, Fido’s initial position as racially and socially inferior ironically

⁴⁶ The idea of the “non-human” being as “more human than the human” is emphasized in a direct manner in Scott’s *Blade Runner*, particularly with regard to the notion of emotion as defining of the “human.” More on this in the following section.

contributes to his re-making and re-stylization not only as a human, but also as a gentleman and the hero of the story.

In the becoming hero and “human” of Fido, and the consequent blurring of the boundary between zombie and human, *Fido* plays with romantic comedy conventions in its meshing of the genre with the zombie film. By parodying the romantic comedy, the zombie parodies heteronormativity. Because the film draws from the traditional characterization of the zombie figure as (un)dead, partially decayed, mindless, and flesh-eating, Fido’s hyperbolic performance of the masculine, heterosexual seducer, and hero questions these norms. Indeed, the zombie’s humanization through incorporation into the heterosexual matrix can be interpreted initially as a threat to gender and sexual norms (and their relation to the “human”) in that the zombie’s appropriation of heteronormative humanity can be said to function as a sort of cross-gendered drag. Judith Butler writes that “gender meanings” are “denaturalized and mobilized through their parodic recontextualization. As imitations which effectively displace the meaning of the original, they imitate the myth of originality itself” (1990, 188). The film’s use of the zombie to stage romantic comedy conventions, along with the zombie’s parody of the (heterosexual) human, point to the illusory nature of these categories, rather than suggesting that they are “natural.” In the scene in which Fido washes Bill’s car, for instance, Helen decides to bring Fido some lemonade. Fido watches a smiling Helen float towards him in slow motion and a soft-focus frame while a 1950’s-style love song plays in the background. A point-of-view shot from Helen’s perspective reveals the gray-faced Fido with a flirtatious and loving look on his face. Of course, Fido’s “drag” performance of the masculine lover is reinforced by Helen, whose own hyperbolic performance of the heroine being flirtatious with a zombie plays into the parody of gender norms in conjunction with heterosexual love and desire.⁴⁷ Bill then arrives and attempts to point out the ridiculousness of the situation by

⁴⁷ The scene’s emphasis on the over-acting of Helen’s part also includes her role as a mother. Timmy sprays

underlining Fido's biological status as a zombie: "Zombies don't drink, Helen" (43:50). She replies, "Yes, they can, Bill. They just don't have to. We can pretend, can't we?", while Fido loudly sucks his lemonade through a straw as if to protest against Bill's essentializing statement (43:55). Helen's reference to "pretending" not only highlights the ways in which Timmy and his mother humanize Fido in this scene through the banality of car-washing and drinking lemonade, but it also addresses the feasibility of a budding romance between Helen and Fido, along with his adoption of the necessary role as a masculinized, heterosexualized, romantic lover.

By playing with generic conventions, Currie's film points to masculinity as performative and inherent to heteronormativity, as well as to the ways in which masculinity and heterosexuality can work to distinguish Fido as more "human" than zombie. More than this, Fido must perform a specific kind of masculinity – one that can be incorporated into the heterosexual matrix of white, middle-class, (1950's) suburbia.⁴⁸ The capacity of Fido to demonstrate masculinity and to be identified as "human" relies on his ability to seduce the heroine. In doing so, Fido does not necessarily deny his "zombieness," but is rather able to take advantage of his flesh-eating "zombie nature" to seduce his love interest. One way to win Helen's heart is through his caring for Timmy and besting Bill as a father figure. This means not only playing catch with him, but also eating those humans that threaten Timmy's well-being: Mrs. Henderson, the two Zomcon scout bullies, and Mr. Bottoms. Furthermore, "zombieness" ironically becomes the occasion to perform the soft-spoken, mysterious and sentimental lover, at the same time as the narrative engages in a series of metaphorical displacements. For instance, after dressing Fido in one of Bill's suits, Helen leans towards him

Helen with a hose and she half-heartedly scolds him with a side glance at Fido as she smooths her hair. Helen thus shows that she is interested in (and validates) the "male gaze" of Fido, and she plays with the disjunction between her role as a "proper" mother and wife and her aim to be seen as sexually desirable by Fido.

⁴⁸ As I discussed in Chapter Five, Blacula is also obliged to perform masculinity and participate in the heterosexual matrix in order to be humanized. But once again, his performance of masculinity appears to be at odds with the urbanized Black masculinity of the 1970's.

to check the collar of his coat. Fido then smells her while soft, romantic music plays and Helen pulls back and looks at him knowingly. Though Fido's smelling of Helen could be interpreted as a reflection of his "zombie nature" – the desire to eat her – the music and Helen's response displace this essentialization of Fido onto heterosexual desire. Later, when Fido's collar malfunctions, Helen gasps and asks him: "Why aren't you eating me?" (52:35). With Fido's sheepish glance and a little moan, Helen understands that Fido has romantic feelings for her. Here, his inability to voice his feelings for Helen seems to work in his favor. For instance, if Fido were to vocalize his feelings in words, he would no longer be such a "gentleman" for the married Helen. Interestingly then, Fido's use of his "zombie-ness" to express heterosexual love and desire works to situate him as more "human" than zombie. Initially suggesting that the idea of a zombie romantic hero is rather ridiculous, the film takes advantage of zombie film tropes in order to highlight the performativity of generic romance conventions in their capacity to re-stylize the zombie as a charming heterosexual seducer.

Yet Currie's film plays into conventions rather than plays with them, moving away from a critique of masculinity as performative and rather demonstrating that heterosexuality and gender normativity are necessary to the recuperation of the (racial) Other as "human." While Fido's position as romantic hero is sometimes ironic and humorous, the resulting critique of the "wrong kinds" of (white) masculinity is not. As Zomcon's head of security and the embodiment of Willard's 1950's style hegemonic order, Mr. Bottoms represents a patriarchal and (hyper)masculine extreme. Bill, in addition to being an absent father and inattentive husband, is portrayed as childish in his fear of zombies. Fido's appropriation of the central heroic role then mirrors the way in which his masculine performance figuratively situates him between Mr. Bottoms and Bill. While the final scene continues the parodic nature of the film in that Fido is depicted wearing a Hawaiian shirt and happily enjoying a BBQ as the new "head" of the Robinson family, it is a role that Fido could only obtain through the death of Bill and

Mr. Bottoms who is now a zombie on a leash held by his daughter. The film operates a reversal in which “incorrect” masculine performances are aligned with death and zombification, while “correct,” or even ideal, masculinity is rewarded with “human” status. Part of the humor in this final scene is the moment in which Fido and Mr. Bottoms cross paths and grunt at each other. While this evidently places a parallel between the two zombie characters as each of them attempts to assert his masculinity (through their “zombieness”) over the other, it also highlights another binary that the film promotes: the “good” zombie or human versus the “bad” zombie or human. Regardless of the physical status of the characters, whether alive or undead, the film suggests that one group should have the right to enjoy a BBQ and wear nice clothing while the other group should be on a leash.

Fido’s zombie drag then reproduces and reinforces the very same norms that the figure might otherwise put into question. As Judith Butler maintains: “Parody by itself is not subversive, and there must be a way to understand what makes certain kinds of parodic repetitions effectively disruptive, truly troubling, and which repetitions become domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony” (1990, 189). In *Fido*, the abject Other is “cleaned up,” gendered, heterosexualized, and even “gentrified” – since he is adopted into white, middle-class suburban living – through the same norms that the film purports to parody.⁴⁹ His humanization as hero, romantic partner, and father figure, or his incorporation into the Robinson’s nuclear family structure, is in opposition to his stigmatization as (racial) Other. In the final scene, Fido is dressed in a Hawaiian shirt and khaki pants, playing catch (rather than fetch) with Timmy and participating in a BBQ in the Robinson’s backyard. This space has thus been reconfigured in relation to Fido – he now stands in for the absent Bill as a father figure and a partner to Helen, who validates the zombie with a loving look which is

⁴⁹ I use the term “gentrified” to refer to the process of Fido becoming a gentleman as well as to his new relation to space. Though it is not the space of zombies, or the wild zone, that is gentrified, Fido has now integrated middle-class space as an equal.

sincere rather than hyperbolic. Fido's Otherness has not been entirely erased because he still wears a collar, and it could be argued that the new family is still "pretending" that Fido is human. Nevertheless, Fido continues to perform and provide the narrative's definition of normative white masculinity as contingently defined through the nuclear family. For instance, as a typical article of clothing for middle (to upper-) class white men, the Hawaiian shirt positions Fido as both belonging to this category, while it again opposes him to Bill and Mr. Bottoms. Having appeared in uni-color button down shirts with sports jackets at an earlier BBQ, Fido appears more relaxed and less conservative than his rivals. We thus lose the zombie as a figure for the posthuman, the zombie that "crashes borders" (Lauro and Embry 91), in favor of the zombie as part of a liberal humanist fantasy staging the recuperation of the (racial) Other where difference can either be subsumed (in the nuclear family structure) or erased, and where white heteronormativity is only problematic when it is contingently positioned as too conservative.

While *Fido* does appear to allegorize miscegenation through Fido and Helen's relationship, thereby pointing to the threat that racial mixing has posed to racial categorization, the allegory ultimately functions in the same way as Fido in "drag" in that it is "domesticated and recirculated as [an] instrument of cultural hegemony" (Butler, 1990, 189).⁵⁰ Actually, the film's most blatant reference to miscegenation is the sexual relationship between Mr. Theopolis and his zombie, Tammy. In one scene in particular, Fido witnesses Mr. Theopolis dancing while undressing in front of Tammy in chains as she attempts to bite him. While the biting and chains can imply sexual play, the scene obviously points to the zombie's association with biting

⁵⁰ It is worth noting that references to miscegenation in zombie films are not new. Early twentieth-century zombie films "(spoke) to fears of miscegenation" (Kee 15) at the time. For instance, the 1932 *White Zombie* plot is centered around the body of a white woman who was to marry the film's hero before her zombification by the "evil" Creole character, Murder. See my discussion of anti-miscegenation discourse and Halperin's film in Chapter Three. Moreover, *Fido*'s film genre of the ZomRomCom might suggest a romance between a zombie and a human. Although *Fido* is not considered the first ZomRomCom (a title given instead to the 2004 *Shaun of the Dead*), it is the first to depict zombie / human mixed couples.

as well as the use of the figure to refer to the slave in chains. In this sense, though the scene might be humorous in its staging, it is “truly troubling” in its allegorical reference to the rape of Black female slaves by their white masters (*idem*). Moreover, the objectification of the zombie with regards to Tammy also refers to her characterization as a *femme objet* – until the end of the film, her regular “uniform” is a tiny shirt and short skirt. With its “happy ending,” *Fido* resolves these disturbing references by depicting the couple as equals. Tammy is dressed in a flowery, long-sleeved and full-length dress while Mr. Theopolis serves her a glass of lemonade (rather than the other way around), declaring that “[t]here’s only one Tammy” (1:21:05) and giving her subject (rather than the zombie’s anti-subject) status. The other element which renders a sexual relationship between a zombie and human somewhat “disturbing” is not necessarily its allegorical reference, but rather the literal meaning, where the zombie’s body is made of decayed flesh. Mr. Theopolis offers reassurance here by telling Timmy that he “got [Tammy] before there was any decomposition” (34:50), and whereas Fido’s and other zombies’ skin color is grayish blue, hers is pale white. (More on this below.) In a sense then, any association to sexual deviance that might characterize the main zombie / human couple of Helen and Fido is displaced onto the secondary characters of Mr. Theopolis and Tammy. Helen and Fido can thus “safely” live their romance without the “threat” of sex and miscegenation. Helen – pregnant with her second child with Bill throughout the film – has given birth, allowing Fido to play the role of the father “figure” rather than become a biological father himself.

Not only does Fido’s role as a father remain figurative, so too does the film’s representation of racial Otherness. The film reviewer Dargis notes: “They set up a divide between the light-skinned humans and the dark-skinned zombies that they never fully engage, shying away from anything heavy or dangerously downbeat” (n. pag.). Dargis’ assertion is correct in that the film prioritizes its parodic humor over critiques of white hegemony that are

“disruptive” and “truly troubling” (Butler, 1990, 189). Although the contrast between “dark-skinned zombies” and “light-skinned humans” is one of the means through which the film uses somatic signifiers to construct the allegory of segregation (and slavery), the film’s use of dark make-up on its cast of white actors to depict the zombie ensures that the monstrous figure remains merely figurative, existing only within the diegesis. It does little to suggest that the extra-diegetical construction of the racial Other (through monstrosity) is also figurative. At the same time however, the film’s all white cast, along with Fido’s (and Tammy’s) reinforcement of white normativity as “human,” render whiteness as the “norm” rather than merely a figurative construction. Moreover, by positioning the white “human” as the desirable category to be achieved by the “dark-skinned” zombie, the film suggests that it is not “human” status that provides the happy ending, but whiteness. In this sense, Blackness, along with other non-white identity categories, not only remain “metaphorically visible while literally invisible” (Williams qtd. in Shyminsky, 392), but they also remain undesirable positions to occupy. In contrast, whiteness provides both a figurative and literal happy ending within the diegesis, as well as externally. As Richard Dyer would argue, Currie’s film contributes to the construction of whiteness as a metaphor for death, a position that exceeds and transcends the body. Whereas the “dark-skinned zombies” remain forever undead, and – like the slave – a body without a mind, the white “human” can access “paradise,” either by wearing a Hawaiian shirt, or like Bill, through death and a burial (with a separate head coffin) from which they do not return.

Blade Runner and Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

Ridley Scott’s 1982 *Blade Runner* and the novel on which it was based, Philip K. Dick’s 1968 *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, use the figure of the cyborg to allegorize the racial Other through passing and slavery – like the *X-Men* narratives and *Fido* respectively – but by engaging with postmodern allegory much more so than the previous texts discussed in this

chapter. Nevertheless, despite the series of metonymical deferrals that Scott's and Dick's narratives use to deconstruct the human/cyborg binary, the two texts ultimately destabilize only the human through the posthuman, while the destabilization of racial difference remains (once again) merely figurative.⁵¹ According to Donna Haraway, the cyborg is "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism" (1991, 149). Similar to the cyborgs theorized by Haraway, the cyborgs of Dick's novel (called "androids") and Scott's film (called "replicants") expose the contingencies and contradictions involved in the definition of the "human." Set in a dystopian future where androids/replicants are used as slave labor in "off-world" colonies while the virtual extinction of animals on Earth has rendered them a more highly valued possession, the novel and the film point to the animalization of the Other and (in the case of Dick's novel) the ironic hierarchization of the animal vis-à-vis the cyborg, thereby "transgress[ing]" "the boundary between human and animal" (Haraway 152). In search of a better and longer life, a group of androids/replicants escapes their bondage and comes to Earth where their presence is forbidden and they risk execution (called "retirement" in the two narratives) by a bounty hunter or "blade runner" if they fail to pass as human.⁵² Given that the only means to identify a passing android/replicant is an empathy test, not only do the passing androids/replicants highlight the ways in which the "human" is performative, but they also underline the "leaky distinction between human-animal (organism) and machine" (*idem*). Moreover, though the Voigt-Kampff empathy test claims to measure emotions, it can do little more than calculate physical responses, thus illustrating the "imprecis[ion]" of "the boundary

⁵¹ Even though the film and the novel constitute two separate texts, I will be discussing them together as I believe that they complement each other in many ways. While in his article, "*Blade Runner's* Post-Individual Worldspace," Kevin McNamara suggests that a significant difference between the film and the novel is the dividing line between humans and androids, one that is in part drawn from an assertion by Dick himself – that the androids are "essentially *less* than human" (quoted by McNamara 435) – I would argue that, like the film, the novel destabilizes this binary. As Elaine L. Graham writes, "The fragile and indeterminate nature of the very boundary between humans and artefacts, sentience and inertness, authentic and artificial, constitutes the heart of the novel and its film adaptation" (5).

⁵² In Scott's film, because of the "danger" in confusing replicants with humans, they are limited to a four-year life span (15:58).

between physical and non-physical” (153). Although the film and the novel use the detective genre, through the primary focalization of the bounty hunter/detective, Rick Deckard, his judgment is consistently put into question by the androids/replicants he hunts. In this sense, the voices of the cyborg characters are consistent with what Haraway characterizes as “cyborg writing”: “Cyborg writing is about the power to survive ... on the basis of seizing the tools that marked the world that marked them as other” (175). Scott’s film is included in Haraway’s essay when she writes that “[t]he replicant Rachael in the Ridley Scott film *Blade Runner* stands as the image of a cyborg culture’s fear, love, and confusion” (1991, 178).

Although Haraway argues that the cyborg demonstrates that the “boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion,” and that as “fractured identities,” “women of colour” are cyborgs (149, 155), it is difficult to see how Rachael’s experience does more than figuratively represent “women of colour.”⁵³ This is one of the critiques that Malini Johar Schueller makes of Haraway’s essay when she writes that Haraway’s use of the cyborg is rather as an “analogy” that “appropriat[es] the identity politics of women of color” while “avail[ing] itself of the universalizing and unmarked privileges of whiteness” (81). The same can be said of Dick’s androids and Scott’s replicants, given that *Blade Runner* involves an all-white cast and that *Do Androids* makes no mention of racially or ethnically diverse characters. Scott’s film and Dick’s novel perform a function similar to that of Haraway’s theorization of the cyborg (as argued by Schueller), which is to say that the use of “racial analogy,” or allegory in the case of Scott and Dick, “helps whiteness retain its privilege by being uninterrogated” (82). Or, as is also the case in *X-Men* and *Fido*, “a white body performing blackness symbolically, becomes a vehicle through which the other is metaphorically visible while literally *invisible*” (Williams quoted in Shyminsky, 392). In this sense, Rachael is emblematic

⁵³ It is worth noting that Haraway does not specifically equate Rachael with “women of colour.” However, in insinuating that cyborgs can be found in both “social reality” and “science fiction” and that the “boundary” between the two is an “illusion,” she certainly insinuates that the difference between the two is also illusory.

of the cyborg, but not of (Haraway's) "women of color," nor of the illusory nature of such a category (especially as the homogenized group that Haraway cites [Schueller, 81]). Although it may seem that in destabilizing the "human," the two narratives also question race through the human's metonymical relationship to whiteness, Scott's and Dick's texts merely appropriate racial discourses in their construction of the posthuman cyborg's Otherness, while the "boundary between science fiction and social reality" remains intact and the racial Other maintains its extra-diegetical difference from whiteness.

In the two narratives, the cyborg/human binary is reinforced through regulations that divide space in relation to each group, demonstrating the metonymical relationship between (and the characterizing function of) space and identity categories. The film and the novel use the distinction between Earth and "off-world" colonies to allegorize slavery, segregation, and passing. Like the zombie in *Fido* who is only permitted access to "human" space through slave-like servitude, androids/replicants are not permitted on Earth. The refusal of the cyborg on Earth appears as slightly ironic in that the off-world colonies are considered privileged spaces in which only those humans who are deemed genetically and intellectually worthy are permitted, while Earth, despite remaining a haven for "inferior" humans, must be protected from the cyborg. On the one hand, the off-world colonies signify a space where the genetic "superiority" of the "human race" can be maintained, not only through reproduction, but also through their metonymical relationship to the android/replicant. This is emphasized through the fact that each human who migrates off-world is given an android/replicant as a gift, as if to reinforce human status in opposition to the cyborg through other metonymical binaries (such as slave/master, possessed object/owner, artificial/organic). On the other hand, Earth also appears as a privileged space for the "human," given that the profession of the "blade runner" exists, which is entirely devoted to erasing the presence of androids/replicants on Earth through

“retirement.”⁵⁴ The demarcation between off-world and the Earth vis-à-vis the cyborg also reflects the way in which slavery once operated as a substitute for the racial binary (Black/white equaled slave/free). Without this distinction, “drawing the contours of social space” through segregation and practices of lynching became necessary in order to maintain white supremacy (Wiegman 40).

Framing the human/cyborg binary are its relationships to other categories through which the two “species” are metonymically defined. In both the novel and the film, a complex hierarchy between humans and “lesser” humans, animals, and cyborgs is depicted, which simultaneously refers to and deflects the stigmatization of the racial Other.⁵⁵ The narrative of the novel in particular depicts the cyborg as highlighting the contradictions through which humanity defines itself, specifically in relation to animals, highlighting the “transgress[ion]” of the “boundary between human and animal” (Haraway, 1991, 152). In Dick’s novel, humans must own an animal or else risk being “consider[ed]” “immoral and anti-empathic” (13). Given that the means to distinguish an android from a human is through an empathy test, the latter accusation is particularly threatening. When Deckard meets Phil Resch and both characters are unsure as to whether the latter is an android, Resch emphasizes the squirrel he has at home and that he cares for and “keeps alive” – something which an android is apparently “unable” to do (130). Though the “human” is metonymically defined through the animal extra-diegetically, in Dick’s novel, this is taken to a hyperbolic extreme. Moreover,

⁵⁴ The term “blade runner” does not exist in Dick’s novel. Deckard’s profession is instead “bounty hunter.” Of course, the word “retirement” *in lieu* of “execution” is significant since it marks the body and the “life” of the android/replicant as one that is only conceptualized through work. Here again is a link to *Fido* since the body of the zombie allowed for one to remain, according to Zomcon, a “productive member of society” even after death (through slave labor).

⁵⁵ In Dick’s novel, those who cannot emigrate to the off-world colonies are called “specials.” For instance, the other character through whom the novel is focalized is J.R. Isidore, deemed a “special” for weakened mental faculties (more on this below). In Scott’s film, this character is replaced by J.F. Sebastian who is also not allowed to emigrate, but due to a genetic disorder. As one of Tyrell’s (the creator of replicants) leading geneticists, Sebastian’s intelligence is not put into question. The notion of “inferior” humans is not only represented through “specials,” but also through characters’ social situations. In Scott’s film, Bryant warns Deckard that “if [he’s] not cop, [he’s] little people” (13:19). This threat is enough to pressure Deckard into continuing work as a blade runner despite his intentions.

with the exorbitant price of animals, human status is not accessible to those with meager means.⁵⁶ Deckard, for instance, cannot afford an animal until he receives the bounty for retiring three androids, so that although his humanity is arguably reinforced through the killing – the erasure, or the “repudiation” of androids – it is not until he owns a goat that his status as “human” is safe from judgment.⁵⁷ In parallel with the development of “artificial” humans is the existence of electric animals for those who cannot afford “real” animals. This parallel also underlines the inferior positioning of the android since electric animals are permitted to pass, but not androids. Worrying whether or not his neighbor might notice his sheep is fake, Deckard concludes that his neighbor will never ask: “Nothing could be more impolite. To say, ‘Is your sheep genuine?’ would be a worse breach of manners than to inquire whether a citizen’s teeth, hair, or internal organs would test out authentic” (11). As Deckard’s thinking demonstrates, the animal’s body is akin to the owner’s body. As an extension of the self, it is no wonder that Deckard feels that his lack of a live animal is a threat to his humanity.

Ironically, despite the elevated status of the animal, certain associations with the animal are nevertheless a sign of inferiority. For instance, in Dick’s novel, J.L. Isidore, a “special,” a human physically affected by the nuclear fallout and deemed unworthy of emigrating off-world, is additionally stigmatized as a “chickenhead,” while other “specials” are demeaned as “antheads.” In Scott’s film, the hierarchy between animals and replicants is less clearly defined. But several of the replicants whom Deckard hunts are linked to animals: Zhora uses a snake and covers herself with snake scales in her exotic dance routine, Pris paints her eyes to resemble

⁵⁶ As is the case extra-diegetically, a hierarchy among animals exists in Dick’s novel, and this is exemplified by the animal pricing catalogue that Deckard carries with him everywhere. Though the animal remains objectified through the sale and purchase of the creatures, its status is distinct from the android who (or which?) is given freely to those who emigrate. Human treatment of animals versus androids also maintains this distinction.

⁵⁷ Of course, Deckard’s relation to “human” status through killing androids is debatable – this is actually a point of contention in the novel. In the very first chapter, for instance, Deckard’s wife, Iran, accuses him of being a “murderer” of “those poor andys” (4). Later, Deckard admits that he thinks feelings towards androids should be a question on the Voigt-Kampff empathy test since this is one of the emotional aspects that Phil Resch lacks and that makes Deckard suspect he is an android. (More on this later.)

a raccoon, and Roy howls like a wolf in the film's climatic scene.⁵⁸ While these self-characterizations exemplify Donna Haraway's point that "the cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed" (1991, 152), they also point to nineteenth-century scientific discourse that animalized the racial Other. It is then significant that, even though an association with animals should conceivably elevate a replicant's status rather than demean it, Deckard is able to track and kill his first replicant in the narrative through a snake scale, or what he terms an element that is "not human" (25:26), as if it might belong to Zhora's body rather than her clothing. In other words, the replicants' passing fails in part due to their adoption of animal signifiers.

At the same time, successfully passing as human requires exhibiting empathy towards animals, especially because the Voigt-Kampff empathy test appears to consist primarily of questions that pertain to the treatment of animals. Dick's novel and Scott's film thus ironically point to the ways in which socio-cultural changes can affect the definition of the "human" in addition to and in conjunction with other identity categories, as well as how restrictive these definitions can be. The novel suggests that this empathy comes from the cultural memory of the loss of animals due to the Earth's growing radioactivity. In both narratives, the Voigt-Kampff test puts the tested individual in the hypothetical situation of an animal that is in distress, mistreated, or dead, and demands that the human spontaneously portray the "correct" emotional response. In the novel, Deckard finds his "situations" being put into question by the android, Luba Luft, who points to discrepancies with language and cultural differences. Deckard's first test question becomes ineffective when Luba, whose native tongue is German, does not know what a wasp is. The next question asks what she would do if she were watching a movie made before the nuclear war in which dog is served at a banquet. She asks:

"Was the movie set in the Philippines?"

⁵⁸ Roy also holds onto a dove in his last moments of life. Given that the dove is a symbol of peace, this act parallels his rescue of Deckard. The dove is also a common symbol used in Christianity. More on this later.

“Why?”

“Because,” Luba Loft said, “they used to eat boiled dog stuffed with rice in the Philippines. I remember reading that.”

“But your response,” he said. “I want your social, emotional, moral reaction.” (81)

Deckard’s line of questioning requires empathy with animals that must refuse empathy with other cultures, as well as a necessity to see cultural perspective as historically stable and unchanging. For Luba to pass the test, her “social, emotional, moral reaction” must consist in judging another culture’s (historical) practices and in positioning herself as superior from a (white) Western perspective. More than this, passing as human for androids/replicants means adopting a belief system and repeating acts and gestures that position the android/replicant as lower than animals. One android laments to Deckard that he came to Earth for the ““chance”” to pass as human despite the fact that Earth is a place ““where we’re not even considered animals. Where every worm and wood louse is considered more desirable than all of us put together”” (94). The ironic positioning of insects as “desirable” creatures is exemplified in a later scene in the novel when J.R. Isidore happily finds a spider and brings it home, proudly showing it to the three androids that are in hiding there. Pris’ reaction is to remove some of its legs as the other two curiously observe. Some critics have interpreted this scene as proof of the androids as ““evil and inhuman”” (Fitting quoted in McNamara, 435). However, such a reading overlooks the irony of the scene, since interpreting the androids’ supposed behavior as “inhuman” requires the denial of the prior mistreatment of animals, a time that is not clearly referred to in the narrative, as if it never existed. The narrative thus highlights the distance between the cultural context in the diegesis, one where ““insects ... are especially sacrosanct”” (Dick 161), and that of the extra-diegetical world to which the allegory points.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ I would argue rather that Pris’ act is cruel in that it disregards the feelings of J.R. Isidore who clearly suffers at witnessing the event. Despite the androids’ earlier belittling of him as a “chickenhead,” it is the torturing of the spider that pushes Isidore to turn his back on them when Deckard arrives to “retire” them. Isidore thus exemplifies the extent at which animals are held in high esteem since he does not take issue with the androids’ prejudice and verbal abuse against himself, but cannot abide by their torturing of the spider.

The “superiority” of animals in relation to humans versus cyborgs, along with the Voigt-Kampff test, highlight the ways in which these identity categories intersect with gender and sexuality. Significantly, animals are gendered through the use of the pronouns “he” and “she,” while androids/replicants are not and are referred to as “it,” a practice which further aligns animals with humans while the objectification of cyborgs is made all the more apparent.⁶⁰ Thus, passing as human for androids/replicants requires accepting that animals are “worthy” of being gendered while androids/replicants are not. In Dick’s novel, Deckard is initially unsure regarding the “human” identity of Rachael Rosen, supposedly the niece of the creator of androids. Yet Rachael ultimately fails to pass by refusing (or forgetting?) to gender an owl that the company offers to give Deckard: “*She keeps calling the owl it. Not her*” (58). Although doubt exists in Deckard’s mind as to whether or not the owl is “real” or electric, and this question is never answered, it is clear that Rachael should have been complicit in passing the owl as real by assigning it a gender. Her failure to participate in this social performance is what “outs” her identity rather than the owl’s. Rachael’s identity is metonymically defined through the owl rather than the reverse. Likewise, according to the Voigt-Kampff test, Rachael’s identity is contingent upon her sexuality. In both the novel and the film, Deckard’s first question to Rachael reveals a profound heteronormative bias: “In a magazine you come across a full-page colour picture of a nude girl” (49). Rachael interrupts Deckard by asking, “Is this testing whether I’m an android ... or whether I’m homosexual?” (*idem*). Deckard’s refusal to answer her question, combined with his continuation of a narrative that involves her hypothetical husband, suggest that the test excludes non-normative sexual identities. If Rachael

⁶⁰ There is another irony here in that the gendering of animals versus cyborgs runs contrary to our own cultural practices which rely on visual appearance. If we follow Judith Butler’s contention that sex is gender, or is also a cultural, performative construction, it is ironic that animals should be gendered when their sex is not always immediately apparent, while cyborgs are constructed in such a way as to make their sex/gender visible and immediately identifiable. To an extent then, the use of these pronouns vis-à-vis animals and cyborgs points to a disjunction between somatic signifiers as outer metaphors of the body’s interior. The issue of separating appearance and performance from (biological) identity is emphasized in Scott’s film. I will return to this below.

does not exhibit the “correct” response, it is not her sexuality so much as it is her humanness that is put into question because non-human status would also mean exclusion from the sex/gender system.⁶¹

The necessity to perform gender and heterosexuality “properly” in order to achieve human status is exemplified in Scott’s film in the scene in which Deckard and Rachael begin their physical and/or romantic relationship.⁶² Having recently been told by Tyrell (the creator of replicants in the film adaptation) that she is a replicant, Rachael seeks out Deckard as the “observer” or judge of the human versus replicant distinction, hoping to convince him through a picture and a memory that she is in fact human. After accepting the contrary, Deckard “teaches” her how to be a human through their heterosexual encounter. The scene reads like a lesson that is reliant on both language and gestures:

Deckard: “Say ‘kiss me.’”

Rachael: “Kiss me.” [Deckard kisses her]

Deckard: “I want you.”

Rachael: “I want you.”

Deckard: “Again.”

Rachael: “I want you. Put your hands on me.” (1:11:45-1:12:19)

Deckard puts words into Rachael’s mouth until she is supposedly able to assume a position of command herself – she tells Deckard to put his hands on her and he does. Brian Carr remarks of the scene:

This exchange renders absolutely explicit the relationship between normative sexuality and human signification, as Rachael’s assumption of a sexed linguistic position is marked as coterminous with her ability to mobilize language. Where Deckard has, until now, regarded Rachael as an “it,” her gendered possessiveness and her submission to the protocols of romantic possession have now officially rendered her within the bounds of human desire and symbolization. In its conflation of heterosexual desire with human agency, Rachael’s “put your hands on me” signals a resolution of her prior nonhumanness into that of the sexually differentiated human. (135-136)

⁶¹ Of course, Rachael is an android/replicant. But at this stage (in the film narrative at least), she believes she is “human” and is thus not attempting to pass. More on this below.

⁶² In Dick’s novel, Rachael seduces Deckard in the attempt to keep him from completing his mission of retiring the last three androids. Though the four androids can no longer pass at this point, Rachael hopes that Deckard will liken herself to her fellow androids and that his feelings for her will thereby extend to sympathy for them. In a sense then, she hopes that she will operate as a synecdoche for the entire group of androids.

Carr argues that Rachael's sexual submission to Deckard frees her from the status of a non-human possession through the appropriation of a gendered position. While this position is empowering, it also requires that she become a "romantic possession."

Furthermore, the scene reflects the ways in which the racial Other was required to enter into the gender binary in order to obtain the status of the human subject. Robyn Wiegman notes that, "the possibilities" for "African-American female and male slaves ... escaping the category of the inhuman took shape under a bizarrely liberating figuration of gendered subjectivity" (11).⁶³ If she is seemingly able to command Deckard to put his hands on her, the command might also be due to her knowledge that, whether she asked him to or not, he would have done so. Before this exchange, Deckard blocks Rachael's attempt to leave and forcibly pushes her against a wall, so that despite Rachael's command, the scene is suggestive of rape.⁶⁴ Regardless of Rachael's newly sexed subject position, she is positioned as Deckard's possession in both the romantic sense and the slave sense. Rachael's subsequent "liberated" and humanized position appears ironic because she must remain hidden in Deckard's apartment and she is given no lines of dialogue in the following scenes beyond a simple "yes" or "no" in answer to Deckard's questions, as if her voice has been usurped by the bounty hunter in exchange for her life. Carr's remark that Rachael now has the "ability to mobilize language" does not acknowledge this. The narrative suggests that Rachael can acquire (white) human status by appropriating femininity and heteronormativity, but this is a position that is voiceless. Here, "cyborg writing" or "seizing the tools that marked the world that marked them as other," is merely a means to reproduce and reinforce the metonymical connection between humanity and (white) heteronormativity in order to escape (racial) Otherness (Haraway, 1991, 175).

⁶³ I would argue, however, that the scene and those that follow between the newly formed couple suggest that Rachael's new position is far from "bizarrely liberating."

⁶⁴ Without calling it rape, Brian Carr writes: "In a rather disturbing sequence which vacillates between violence and desire (or effectively conflates them), Deckard slams the door, refusing to allow Rachel to leave, and instead throws her against the wall and begins to kiss her" (135).

Yet the heteronormative, patriarchal control over Rachael's identity is apparent even before her sexual encounter with Deckard. Interestingly, Rachael's initial response to Deckard's questioning aligns her possible status as a replicant passing for human with the homosexual closet in more than one way. Like Anne the Purifier in the *X-Men* graphic novel, *God Loves, Man Kills*, Rachael cannot consciously pass as a "human" because she does not know that she is not one, that she is in fact a replicant. In *Blade Runner*, it is Tyrell who withholds this information and attempts to pass her as human to Deckard. After Rachael completes the test, Tyrell asks her to leave the room in order for Deckard to state his conclusion. Eve Sedgwick writes of the heteronormative observer of possible passers:

The position of those who think they *know something about one that one may not know oneself* is an excited and empowered one – whether what they think one doesn't know is that one somehow is homosexual, or merely that one's supposed secret is known to them. (80)

Deckard and Tyrell are placed in this "empowered" position of knowing more about the identity of the Other than she does herself. While Tyrell, as her creator, controls the knowledge that Rachael has of herself, he then passes this power on to Deckard who assumes the role of a teacher.⁶⁵

Deckard's authority as Rachael's teacher, along with his capacity to identify passing androids/replicants, is contingent on the Voigt-Kampff machine, which is itself contingent on the notion that "human" emotion can be read in the same way as other somatic signifiers. In this way, the two narratives stage the ways in which the illusory identity category of race is assumed to be visible on the surface of the body, even for those otherwise capable of passing to the general (white) public. As the examiner of potentially passing androids/replicants,

⁶⁵ In the novel, Tyrell's counterpart, the character of Rosen, initially tries to convince Deckard he is mistaken about identifying Rachael as an android, thereby questioning the validity of the Voigt-Kampff test and Deckard's judgment (more on this later). But he later tells Deckard in the presence of Rachael that she is an android. Whether Rachael already knew this is unclear since she later admits to Deckard that she has slept with several bounty hunters in the attempt to keep them from retiring more androids. In the film, Rachael escapes from Tyrell who then adds her to Deckard's list of replicants needing to be retired.

Deckard relies on a machine that, rather than “measure feelings,” “detects only physical manifestations from which emotion may be inferred” (McNamara 440). He is then given the authority to interpret the results and declare whether or not one is a(n) android/replicant and thus sentenced to death. Referring to the “inauguration of biology” and its effects on racial discourse, Wiegman writes:

While the visible must be understood as giving way to the authority of the invisible recesses of the body, to organs and functions, the full force of this production of racial discourse was nonetheless contingent on the status of an observer, whose relation to the object under investigation was mediated and deepened by newly developed technologies for rendering the invisible visible. (31)

As Wiegman suggests, like Deckard and the Voigt-Kampff test, “an observer” and “newly developed technologies” had the authority to identify and define the racial Other, to decide whether or not the “invisible” could indeed be rendered “visible.” The test suggests that androids/replicants lack emotion and empathy, and that this lack translates into a lack of humanity or what is “human.” Yet as feelings are “invisible,” the test can only detect physical responses to what it defines as emotional stimuli. The “empathy test,” as Tyrell calls it, looks for “capillary dilation of the so-called blush response, fluctuation of the pupil, involuntary dilation of the iris” (18:40). The test and the “observer” who operates it thus demand and impose a “correct,” or “human,” emotional as well as physical response to each question. The signifier of a “blush response” or the “fluctuation of the pupil” would point to one’s inner “humanity,” while the lack of these signifiers would mean a corresponding lack of “humanity.” The immediate “inner” bodily metaphor that is at work here is not the biology of the “human” versus the cyborg, but rather an invisible concept that is made to be visible, much like Judith Butler’s explanation of the “soul”: [T]he soul is a surface signification that contests and displaces the inner/outer distinction itself, a figure of interior psychic space inscribed *on* the body as a social signification that perpetually renounces itself as such” (1990, 184). Concretely, the Voigt-Kampff test purports to measure somatic signifiers that function as metaphors for

“human” emotion and thus for “human” biology. However, the physical responses to the “emotional stimuli” of the test are rather based on a series of metonymical deferrals, from “human” emotion, to “humanity,” and to “human” biology. Moreover, as Butler shows regarding the soul, “human” emotion and “humanity” are concepts that threaten the “inner/outer distinction” of the body and can only be validated through their illusory “inscri[ption]” on the “surface” of the body.

The novel and film continue to emphasize these problematic disjunctions and deferrals between (identifying) emotion and the “human” by staging doubt in the Voigt-Kampff test and in Deckard’s authority. In addition to the contradictions involved in the valorization of animals versus the stigmatization of androids, the human characters in the novel deny the role that machines play in accessing emotions. Not only is Deckard obliged to depend on a machine (for the Voigt-Kampff test measurements) in order to identify “sincere” versus “artificial” emotion, but Deckard and other human characters also rely on an “empathy box,” a machine, for imposing desired and/or “appropriate” moods and emotions. In this way, the novel’s narrative suggests that emotions are not necessarily “natural” or “naturally” inherent to the “human” body or soul, but rather that a machine can also produce emotions. Thus, ironically, while Deckard searches for “human” emotion in/on test subjects through the Voigt-Kampff test – emotion that is believed to be inherently “human,” present in the human interior as well as visible on the surface of the body – the emotions he and his wife can access or alter come from outside of their body, from something that is not inherently “human.” The connection between emotion and the “human” and its supposed opposition to the machine or the artificial is exposed as arbitrary (except through its function of safeguarding “human” identity and justifying the exploitation of androids/replicants as slaves). The empathy box in Dick’s novel also performs another function which purports to connect (or rather “fuse”) humans with the religious guru Mercer, a phenomenon that additionally illustrates the “imprecis[ion]” of “the boundary

between physical and non-physical” (Haraway, 1991, 153). Human characters that “grip” the “handles” of the empathy box can be momentarily mentally transported to Mercer’s body and experience what he feels, including physical injury – the results of which appear on characters’ bodies even after they “let go” of the handles. Dick plays with this “imprecision” “between the physical and non-physical,” as well as with the “leaky distinction between human-animal (organism) and machine” (*idem*), even further at the novel’s end when Deckard hypnotically mimics Mercer’s actions and finds what he believes to be a “real” toad. Not only is the scene unclear in terms of whether or not it occurs in the ontological “reality” of the diegesis or rather in Deckard’s mind, but also Deckard’s final judgment – distinguishing between the organic and the inorganic – fails as he later discovers that the toad is electric.

Doubt about the Voigt-Kampff test, about Deckard’s judgment, and consequently in the boundary between the cyborg and the human, is established by the androids/replicants themselves who “seiz[e] the tools that marked the world that marked them as other” (Haraway 175). In Dick’s novel, Rosen initially refuses to admit that Rachael is an android, claiming instead that her “underdeveloped empathic ability” is due to her isolation on a spaceship until the age of 14 (54). The result is a momentary role reversal in which it is Deckard and the Voigt-Kampff test who/which are “tested” and deemed ineffective rather than Rachael and the Rosen association’s androids. More than destabilizing his confidence in his judgment, the androids in Dick’s novel succeed in questioning his view of “reality,” his memory, and thus his identity. In another role reversing moment, Deckard is arrested and accused not only of being an imposter bounty hunter and of not using the correct empathy test, but also of being an android “with a false memory” (111). Given that the novel is primarily focalized through Deckard, the narrative does not dispel Deckard’s own doubt concerning his “human” identity and (initially) leaves the ambiguity regarding his interpretation of events and the beings with whom he is confronted.

Though Deckard is later reassured regarding his “human” and official blade runner status, he becomes more and more unsure as to the “right” amount of emotion to have in defining the “human,” and by extension himself, in opposition to the android. Initially, he deems that Phil Resch is not human because of the “cold” manner in which he “kills” (rather than “retires”) androids. After determining that he is, indeed, human, Deckard decides that Resch has a “defect” in his “empathic, role-taking ability,” specifically his “feelings toward androids,” an identity category that is excluded from the Voigt-Kampff test (140).⁶⁶ Later, he concludes that he was wrong: “There’s nothing unnatural or unhuman about Phil Resch’s reactions; *it’s me*. I wonder ... if any human has ever felt this way before about an android” (142). For Deckard, having too little emotion can result in identification as an android, while too much emotion can also differentiate from the “human” and render him Other. In Scott’s film, Deckard recognizes that replicants are capable of emotion and makes a parallel to his own. Witnessing Rachael crying, his voice-over states: “Replicants weren’t supposed to have feelings. Neither were blade runners. What the hell was happening to me?” (36:15).⁶⁷ Deckard’s line of thinking points to the metonymical relationship between replicants and blade runners and hints at the way the two are defined through each other. It is unclear whether Deckard’s empathy towards a replicant positions him as more “human” than those that are blade runners (or if blade runners are a privileged “human” category that is permitted to feel less emotion), or whether his empathy towards Rachael aligns him with replicants. What is clear is that, similar to his counterpart in the novel who is characterized as more empathic than Resch, Scott’s Deckard is positioned as such in opposition to his boss, Bryant, who calls replicants “skin jobs”: “Skin jobs, that’s what Bryant called replicants. In history books, he’s the kind of cop who used to call black men niggers” (12:15). In addition to highlighting the

⁶⁶ Not only are androids supposed to be incapable of having emotion, but they must also be understood as unable to solicit emotion in humans.

⁶⁷ Unless otherwise specified, I use the original theatrical release of the film throughout this analysis, which includes Deckard’s voice-over.

allegorical (and metonymical) link between replicants and the racial Other, Deckard's comment self-characterizes him as less prejudiced and more empathic towards replicants. Moreover, Deckard's remorse at killing and witnessing the death of replicants is emphasized through point of view shots that depict each of their deaths in slow motion, as well as repeated counter-shots between Deckard's face and the replicants' bodies, which stage the moment as traumatic rather than triumphant.⁶⁸ In both the novel and the film, the destabilization of Deckard's knowledge regarding emotion (or his "emotional intelligence") contributes to the questioning of his authority, and thus to the blurring of the boundary between the "human" and the android/replicant.

In Scott's film, Deckard's capacity to identify replicants is further magnified as problematic through its emphasis on sight and the role that it plays in "recognizing" passers or not. For instance, the film opens with an establishing shot of Los Angeles which is repeatedly interrupted by quick cuts to an eye. The eye remains unidentified – perhaps it is Deckard, perhaps Tyrell (since the camera zooms in towards his building), perhaps Roy. Or perhaps it belongs to one of the first two characters the camera depicts: a bounty hunter, Deckard's predecessor, or Leon, a replicant, who is just about to undergo an examination of his eye with the Voigt-Kampff test. In any case, coupled with the airborne advertisements and flashing lights or search lights that consistently pierce interior spaces, the initial eye establishes the environment of surveillance that persists throughout the film, an ambiguous synecdoche for both the body of the surveying bounty hunter and the surveyed replicant. The film also establishes alternative moments which escape the view of the bounty hunter, or more

⁶⁸ It is noteworthy that the filmic discourse creates a dissonance between Deckard's remorse and the staging of both Zhora's and Pris' deaths. Seo-Young Chu notes that "Zhora's corpse is obviously meant to resemble the female mannequins on display in the store windows through which she has just crashed," and "Pris shrieks and thrashes against the floor with a mechanical vitality that is truly horrifying to watch and to hear" (221). In other words, the "aesthetic effect" of their deaths appears to underline the "mechanical" or "artificial" aspects of the replicants (*idem*). The exception to this is Roy. Deckard is also visibly moved by his death and his voice-over even expresses regret at having to "watch him die" (1:47:57). But the "aesthetic effect" here is quite different. More on this below.

specifically Deckard as primary focalizer. These scenes, which are focalized through replicants, sometimes depict replicants displaying emotion and escape Deckard's narrative authority. Because he does not witness Roy expressing emotion, for instance, his voice-over cannot impose a reading of him. More than this, eyes remain a leitmotif through scenes that are focalized through replicants, as if to point to alternative ways of seeing and/or reading. Roy and Leon first visit the man who manufactures eyes for replicants, thus attempting to reach Tyrell through eyes, and he later kills Tyrell in part through piercing his eyes. Though the choice of this method might seem unclear, Roy explains the importance he gives to sight in other moments, thereby proposing an alternative vision to Deckard's, and the human perspective (of replicants). After Choy, the synthetic eye-maker, tells Roy that he "designed [his] eyes," Roy responds: "If only you could see what I've seen with your eyes" (29:35) – a pun that not only underlines the question of ownership of the replicant's body, but also gives value to the content of what Roy has "seen." Just before his death, he tells Deckard some of what he has seen: "I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion ... All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain" (1:46:09-51). In his last breaths, Roy demonstrates that he equates the value of his life with his memory of these "moments," mourning the loss of them through the end of his life. In addition to providing a final example of a replicant exhibiting emotion (as well as empathy since he has just saved Deckard's life), this scene links sight to memory – another concept that Scott's film cites as a distinguishing feature between humans and replicants. Roy not only emphasizes the importance of his perspective, but also of his memories despite his short life span, thereby "seizing the tools that marked the world that marked" replicants "as other" and opposing Deckard's initial devaluation of replicant views as well as of their memories as "fake" (Haraway, 1991, 175).

Indeed, Roy's gesture towards memory in his final words highlights the film's destabilization of memory as another means to define the "human," and importantly, one

through which Deckard himself can prove his human identity.⁶⁹ Like the dichotomy between the “real” human and the artificial human, Tyrell and Deckard initially link the opposition between “real” and artificial memories to the two corresponding identity categories. Yet, Roy’s speech counters this view, suggesting that the memories which occur even during the replicant’s short-life span are “real.” The replicant character of Leon also shows emotional attachment to memories of events that have occurred during his lifetime by going to dangerous lengths to retrieve his “precious photos,” as Roy calls them (26:16). Leon’s photos counter the falsified photo that Rachael has of her and “[her] mother” (33:05). As a possible synecdoche of the memory itself, her photo represents the falsification of the memory as well. The question remains whether or not Deckard’s own photos are “authentic” or falsified like Rachael’s. After Rachael visits Deckard and shows him her photo, hoping it will metonymically prove her human identity, Deckard questions his own memories as he is later depicted hunched over his piano in front of his family photos. McNamara notes:

At least several of them record life in times before his own, but their display on his piano implies that they are to be regarded as germane to his sense of his own past. In this way, photography becomes a figure for the desire for history ... These scenes also remind us that our knowledge of the past is always mediated through representations (even our memories are mediated), and that we must interrogate them to reveal the ideology that subtends the apparently natural. (426-427)

As McNamara suggests, photographs serve as signifiers of memory and/or history. In Rachael’s case, they do not point to her own memories, nor to her humanness; thus Deckard’s photographs do not necessarily signify his own status as human.⁷⁰ While Deckard seems to

⁶⁹ Although the “synthetic memory system” is evoked in Dick’s novel and causes Deckard to momentarily doubt his human identity, the narrative does not valorize android memory in the way that Scott’s film does. Nor do Dick’s androids display as much emotion as Scott’s.

⁷⁰ In Scott’s 1992 version of the film and in the 2007 final cut, there is no voice-over. Scott intended for Deckard to be depicted as a replicant. As if to alleviate any doubt, he tells *New York Times* writer, Fred Kaplan, that Deckard “‘is a replicant. He was always a replicant’” (n. pag.). In the two later versions, Scott restores to this scene previously edited footage of Deckard envisioning a unicorn running through the forest. As Gaff, another blade runner, later leaves a unicorn figurine on Deckard’s doorstep, Deckard’s vision and/or memory suggest that he has also been implanted with false memories to which Gaff has access in the same way that Deckard was informed of Rachael’s false memories. However, if one includes Scott’s 2017 sequel (*Blade Runner: 2049*) as an indication of Deckard’s status in the first film, then one must conclude that he is human. Indeed, the plot of the second film revolves around a child that Deckard and Rachael had – half-human and half-

interrogate himself and his memories (perhaps wondering why he should assume that Rachael's photograph is false and his are not), the voice-over, representing narrative authority, remains curiously silent in this scene. Deckard is also silent when Rachael asks him whether he has ever been tested by the Voigt-Kampff machine himself. Rather than respond to the question, this is when Deckard initiates his seduction of Rachael, as if asserting a dominant masculine attitude, his sexed subjectivity, is an answer. The "void" of Deckard's past that the photos can no longer logically fill are replaced by a cultural memory of masculine performativity and heteronormativity. Deckard's performance suggests the need to define metonymically his human status through and in opposition to Rachael's – first as "human" versus replicant, and then in gendered terms as masculine versus feminine. This "human"/gendered status is otherwise performed through the "retirement" of other replicants. As Gaff, another blade runner, tells Deckard once his mission is complete: "You've done a *man's job*, sir" (emphasis added, 1:48:05), thereby highlighting the performative aspect of Deckard's identity and insinuating that his position as a man (and a human) is/has been contingent on his actions.

Despite the film's depiction of Deckard's identity as ambiguous, and despite its exposure of the fragility of the human/cyborg binary through what might otherwise appear to be deconstructive allegory, the film's critique of racial injustice through the figure of the cyborg remains on the figurative level because it reinforces the "privileges of whiteness" as "universalizing and unmarked" (Schueller 81). In his discussion of racial representation in the film, Brian Carr expresses concern over the fact that *Blade Runner* does not use any African-American actors to portray the replicants and asks whether or not this disrupts its capacity to represent the racial Other. He concludes by suggesting that it is the replicants' "whiteness" that

replicant. This instance exemplifies the way in which miscegenation can ultimately reinforce racial difference rather than destabilize it, since the child's "hybridity" is metonymically dependent on Rachael and Deckard's fixed identities.

contributes to their ability to destabilize the human/cyborg binary, and thus with it, the racial binary:

Even though the very practice and pre-occupation with any kind of detection is always linked to a crisis in the visual, it may be that the visual registering of whiteness in the film ... works to occlude that register of colonial difference in which the purported “truth” of “color” stands as the difference of human and nonhuman (139).

Carr’s point is that the film’s use of white actors/actresses to portray replicants operates in the same way as passing (along with its allegorization thereof), pointing to a “crisis in the visual” and the illusion of (skin) color marking the “difference of human and nonhuman.” However, this reading suggests that whiteness, as in *X-Men* and *Fido*, is the “norm” through its supposed absence of color, thereby reinforcing the “unmarked privileges” of the category in the same way that passing does.

Moreover, as Schueller might argue, Scott’s film also demonstrates the “universalizing” capacity of whiteness in its ability to represent both the “human” and the cyborg Other. While for Haraway the cyborg is a (metaphor of the) marginalized category, Tyrell claims that his replicants are “more human than human” (22:42). Though Tyrell’s paradoxical motto points to the “human” as illusory, it also aligns the replicant with perfection. J.F. Sebastien repeats this idea when he identifies Pris and Roy as replicants: “You’re so perfect” (1:16:53). The film suggests that perfection is only attainable through posthuman whiteness. While the film also displaces the cyborg and figurative racial Other’s grounding in the body through the character of Roy and the religious symbolism that characterizes him, the ultimate result is the reinforcement of whiteness as divine. Interestingly, Roy’s character in Dick’s novel is introduced as having “intelligent eyes but flat, Mongolian features which gave him a brutal look” (152-153). Roy is the only character described with ethnically/racially marked “features,” which again situates whiteness as the unmarked “norm.” Although Roy’s visible difference from human and android characters alike admittedly diversifies Dick’s novel, it is precisely the “Mongolian features which [give] him a brutal look” (153). Dick’s metonymical

sentence construction becomes metaphorical since Roy's character is ultimately perceived by Isidore (and later Deckard) as doubly Other – both “brutal” machine and “brutal” foreigner.⁷¹ Conversely, Scott's Roy is played by a white actor with blue eyes and blond hair (the German Rutger Hauer), a move between the novel and the film adaptation that Betsy Huang terms “aryanizing” (n. 3, 40). More than this, Huang notes that Scott's Roy is “both humanized and deified through rather unsubtle associations with Christ such as the dove he dramatically releases prior to his expiration” (*idem*). Roy's alignment with Christ functions as a way to destabilize the good/evil moral dynamic between him and Deckard. Once again, as in *Twilight* and *Fido*, the film reproduces the metaphorical conjunction between whiteness and death, and – perhaps more like Edward than Fido – Roy's construction as Christ-like through the symbolism of the dove (as well as a nail through his hand) renders his death a way, as both angelic and martyr-like, to transcend the body. Although this characterization destabilizes the metonymical link between the Other and the body, as well as the inner/outer metaphors of Roy and his body, it reinforces the somatic signifier of pale skin as a transcendental signifier for concepts that exceed the body. This final scene shows that Roy's character points to the contradictions involved in the construction of the cyborg/racial Other on the figurative level. But visually, he reinforces the extra-diegetical and metaphorical links that construct white superiority and hegemony.

The three narratives discussed in this chapter use various figures of the “monster” to allegorize racial discourses and highlight the performativity of race. In the *X-Men* narratives, *Blade Runner*, and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, the mutant and the cyborg's passing

⁷¹ Of course, though most of the main characters are played by white actors and actresses, Scott's cast is not entirely white. The dystopian Los Angeles of year 2019 resembles a futuristic Tokyo where multiple languages are spoken. The cast of human characters that Deckard and the replicants meet is diverse with several Asian American characters in particular. Deckard's fellow blade runner, Gaff, is Latino. This casting and setting choice suggests that the “little people” to whom Bryant refers (13:19) – those who cannot emigrate off world – are not merely “second-class” citizens due to disability, but also due to their ethnic/racial identity.

as human underlines the fragility of the “human,” and metaphorically, the fragility of whiteness, by destabilizing the links between somatic signifiers and the body’s “interior.” *Fido* also illustrates the dissonance between the body and performance. Although *Fido* cannot pass as human, the zombie’s approximation of “human” status through (as well as in opposition to) racial Otherness, parodies the way in which the “human” is contingently defined through whiteness and heteronormativity. As posthuman figures, the “monstrous” characters in these narratives not only point to the ways in which racial Otherness has been constructed through “monstrosity,” but also how the definition of the “human” is/has been metonymically contingent on racial categorization. Each of the three narratives use the strategies of postmodern allegory by illustrating the intersection of identity categories along with forms and discourses of oppression, drawing from a network of stigmatizing signifiers and signifieds to construct their “monstrous” characters. But it is *Fido* and especially *Blade Runner* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* that make the greatest use of deconstructive allegory as they point towards the contradictions in inner/outer bodily metaphors and ineffective concepts used to define the (racial) Other, and highlight the process of the deferral of meaning through metonymy rather than metaphor. Yet this process of deferral remains within the diegesis and thus merely on the figurative level. These narratives rely on the boundary that divides fantasy fiction and extra-diegetical “reality” into two distinct ontologies. In this way, each narrative can disavow whiteness (or the somatic signifier of pale skin) as part of the construction of the “monstrous” figure through arbitrary signifiers. The racial Other remains a tenor, a “reality” that “is metaphorically visible while literally *invisible*” within the diegesis, while whiteness retains its “universalizing and unmarked privileges” as the metaphorical vehicle (Williams quoted in Shyminsky, 392; Schueller 81). Thus, white hegemony can critique racial injustice even while promoting white hegemony. These narratives ultimately suggest that the “monster” can only be shown as illusory when white, while the extra-diegetical “reality” of non-whiteness

remains Othered and “uninterrogated” (Schueller 82). In the next chapter, I turn to “monstrous” narratives that destabilize the distinction between figurative and literal meanings of race through deconstructive allegory.

Seven

Fantasies of Race

This final chapter analyzes narratives that expose the illusion of race through their treatment of fantasy and the figure of the monster via the techniques of deconstructive allegory. Like the narratives in the previous chapters, Alan Ball's HBO television series *True Blood* (2008-14) and Octavia Butler's trilogy of novels entitled *Lilith's Brood* (2000) humanize the "monster" while allegorizing race and racial oppression through the staging of racial discourses, such as miscegenation and passing.¹ However, these texts do not inadvertently reinforce the concept of race and racial difference through inner/outer bodily metaphors, nor repeat the stigmatizing racial or "monstrous" constructions of scientific racism and nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fantasy narratives, nor resituate the racial binary through a counter-discourse and the "grounding" of somatic signifiers such as skin color. *True Blood* and *Lilith's Brood* do not reify whiteness as the "norm" and the absence of race, in opposition to racial Otherness, nor do they

¹ For the purposes of this thesis, I will be focusing my analysis on the first season of *True Blood* (2008). Octavia Butler's *Lilith's Brood* is a series of three novels – *Dawn* (1987), *Adulthood Rites* (1988), and *Imago* (1989) – that were originally published as the *Xenogenesis* Trilogy.

contribute to the extra-diegetical “reality” of race by strengthening the boundary between the figurative and the literal. Rather, *True Blood* and *Lilith’s Brood*’s play with and disrupt the links between signifiers and signifieds, “thematiz[ing]” the “difference” between the “sign” and “its literal meaning,” thereby illustrating that race is already (has always been) a textual, discursive construction (de Man, 1969, 209). Although the effects of racial discourses and the fantasy of racial Otherness have “real” and physical consequences (some of which I outlined in Chapter Three regarding legal discourses), these narratives do not rely on the extra-diegetical “reality” of race and racial difference.² They continually disrupt the processes of signification and the attribution or fixing of meaning to conceptions of identity, and in particular racial identity. Similarly, these narratives highlight the performativity of race and its intersection with gender and sexuality through the repetition and displacement of acts and gestures that destabilize the link between inner/outer bodily metaphors, illustrating “the play of presence and absence on the body’s surface” and its role in “the fantasied and fantastic figuration of the body” (Judith Butler, 1990, 184). In so doing, these narratives disrupt and deconstruct (the performance of) race and expose the ontological fantasy of race.

Like Judith Butler’s theory of performativity, Paul de Man’s definition of (deconstructive) allegory challenges the notion of identity. Just as Butler highlights the illusion of a stable gendered identity or essence by challenging inner/outer bodily metaphors, de Man argues that Rousseau’s discussion of man’s metaphorical “denomination” of another man as “giant” involves the confusion of “inner feelings of fear” and “outside properties of size”

² Even these consequences can be (and are) recuperated on the level of discourse as a means to reinforce the fantasy of race. An example would be the belief in inherent genetic differences between people of color and whites regarding physical health and intelligence, a belief that stems from scientific racism. These discursive constructions then lead to poorer access to medical treatments and education, for instance, which then in turn reinforce the ideology of white superiority in health and intelligence. In his essay on metaphor, de Man alludes to a practice such as this or the influence of (figurative) discourse on the “literal world.” Referring to Rousseau’s discussion of the social contract, de Man writes: “The social contract is ... a complex and purely defensive strategy by means of which the literal world is given some of the consistency of fiction, an intricate set of feints and ruses by means of which the moment is temporarily delayed when fictional seductions will no longer be able to resist the transformation into literal acts” (1979, 159).

(1979, 150-1). For de Man, “all language is language about denomination, that is, a conceptual, figural, metaphorical metalanguage” (1979, 152-3). Moreover, de Man critiques metaphor for “overlook[ing] the fictional, textual element in the nature of the entity it connotes” (de Man, 1979, 151), disregarding the illusory nature of the metaphoric vehicle and its construction of the tenor as “reality.” Conversely, allegory highlights the figurative nature of the figure as well as of language itself. With regards to race, de Man might argue that allegory points to the “denomination” of the racial Other as a fictional, textual, discursive construction. While opposing allegory to metaphor with regards to essentialism, de Man contrasts allegory with the Romantic use of the symbol to stabilize the identity of the self in relation to the transcendental signified. Whereas the Romantic symbol promoted the idea of identity as unified and timeless, allegory “painfully” illustrates the illusion of “identification” (1969, 207). The idea of a unitary “identity” that is ontologically stable in time and in “reality” is not possible since “allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference” (*idem*). This is because, for de Man, “[t]he meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can then consist only in the *repetition* ... of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority” (emphasis added, *idem*). Similarly, gender identity for Judith Butler is both constituted through a series of signs, and it is also through the series that gender can be exposed as performative. Like de Man, she emphasizes the need for repetition: “gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (1990, 191). Like allegory, these “acts” have arbitrary relationships with one another. Butler argues that it is because of the need for the “repetition” of acts or gestures in the constitution of a stable gender identity that the latter can be exposed as unstable and even non-existent. De Man attributes the same power to allegory which, because the sign can “never coincide” with the “previous sign,” “suggests a disjunction

between the way in which the world appears in reality and the way it appears in language” (1969, 191). More than “suggesting” this “disjunction,” allegory highlights this separation between the world and language in that “the relationship between sign and meaning is discontinuous”: “the sign points to something that differs from its literal meaning and has for its function the thematization of this difference” (209).

True Blood and *Lilith's Brood* both use deconstructive allegory by making parallels between species difference and racial difference, integrating a series of metaphors that position the vampire and the alien as a figure for the racial Other, but then pointing to the ways in which these metaphors are illusory. Not only do these texts highlight the fantastical construction of the racial Other through “monstrosity,” but in so doing, they also show the ways in which the racial Other has been fantasized and fabricated. Race remains discursive rather than grounded in a pre- or extra-discursive, literal “reality.” At the same time, rather than allowing species/racial performance to reinforce the fantasy of species/racial identity, the two texts demonstrate the ways in which the displacement or disjunction of certain “stylized acts” in relation to previous “acts” and/or somatic signifiers exposes race as performative. Here, I continue to draw from Nadine Ehlers’ assertion that race as well as gender is performative: “through being read as ‘belonging’ to a particular racial category—that is, visually appearing and conducting one’s acts, manners, and behaviors in accordance to disciplinary racial demands—all subjects are passing-*for* a racial identity that they are said to *be*” (7). More than this, the two texts show that the “passing-*for* a racial identity” also necessitates the complicity of the observer.

While the texts previously examined allegorize miscegenation and passing in such a way that simultaneously threatens and reinforces racial difference, *True Blood* and *Lilith's Brood* highlight the ways in which these racial discourses function specifically as discursive, relying on perception and interpretation rather than on biological difference. Robert Young

writes that “[t]he idea of race ... shows itself to be profoundly dialectical: it only works when defined against potential intermixture, which also threatens to undo its calculations altogether” (19). Young pinpoints the way in which the concept and the discourse of miscegenation – despite its threat to the stability of racial categories – reinforces the notion of racial purity as its binary opposite. Likewise, racial mixing can only occur from the basis of racially “pure” or unmixed categories. Similarly, passing is a potentially subversive as well as normative act since it both highlights the performativity of race and the fantasy of somatic signifiers that identify racial “identity” and, as Nadine Ehlers has noted, also reinsert the “liminal” body “back within the logic of binary understandings of race” (76). While *True Blood* and *Lilith’s Brood* do not necessarily illustrate a way to escape these “binary understandings of race,” each narrative plays with the notions of miscegenation and passing and their potential reinforcement of racial categories by staging the ways in which these discourses are (incorrectly) imposed on bodies. For instance, although vampires in *True Blood* do not easily reproduce, the first season demonstrates the ways in which the fear of miscegenation is displaced onto the bodies of the human women who engage in sexual relationships with vampires. In Octavia Butler’s novels, aliens reproduce with humans to such an extent that the practice is reconfigured as verging on normative. “Sameness,” or species/racial purity, then becomes the “difference” that is required in order to maintain the notion of “hybridity” or species/racial mixing. Furthermore, in its ironic reference to passing, *True Blood* characterizes vampires as “out of the coffin,” and as such a pun might suggest, plays with what being “out” as a vampire means, largely through the figure’s metonymical relation to the “human,” whether by “mainstreaming” or living as a human, or through human (stigmatizing) characterizations of vampires. At the same time, as the storyline of the first season demonstrates, passing occurs less with the vampire and more with human and other supernatural characters. In Butler’s novels, passing as human is not a practice that alien characters attempt to engage in, but it is one that is imposed on some of them

in the attempt to maintain the semblance of an idealized and fantasized “human” family. As this last example suggests, the two narratives point to the ways in which the discourses of (anti)miscegenation and passing are metonymically linked, since fear of the passing “monstrous,” racial Other often implies a fear that “it” would “contaminate” racially pure bloodlines, or that miscegenation would lead to racially-mixed children who could then pass as white. Moreover, these narratives also illustrate the ways in which the racial discourses of miscegenation and passing are metonymically contingent on (performances of normative) gender and sexuality as well, in that non-normative gender and sexuality and miscegenation “converge at and as the constitutive outside of a normative heterosexuality that is at once the regulation of a racially pure production” (Butler, 1993, 167).

In the context of de Man’s notion of allegory and Judith Butler’s theory of performativity, the repetition and displacement of signifiers can be seen not only to promote processes of re-signification, but also to question the very practice of signification with regards to race and racial difference. Each narrative posits its metaphors of species difference as the vehicle for the tenor of racial difference, but then destabilizes, displaces, contradicts, and/or puts into question this process of representation and the meanings engendered. As de Man writes, “[a]llegorical narratives tell the story of the failure to read ... Allegories are always allegories of metaphor and, as such, they are always allegories of the impossibility of reading” (1979, 205). Both *True Blood* and *Lilith’s Brood* “tell the story of the failure to read,” by staging problematic interpretations and the difficulties that inscribed readers encounter in “reading” other characters, mirroring the ways in which race has been problematically constructed extra-diegetically. Each narrative involves contradictions that disrupt signifying practices occurring within the diegesis as well as from the narrative to the extra-diegetical referents – whether socio-cultural or intertextual – showing how these narratives self-

consciously work to expose race, not as literal, material, or natural, but as figurative and discursive fantasy.

***True Blood*³**

True Blood (HBO, 2008) borrows from the vampire narrative conventions of the late nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries, characterizing its vampires through the same stigmatizing discourses that were used to construct the “monstrous” racial Other. But rather than reinforcing the metonymical link between the figure of the vampire and the stigmatized racial Other (or making this connection metaphorical) as in *Blade*, or reversing the vampire’s alignment with Otherness by humanizing and whitening the figure as in *Twilight*, or even forming a counter-discourse against the mis-characterization of vampires as in *The Gilda Stories*, *True Blood*’s vampires make categorization itself difficult. For instance, vampires are positioned as a straightforward metaphor for oppressed and disenfranchised African-Americans – they are fighting for the Vampire Rights Amendment, much like the Civil Rights movement of the 1950’s and 1960’s. However, the vampires do engage in activities that potentially reinforce human characterizations of them as hypersexual, animalistic, and threatening. In either case, other vampire characters portray the ways in which both these alignments are performative, an accumulation of acts and gestures or an adoption of discourses. This is perhaps why J.M. Tyree calls the series a “loose allegory” (34). Tyree’s notion of allegory seems to adhere to the more traditional definition where the relationship between sign and meaning is based on metaphor. Rather, *True Blood* uses a more deconstructive de Manian form of allegory because it consistently plays with vampire conventions and racial/ethnic stereotypes. The series repeats

³ A portion of this section on *True Blood* is a revised and expanded version of part of an article published in *The Visual Culture of Modernism*, Volume 26 of *SPELL* (2011): “Making the ‘Monstrous’ Visible? Reading ‘Difference’ in Contemporary Fantastic Film and Television.”

the signifiers that have defined these identity categories, pointing to their metaphorical relationship, at the same time that it disrupts meaning through continual displacement.

In a sense, *True Blood* illustrates the durability of binaries and the difficulty involved in deconstructing identity categories. The series includes the two contradictory metaphorical constructions of the figure in vampire narratives – like the two oppositional vampires of Dracula and Blacula in *Blacula* – the oppressed and stigmatized racial Other versus the wealthy white supremacist and aristocrat, sometimes incorporating these alignments within the same vampire character. Moreover, the series straddles the line between the stigmatization of the vampire through racial tropes along with the figure’s potential to subvert and threaten racial and sexual boundaries, much like Stoker’s *Dracula*, and the other extreme: the contemporary humanization of the figure, which, although it challenges racial stigmatization, reinforces white heteronormativity. The questioning of the vampire and its allegorization as the racial Other necessarily involves the ways in which the “human” is characterized as well. Accordingly, the series destabilizes the vampire/human binary by depicting human characters who engage in the same activities as vampires. For instance, vampires are also hunted for their blood to be consumed by humans. As Tyree remarks, “*True Blood* manages to broach an unusual kind of horror, that inflicted *on* and not by vampires” (34). Furthermore, the series involves a diverse cast and engages with both figurative and “literal” or realistic representations of racial and sexual oppression, and it uses both of these levels of meaning to characterize the other.⁴ In this way, *True Blood* shows that these discourses, those of vampire conventions and those of racial discourses, as well as their relationship to each other, are self-reflexive. Indeed, as a relatively new identity category, having recently “come out of the coffin,” vampires and humans alike struggle to make sense of the group, and resorting to metaphors of racial difference

⁴ My use of the word “literal” here is not to say that race exists in an extra-diegetical “reality,” but to distinguish with the figurative level of meaning. This is a level of representation that is similar to the genre of realism where actors portray racial and/or sexual minorities as well as enact realistic scenes of repression based on discrimination.

demonstrates the ways in which race has also consistently been constructed through metonymy. *True Blood*'s characters, whether vampire or human (or other than that), mutually define each other, showing that race ultimately "resist[s] expression" and a "simple statement or definition," and rather "exist[s] in terms of relationships and processes rather than as [a] static entit[y]" (Madsen, 1995, 123-124). I argue that the series thereby disrupts the metaphorical connection between the vampire and the racial Other, illustrating that this extra-diegetical "reality" of racial Otherness is as much a fantasy as that of the vampire.

That the series intends to use vampires in order to function as an allegory for disenfranchised minority groups, and in particular African Americans, is evident through its continual references to political and legal discourses regarding civil rights and its staged repetitions of exclusionary social practices, not to mention its setting in the small town of Bon Temps, Louisiana in the "deep South," the site of racial segregation and the most rigid anti-miscegenation laws. The series' opening credits remind its viewers of these issues by integrating historical footage of the Civil Rights movement in which a Black man is physically removed from "white space" by a group of white men, and shots of Ku Klux Klan members. Significantly, vampires are introduced in the series as a "race" and as disenfranchised. In the first scene of the pilot episode, a mini-mart employee watches a television journalist interview a vampire spokesperson arguing in favor of the Vampire Rights Amendment and against the journalist's accusation that her "race" has "a history of exploiting" humans (*Strange Love* 1:06). The first season continues to present various viewpoints that continually align vampires with positions held by "second-class" American citizens. Bill Compton, the series' vampire hero, hopes the VRA will pass so that he can become the legal owner of his family home. Arguing that "Americans don't believe" that vampires "deserve *special* rights," Jason Stackhouse's response to Bill's wish echoes the discourse of white supremacy vis-à-vis the African-American Civil Rights movement (emphasis added, *The First Taste* 30:57). His

statement illustrates not only that vampires are metonymically excluded from American citizenship, but also how white supremacist discourse displaced the notions of privilege and injustice from the privileged group (whites) to the disenfranchised (Blacks). Sookie Stackhouse, the series' human heroine, continually highlights the link between the vehicle of human prejudice against vampires and the historical tenor of racial prejudice. For instance, when her boss, Sam Merlotte, claims his support of the VRA, but that vampires should "keep to themselves," Sookie reminds him of the inherent contradiction in Sam's opinion as well as in segregation discourse by retorting: "So you think we should return to the days of separate but equal?" (*Escape from Dragon House* 27:02).⁵ The first season also stages a vampiric version of the practice of lynching as a white supremacist means to reassert the boundaries of segregation. After three vampires flauntingly enter Merlotte's bar and assert their right to be there as members of the community despite Sam's order for them to leave, three "rednecks" (*Sparks Fly Out* 34:20) respond by launching fire-bombs into the vampires' home. At the same time, the scene in Merlotte's points to the disjunction in the supposed straightforward metaphorical relationship between the series' vampires and African-Americans, along with the alignment between the VRA and the Civil Rights movement, in that the three vampires do not engage in a peaceful sit-in protest, but proceed to threaten and to physically dominate the human characters present in the bar. I will return to other ways in which the series disrupts the traditional form of allegory.

As with the metaphorical connection between vampires and African Americans, *True Blood* uses the figure of the vampire to allegorize LGBTQ+ identities through both the vampire and the human perspective, with vampires adopting the position and discourses of the disenfranchised while humans borrow white supremacist and heteronormative mechanisms and language. Vampires refer to the great revelation of their existence as "coming out of the coffin,"

⁵ See my discussion of segregation and anti-passing discourse in Chapter Three.

where “coffin” is evidently a metaphorical substitution for the “closet.” In its metonymical relationship to passing, the phrase also serves to re-characterize the function of passing as a strategy to protect themselves from discrimination rather than to feed upon humans, like the “passing monster” that Dracula embodied. Continuing with the series’ foregrounding of the deep South as a site of religious fundamentalism and bigotry, the only direct reference to vampires in the opening credits is a church advertising billboard on which “God hates fangs” is written. The metaphorical substitution (and pun) of “fangs” for the derogatory “fags” not only points to the characterization of vampires as unholy and immoral beings within the diegesis, but it also reduces vampires to the synecdoche of fangs.⁶ The metonymical meanings associated with fangs, such as animality and hypersexuality, which are also part of the human characterization of vampires, are then connected to discriminatory practices that depict vampirism as criminal. In a scene that functions as a metaphor for the pre-Stonewall era police raids on gay bars, the local vampire bar, Fangtasia, is raided by police in order to ensure that no vampires are illegally feeding from humans.

The series moves beyond traditional allegory and questions identity categories by playing with vampire narrative conventions, reversing the associations between vampire signifiers (such as fangs and blood) and the vampire/human binary. As fangs and blood are not used to transform humans into vampires, the series displaces these signifiers from their associations with, for instance, vampires’ fangs as used to bite humans and drink their blood. Likewise, the traditional tropes and concepts that stem from these signifiers – those of non-normative sex, contamination, and racial mixing – are also displaced. The first season multiplies the moments in which the appearance of fangs deviates from the tradition of the vampire about to feed from or to attack a human. Significantly, many of these instances happen within the first few episodes, signaling that fangs and blood do not necessarily refer to the

⁶ Vampires are also referred to in a derogatory way throughout the series as “fangers.”

vampiric feeding from humans. For instance, the first vampire to show his fangs in the series is a TruBlood drinker, the synthetic blood drink that provides vampires with all their nutritional needs. When Bill first kisses Sookie, his fangs unintentionally appear and he expresses embarrassment, as if he were experiencing an erection or premature ejaculation. The first time Bill appears with his fangs out is due to pain – wrapped in a silver chain (to which vampires are allergic), his blood is drained by “drainers,” humans who steal vampire blood in order to sell it. Not only does this scene position vampires as the hunted rather than the hunters, it also depicts another reversal: a vampire with his fangs out having his blood drained by humans rather than the opposite. Moreover, the first moment in which Bill and Sookie exchange blood, is the same first moment in which a vampire is portrayed with fangs and a blood-stained mouth.⁷ Bill’s mouth is not stained with Sookie’s blood, but with his own. He bites himself (rather than Sookie) to have her drink from him (rather than the reverse) in order to help her heal from her injuries, pointing to the narrative’s re-stylization of vampire blood as beneficial for humans rather than its traditional association as contaminating. While Bill does taste Sookie’s blood for the first time at this moment, he does not use his fangs, but licks her (in order to clean up her wounds and to close her open skin). The series’ re-signification of vampire blood as both healing for humans and as a psychedelic drug, leads to an additional reversal of vampire tropes. While in traditional vampire narratives, vampires cannot enter the home of a human until they are invited in, in *True Blood*, one vampire character, Eddie never leaves his home, and rather waits for Lafayette, a human character and vampire-blood dealer, to come to him and take his blood. At one point, Eddie makes the mistake of opening his door to Jason and his girlfriend who kidnap him and hold him prisoner in order to have a permanent vampire-

⁷ In 1950’s and 1960’s UK Hammer Films, the first vampire films in which fangs are depicted on screen, the moment the vampire’s identity is revealed is signaled by fangs and a blood-stained mouth. That *True Blood* not only depicts its first vampire with fangs as a TruBlood drinker, but also reconfigures the moment a vampire with fangs and a blood-stained mouth appears, is quite significant and points to the way in which the series’ allegorization of racial Otherness works with the rewriting of traditional vampire narrative conventions.

blood supply to drink from. One particular scene in which Jason and Amy “do V” is staged as the taking of communion, but in this instance, Amy and Jason can “give thanks” to the vampire that provided his blood. Their addressing of Eddie positions him as a god, but is sharply juxtaposed with their treatment of him as an object, or mere “blood bag” (*Plaisir d’Amour* 13:20). In these ways, the re-signification of fangs and blood in relation to vampires and humans points to the illusory metaphorical links between somatic signifiers and blood which constitute “identity.”

It could be argued that the series propagates essentialist notions of difference between identity categories through the depiction of vampire blood as physically distinct from human blood. However, the series’ name suggests otherwise. *True Blood* is certainly a reference to the synthetic blood drink that allows vampires to nourish themselves without drinking human blood. That human blood can be synthesized destabilizes the essentialized or “natural” link between blood and the body, and thereby, identity. The series plays with the notion of blood as an essence by characterizing artificial blood as “true.” In addition, the show’s opening credits repeat images that point to blood and vampires without fixing their meaning. At one point, it depicts young boys eating strawberries with close-ups on their red-stained mouths as if to suggest that there is violence in eating of any kind. The credits’ scenes are divided with jump cuts to flashes of fragmented and nude bodies engaging in sexual activities where splotches or spots appear to stain the camera lens. J.M. Tyree argues that these spots are blood spatters and represent the sometimes-horrific tone of the series (34). However, just as it is unclear to whom these fragmented bodies belong, it is also unclear whether or not the “spatters” are indeed blood, and if so, to whom the blood belongs.⁸ Blood is shown as a “floating signifier,” as the spatters seem to float above the frames on which they are imposed.

⁸ Indeed, some of the frames appear to crumple like wads of paper, as if the camera film were old and poorly manipulated. The effect could point to the manipulation or censoring of images by vampires or by humans. In any case, it remains unclear. The only point where blood is clearly pointed to in the theme song is when a red, bubbling liquid fills the entire frame and the series’ name of *True Blood* is super-imposed, again highlighting

In another reversal of the human/vampire binary, the narrative positions humans as carriers of a disease that can infect vampires. In the novel on which the first season of the series is based, Charlaine Harris' *Dead Until Dark* (2001), the disease is known as "SINO-AIDS," which evidently points to the ways in which vampirism has been traditionally constructed through homosexuality and Blackness, two identity categories that have been stereotyped as carriers of AIDS. In the television adaptation, SINO-AIDS becomes "Hep V," referring to hepatitis rather than the more socially stigmatizing disease. The reason for this change becomes clear in a later episode when the Black and flamboyantly homosexual human cook at Merlotte's bar is accused by three racist and homophobic white male customers of serving them a "hamburger with AIDS" (*Sparks Fly Out* 35:02).⁹ In this scene, as Darren Elliot-Smith notes, "infection is not limited to the vampire-as-metaphor but literalized (albeit comically) in the threat of homosexuality that Lafayette renders ridiculous via his extravagant retort" (n. pag.).¹⁰ The series does not limit itself to articulating disease through the figure of the vampire as a "metaphor" for homosexuality (and I would add race, although the dialogue makes no reference to Lafayette's skin color). The character of Lafayette in this scene mirrors a social reality and plays with the performance of gender and sexuality that the three white male characters and the audience have come to expect from him. After verbally responding to their insult and provocatively licking the hamburger, Lafayette blocks their punches and leaves them in a weakened state before delicately gesturing and reminding them to "tip [their] waitress" (*Sparks Fly Out* 36:05). Xavier Aldana Reyes remarks that this scene "undoes gender taxonomies by

the illusion of what is "true blood."

⁹ These three minor characters are also the same men who throw fire-bombs into the home of the three vampires with the human "fangbanger," thereby performing a lynching of those that are considered unwelcome to the Bon Temps community.

¹⁰ Specifically, Lafayette goes to the customers' table asking "Who ordered the hamburger with AIDS?" He continues: "In this restaurant a Hamburger Deluxe comes with French fries, lettuce, tomato, mayo and AIDS!" After being told that an American right is to decide who does and does not prepare his food, Lafayette retorts: "It's too late for that. Faggots been breeding your cows, raising your chickens, even brewing your beer long before I walked my sexy ass up in this motherfucker! Everything on your goddamn table got AIDS!" (*Sparks Fly Out* 35:02-35:36)

undermining and problematizing the boundaries between masculine and feminine codes of received behaviour through a character who easily encapsulates and confuses both” (58). The series illustrates the ways in which the stigmatization of disease intersects with non-normative gender, sexuality, and race, and how these categories are performative. It does so through the “vampire-as-metaphor” as well as through its human characters.

Rather than reversing vampire and human identities alone, the series also demonstrates other ways of displacing concepts that are traditionally associated with the vampire. With regards to animality, for instance, it is not the vampire or the “human” that are constructed through animalistic characteristics, but a third “species” identity category. The first season eventually reveals the existence of “shape-shifters,” humans that can shape-shift into various animals. While *True Blood*’s vampires cannot shape-shift – unlike Stoker’s Dracula who can take the form of a bat, a wolf, and rats – the series plays with this connotation in the second episode when Sookie is attacked by the Rattray couple. As Sookie is beaten, she is not entirely aware of all that is going on around her except for a dog growling, followed by her rescue (by Bill). The focalization of the scene through Sookie and point-of-view shots from her perspective leave the question of the dog’s and the vampire’s identities (or identity) and their relationship to each other unanswered until Sam later “comes out” to Sookie as a shape-shifter and the protective dog. The shape-shifting capacities of the traditional vampire figure, such as Dracula, are displaced onto another figure – the shapeshifter – and another Other, which also complicates any understanding of a human/vampire binary.¹¹ Furthermore, while the two characters work together in this moment as well as in the season finale to save Sookie from dangerous human characters, underlining a likeness between the two as species Others, Sam’s dislike of vampires also suggests a rejection of any kind of association between the two. His

¹¹ Additional species Others are introduced each season. For instance, Sookie later learns that she is part fairy. More on this later.

discourse sometimes echoes that of white supremacy. The series troubles identity categories that are constructed through binary oppositions, and also destabilizes straightforward metaphorical associations between species Others and minority groups.

As Sam's character suggests, the series destabilizes inner/outer (bodily) metaphors – the links between tenor and vehicle. While the allegory of the vampire as the racial Other is not consistent, the series' (use of) allegory underlines the illusory connection between sign and meaning. The opening scene of the series illustrates this, highlighting the contradictory metaphors used to construct identity categories as well as the way the show will continue to play with vampire and racial signifiers and signifieds. A young couple enters a mini-mart that advertises the sale of TruBlood, hoping to hear stories about vampire customers. The sales clerk – watching Fran Flannigan, the American Vampire League spokesperson, defend the VRA and vampires' non-threatening behavior towards humans on television – is dressed in black “goth” style and proceeds to adopt an Eastern European accent and threatening language to playfully scare the couple. His performance suggests that for these characters, a vampire can be identified by these visual and auditory signifiers. Consequently, they disregard the fourth character in the scene: a vampire who, when his fangs are not displayed, has no vampire somatic signifiers. With a paunch belly, a T-shirt and, more significantly, a Confederate flag baseball cap that, when read in conjunction with his white skin point to white Southern racism, the three (white) human characters initially misread him as a (harmless) human, rejecting his protests over the sales clerk's stereotyping of vampires. His only means of defending vampires is to reveal his fangs and threaten the humans. In this sense, the vampire both does and does not adhere to the argument presented by the vampire Fran Flannigan on the television in the background – that vampires are non-violent and are a disenfranchised minority, deserving the same rights as humans. As a member of a stigmatized and victimized group (which the scene evokes through the store clerk's stereotyped impersonation and a reference to the hunting of

vampires for their blood), the vampire is as insulted as any member of a minority group would be in a similar situation. Following Fran Flannigan's points, he is initially non-threatening and purchases synthetic blood rather than feeding on the humans who degrade him. Yet the moment that he reveals his fangs and violently menaces the young couple and the store clerk is the same moment in which his character no longer represents the peaceful movement for the Vampire Rights Amendment, and he disrupts the link between vampires as the vehicle and disenfranchised minority groups as the tenor. The scene not only shows that the vampire cannot easily and always be read in relation to disenfranchised minority groups, but it also points to the fragility of (vampire) identity in relation to somatic signifiers, as well as its metonymical contingency on other identity categories.

Likewise, in a scene in the second episode, Bill's position as a white man comes into conflict with his vampire identity. Invited to visit Sookie and her grandmother, Bill meets Jason and Sookie's best friend, Tara, who are both hostile towards vampires. While Jason chooses to attack his vampire identity by critiquing the VRA as "special rights," Tara confronts him with regards to his status as a once privileged white man in the slave-holding South. Having revealed that he was still human at the time of the Civil War, Bill is asked aggressively by Tara if he owned slaves (*The First Taste* 31:44). As a Black woman, Tara's question is personal, and Bill's answer – that his parents owned slaves – provides another reason for her to dislike him. Yet it also draws attention to the contradiction between Bill's assertion of his status as disenfranchised vampire and that of his position as a white man from a slave-holding family.¹² Ironically, Sookie first responds to Tara's question with dismay, implying that her friend has insulted Bill, which positions him as part of a stigmatized group, similar to the disenfranchised vampire role that Bill has been performing. Sookie's response simultaneously disregards the

¹² Moreover, if the VRA passes as Bill hopes, inheriting his family's home would also imply a re-assertion of his status as the patriarch of a once slave-holding family.

power dynamic between Tara and Bill, namely Bill's privilege as a white man versus Tara's "inferior" status as a Black woman – a dichotomy that remains the same from Bill's time as a human through to the present day. Yet Tara can now assert herself and speak out against racist injustice, and she is regularly quick to highlight any possible way in which a white character might stereotype a Black character.¹³ This is one of the ways in which the series deals with racially-charged issues separately from its allegorical treatment of vampires – but here, the two levels of meaning upset each other, "one ... denies precisely what the other affirms" (Owens 63).

More than the ways in which identity categories (vampire versus human, white versus Black, man versus woman, disenfranchised versus privileged) enter into conflict through these two levels of meaning, Tara's question multiplies references to other potential identities. For instance, it points to another allegorical meaning where the vampire functions as a metaphor for the aristocrat and/or wealthy businessman or "blood-sucking" capitalist, a parallel to the slave-holding white patriarch, and similar to the figure in *Blade* and *Underworld*.¹⁴ Furthermore, Tara adopts the role of a parental figure for Sookie, and in this scene in particular, she plays into Bill's "old-fashioned" upbringing; as he "calls on" Sookie and becomes her suitor, Tara occupies the position of a parent who might deem Bill (un)worthy of her daughter. Though Bill remains polite in answering Tara and Jason, the three characters (along with Adèle and Sookie) consistently play along with these (power) dynamics, ignoring the fact that Bill can easily physically dominate them. In these ways, the scene reveals the ways in which allegory "prevents the self from an illusory identification with the non-self, which is now fully,

¹³ In this scene, Tara challenges the nostalgia that Bill and Adèle express for the antebellum period. Of course, her name ironically points to this nostalgia, given that "Tara" is a reference to Scarlet O'Hara's beloved plantation in the novel and film *Gone With the Wind* which also represents nostalgia for the antebellum period. Tara herself is aware of this. She ironically asks a white man after telling him her name, "And isn't it funny, a Black girl being named after a plantation?" (*Strange Love* 45:54).

¹⁴ This is another figurative characterization of Dracula in Stoker's novel – one that worked with the stigmatization of the Jew. Before Stoker, Polidori's 1819 novel, *The Vampyre*, also depicted an aristocratic vampire who preyed on those who were poor.

though painfully, recognized as non-self” (de Man, 1969, 207). Bill cannot be a privileged white man, a slave-holding patriarch and human, and a disenfranchised (racially) Other and vampire all at once. These conflicting identities are inconsistent through their distance from each other in historical time within the diegesis – Bill cannot be the same “person” he was 160 years prior since he is now a vampire, nor can he be considered a slave-holder as Fran Flannigan argues in the first episode when she says that vampires have never owned slaves (*Strange Love* 1:24). They are also incompatible through their distance in time between levels of meaning: Bill as a disenfranchised vampire (vehicle) and the tenor of the “previous” “allegorical sign,” the disenfranchised African-American during the Civil Rights movement which the series’ opening credits underline through the historic black and white images of white men aggressively handling a Black protester (*idem*). The series of metonymical deferrals through the characters’ relationships to each other, specifically Bill and Tara here, highlight the “pure anteriority” of the “non-self” (*idem*).

The series’ allegorization of racial as well as sexual passing underlines the way in which repetition creates the illusion of a unified “self,” including a racial and gendered identity. As Judith Butler argues, gender is the “disciplinary production of the figures of fantasy through the play of presence and absence on the body’s surface, the construction of the gendered body through a series of exclusions and denials, signifying absences” which, in addition to somatic signifiers, operate through a “stylized repetition of acts” and “a constituted social temporality” (1990, 184, 191). Like gender performativity, passing illustrates both the identity category consciously enacted and the category that is excluded through its absence (through somatic signifiers and/or acts and gestures), thereby showing that each category is metonymically contingent on the other rather than reinforcing the inner/outer bodily metaphors on which race and gender depend. Similarly, because allegory requires the repetition of allegorical signs through (narrative) time, passing is allegorical in itself since it necessitates the repetition of

acts and gestures which are socially discursive rather than symbolic signs of the transcendental “self.” The series’ allegorization of passing is therefore an allegory of an allegory. *True Blood*’s reference to passing highlights this through “the play of presence and absence” of the practice of passing in addition to the same “play” in the (mis)identification of its characters. Since vampires are “out of the coffin,” the passing vampire is meant to be a distant “thing of the past,” or absent, while vampires and their signifiers are now supposed to be continuously apparent, or present. The series thus exposes the impossibility of being continuously “out” as well as the fact that being “out” as a vampire – and allegorically, as a member of an identity category – is contingent on the social meaning of “vampire” in opposition to “human.”

Returning to the staging of the first scene of the series, the scene demonstrates the ways in which the disjunction between somatic signifiers and their traditional associations points to the problematic expectation that an individual consistently be “out” and “correctly” perform their identity category. The filmic discourse clearly plays with vampire and horror film coding in order to highlight the illusory ways in which identity categories are constructed and performed. Before the young couple enters the mini-mart, the camera spends much more time focusing on the “goth”-dressed store clerk, with close-ups and slow pans on his clothing, boots, and jewelry, all while he watches the vampire rights activist, Fran Flannigan, defend vampires as peaceful TruBlood drinkers on television. The scary music and extreme close-ups on the store clerk’s clothing and teeth provide (or at least point to) the “presence” of vampire signifiers to which the character then adds through his stereotypical enactment of vampire identity. Importantly, the couple’s reading of the store clerk validates this performance, whereas the other customer, the vampire, is disregarded due to the absence of vampire signifiers and the presence of other signifiers: a confederate flag baseball cap, a paunch belly, and holding what appears to be a six-pack of beer. The six-pack, which is later revealed to be TruBlood rather than beer, is overlooked by the store clerk and the couple in favor of other more flagrant

signifiers that communicate to the human characters (as well as to the external spectator) an identity category which does not correspond to the vampire and the figure's coding: the white Southern "hillbilly." Again, the vampire is not attempting to pass since he is buying TruBlood, nor is he "out." Ironically, he is only able to fully defend vampires against the stereotyping used by the human characters by playing into their stereotypes of vampires. Since his protests against the clerk's joke and his request that the young couple leave only result in an insult that attacks his somatic signifiers which are immediately visible ("Fuck you, Billy Bob" [*Strange Love* 3:10]), the vampire "outs" himself, revealing his fangs and threatening the human characters. Here, the signifier of fangs is displaced from the mouth of the "Gothic"-styled character to the character that appears to embody the South and its discourses in favor of segregation and anti-miscegenation, and it highlights the disjunction between these seemingly contradictory character traits. The repetition of vampire signifiers, acts, and gestures in this scene is therefore "a failure to repeat, a de-formity, or a parodic repetition" which also highlights the "fantasy" of other identity categories (Butler, 1990, 192).

While the "hillbilly" vampire illustrates the performativity of identity categories, the series' use of allegory suggests that an extra-diegetical "reality" of race is also a fantasy. Rather than the traditional use of allegory, its vampires not only deviate from previous vampire conventions – they are not necessarily "Gothic" – but they also do not easily function as a metaphor for disenfranchised minorities. Similar to the scene between Bill and Tara, the opening scene shows that narrative time emphasizes the gap between the metaphor's vehicle and tenor (vampire as disenfranchised). Moreover, the "hillbilly" character's speech, acts, and gestures consistently maintain a dissonance with his somatic signifiers, revealing "discontinuit[ies]" in his performance of identity categories (*idem*). Indeed, this vampire seems incapable of performing the vampire as disenfranchised, the traditional vampire, and the Southern "hillbilly" at the same time. Not one of these identity categories is entirely consistent

with the character's somatic signifiers. Thus, when he initially performs the disenfranchised vampire "passing" as human, his dialogue in defense of vampires appears at odds with his clothing. This dissonance is further illustrated when he moves from performing the threatening vampire, telling the store clerk that if "[he] ever pretends to be [a vampire] again, [he'll] kill [him]" (*Strange Love* 3:43), to "Billy Bob" in the next second, telling the clerk to "have a nice day" as he exits the store with a smile, his fangs ironically still revealed. The scene thus suggests – not that performing the "hillbilly" is a means for a vampire to successfully pass as human, but rather – that both the "hillbilly" and the vampire are performative and can be exposed as "figures of fantasy" through inconsistencies between the character's acts and gestures and his somatic signifiers, or "through the play of presence and absence on the body's surface" (Butler, 1990, 184). Moreover, the scene's allegorization of identity categories – of the racial Other through the figure of the vampire – highlights the "play" "on the body's surface" as merely discursive, demonstrating that each identity category refers to another through metonymy and a "series of exclusions and denials" (*idem*). Rather than reinserting the "liminal" body "back within the logic of binary understandings of race" (Ehlers 76), *True Blood*'s allegorization of passing highlights the constant negotiation between vampire and human identity. Indeed, in exposing the vampire as performative, the series demonstrates that there are multiple ways in which vampire "identity" can be performed, along with "human" identity, and that each of these categories is metonymically contingent on the other. The first scene's vampire points to the need to consistently perform (stereotypical) vampire identity in order to reinforce the illusion of its difference or opposition from the "human." Or rather, he illustrates the "arbitrary relation between such acts" through a "failure to repeat" vampire "behavior" or Southern "hillbilly behavior," or a "de-formity" of both, in part through the negotiation between being "out" versus the opposition of being "in the coffin / closet" or passing.

The necessity to “correctly” perform an identity depends on the observer who is involved with the way identity is fantasized and performed correctly or not. Eric and Pam, the two vampires that run Fangtasia, seem to be particularly aware of this – they both dress the part of the stereotypical sexy and sadist vampire in black leather, but only during business hours, suggesting that a specific type of clothing, as much as fangs, are essential to human fantasies of vampire identity. Even the bar’s name of Fangtasia, a pun on Disney’s 1940 *Fantasia*, points to the ways in which fangs and other signifiers are imbibed with fantasy in their construction of identity categories. Yet Eric, and more specifically Pam, do not always flaunt the fantasized version of vampirism in the company of other vampires. At one point when the bar is closed, Pam looks very much the opposite of the stereotypical vampire, and thus metonymically more “human”; dressed in a pink sweater and grey trousers, she appears to embody white, middle-class, heterosexual femininity. In the same scene, Eric is wearing jeans and flip flops. Bill, who attempts to “mainstream,” meaning to participate in human society, is obliged to perform the role of the vampire more to vampires than to humans. Although Bill’s mainstreaming can be read as an attempt to assimilate rather than to pass, it is read by the other vampires as a form of “selling out,” a display of weakness that does not allow him any power within the vampire community. Thus, in order to participate in both communities, Bill must play the part of the menacing and powerful vampire, which means displaying hypermasculinity and hypersexual desire. Passing in *True Blood* is not always synonymous with the desire to be read as a member of the opposing community, but demonstrates the performative nature of both vampire and human identities. Moreover, Bill’s consistently expressed desire not to lose his “humanity” underlines the fact that the “human” is metonymically constructed in opposition to these “vampire” Other traits. Ironically, Bill’s performance of the stereotypical vampire is a reminder of the way in which the figure of the vampire functioned as a traditional allegory for racial Otherness and the stigmatization thereof

while his desire to mainstream points to the series' metaphorical positioning of the vampire as a figure for the disenfranchised African-American. In the same way that Bill is never able to fully and consistently perform either category, each traditional allegorical reference undoes the other as well as illustrating that each of these metaphorical tenors is also discursive.

The police function as observer as well as enforcer to stage the ways in which legal discourses shape and criminalize certain identity categories and practices. Two scenes in particular demonstrate the ways in which the stigmatization of racial Otherness and non-normative sexuality intersects through the overlapping of anti-passing and anti-miscegenation discourses. As Judith Butler writes, homosexuality and miscegenation “converge at and as the constitutive outside of a normative heterosexuality that is at once the regulation of a racially pure production” (1993, 167). *True Blood* allegorizes this relationship through the existence of a law that not only forbids humans and vampires to marry, but also forbids vampires from feeding off humans. In this sense, the narrative reinforces the barriers dividing humans and vampires, referring to those that once criminalized interracial as well as same-sex marriage and intercourse. The scene in which police officers raid Fangtasia functions as a metaphor for the police raids on gay bars which occurred pre-Stonewall. On the one hand, the law forbidding interspecies feeding points to anti-miscegenation laws since the series also repeats the metaphorical configuration of the vampire's bite as a vehicle for sexual intercourse. On the other hand, considering that the bite – whether configured as feeding or as sexual act – does not in itself result in human transformation or vampire reproduction, the law represents the criminalization of non-normative sexuality. Regardless, each of these sexual acts were configured perverse. The police are thus figuratively positioned as protectors “regulat[ing]” “normative heterosexuality” and “racially pure production.” More than this, the scene illustrates the ways in which a discursive stereotype functions as a synecdoche for an entire group. The raid is, of course, already based on a stereotype: the assumption that illicit feeding

(or sex) is necessarily occurring in a vampire bar. Though Pam and Eric have ensured that their bar plays into vampire stereotypes, they are confident that their patrons do not indulge in the illegal act. Nevertheless, Sookie informs them that there is one vampire/human couple doing just that in the bathroom at the moment of the raid. Pam and Eric's response, along with Bill and Sookie, is to escape out the back entrance, since even though only one vampire may be caught disobeying the law, all may be arrested. The characters are aware that one vampire's act operates as a synecdoche for all vampires in the bar – they are all guilty by association, or through the deferral of the stigmatization.

The following scene repeats the stereotype of vampirism through the signifier of fang marks, illustrating how (mis)identification operates through the “play of presence and absence on the body's surface” and even through the deferral of this play onto the body of another. After leaving Fangtasia, Sookie and Bill are pulled over by a police officer. Unsure as to whether or not Bill is a vampire, the officer asks if he can shine his flashlight on Sookie's neck. The officer's request is to ensure that no illegal feeding is occurring between Bill and Sookie and, repeats the series' reference to white hegemonic control over interracial sex. But more than this, the officer's request is based on the assumption that, while Bill is a vampire passing as human, Sookie is not, highlighting the “need” to protect the (white) female body from species/racial mixing. He also assumes that the presence of fang marks on Sookie's neck will prove the presence of fangs in Bill's mouth and the absence of fang marks would mean the absence of fangs. The absence or presence of these signifiers determine whether Bill is a vampire or a human. These assumptions, or the meanings that the police officer associates with fang marks, shape the way in which Bill and Sookie are defined and show that the process of identification occurs through mutual metonymical deferral between the two characters' bodies. The series plays with the officer's “racial profiling” and attempt to prohibit interracial sex in that, even though Sookie does not have fang marks, Bill is a vampire and they are dating. Bill

further highlights the absurdity of the officer's assumptions by revealing his fangs and telling the officer that he should shine his flashlight on Sookie's thigh which, although also devoid of fang marks, displaces the neck as the stereotypical location for feeding. The scene points to the ways in which bodies are marked, both literally (with fang marks or without) and figuratively, through discourses that define race and miscegenation, and that these "markings" are ultimately misleading and even illusory. Moreover, the police officer's assumption that Sookie is merely human is, to a certain extent, false.

In its allegorization of (anti)miscegenation, the series repeats the signifier of fang marks, the problematic readings of them in relation to species/racial Otherness, and the discourse's connection to gender. With the repetition of fang marks, *True Blood* illustrates the ways in which somatic signifiers are read and interpreted in prejudiced, racist ways through inscribed readers that perceive the metonymical link to fangs as hypersexual, perverse, and contaminating – signifieds that also construct the transcendental signified of racial Otherness. Yet, as the pull-over scene demonstrates with Sookie, it is often through the white female human body that prejudiced readings of vampires occur. The displacement of the signifieds aligned with vampirism – hypersexuality, perversion, and contamination in particular – is symbolized through fang marks, which function quite literally as a marker for the absence of fangs. The first occasion of this kind of reading takes place in an early scene in the first episode: when Sookie's brother Jason notices fang marks on his sexual partner, Maudette, he quickly removes his hand from her body while dark and scary music signals his fear to the spectator. It is as if Jason reads Maudette as a vampire herself, the fang marks as fangs, and her body as potentially contaminating. For Jason, this "play of presence and absence" on Maudette's body is also the loss of the fantasized presence of the prior sign of fangs. The "contamination" perceived by Jason affects him to the point where, during sex with his next partner Dawn, he imagines a male vampire in her place. In this sense, Dawn is erased – her body becomes merely

the vehicle through which Jason comes into contact with the vampire who had intercourse with her before him. Yet Jason's fantasy of the vampire Other points to not only contamination, but also hypermasculinity (through its metonymical link to hypersexuality). Aware that vampires have a reputation for great sexual prowess, Jason feels the need to assert his own sexual strength and masculinity by reconquering his partners, ironically by playing the vampire. For instance, after watching a sex tape with Maudette and a vampire, Jason repeats the same sexual positions with her and menaces, like a vampire, "to rip her fucking throat out" (*Strange Love* 21:52). This pattern is repeated with Dawn in the following episodes: the same music can be heard when Jason discovers fang marks on her body and he later plays the part of a threatening vampire before initiating sex. Jason thus appears to be less concerned with "contamination" than with asserting his masculinity over vampires and through his partners' bodies. These scenes point to the ways in which masculinity is contingent upon other identity categories – Jason's conception of masculinity is reshaped by his perception of vampires as sexual partners and remains dependent on Maudette's and Dawn's validation of him. Maudette's and Dawn's (or white female) bodies are not only the vehicles through which a species (or racial identity) can be "protected" and propagated, but they also enable the continual (re)assertion of white hegemonic masculinity.

Indeed, *True Blood* points to the way in which anti-miscegenation discourse of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries configured white women as central to racial purity, in need of being "protected" and (the implication was) reserved for white men.¹⁵ The repetition of fang marks and their metonymical link to fangs and the concept of contamination illustrates

¹⁵ I discuss the issue of white male control over the female body at more length in my article, "Sullied Blood, Semen and Skin: Vampires and the Spectre of Miscegenation." For instance, "the opening credits ... illustrate white male desire to control the female body, whether black or white. The credits present shots of two rather stereotypical images of women – those that appear to be religious, moral, and virtuous, and those that appear to be sexually provocative and promiscuous. Shots of women being baptised or blessed by white male preachers suggest that this is one manner of controlling the female body" (40). Indeed, the opening credits depict two oppositional stereotypes of women, similar to the figures of the "angel" and the "witch" found in nineteenth-century literature according to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar.

how female bodies are marked and shaped through miscegenation in illusory ways. Sookie, for instance, is clearly told by one of the “redneck” characters that because she dates a vampire, she is “contaminated for normal people” (*Burning House of Love* 37:15). Not only does the speaker label Sookie as contaminated, but he also suggests that she is (thereby) excluded from “normal people,” those that do not mix, or “miscegenate,” with vampires. That vampires do not “contaminate” humans, or transform them into (or reproduce) vampires simply through their bite and an exchange of blood (as is the case in Stoker’s novel), is apparently beside the point to those humans who are prejudiced against them.¹⁶ A woman who has sexually interacted with a vampire is marked, both literally and figuratively. The first season’s repetition of fang marks is key with regards to the main plot: the identification and apprehension of a serial killer, the storyline’s primary passing “monster”: René Lenier, who targets white human women who “mix” or “miscegenate” with vampires. While the police investigation and reading of the clues (including the somatic signifiers of the victims and fang marks) should point to René, they are rather read for their meaning in relation to stereotypes of vampires and promiscuous women. The police officers and townspeople replicate the serial killer’s perspective. As if (white) women alone represent racial purity, René opts to erase female “fangbangers,” women who are no longer “pure” and who “contaminate” the human race.¹⁷ While René’s approach to the preservation of species/racial purity is extreme, the sheriff’s and the townspeople’s reaction to his crimes suggests that his victims are to blame. Sookie’s mind-reading ability reveals the thoughts of Merlotte’s patrons after Dawn’s death: the young woman, a “fangbanger,” “had it coming” (*Escape from Dragon House* 17:38-18:20). As other

¹⁶ In the main narrative of the first season, there is one instance of a vampire turning a human into a vampire (we witness Bill’s transformation through a flashback), and it is Bill’s first time as a “maker.” Punished for killing another vampire in order to save Sookie, Bill is forced to turn a young girl, Jessica, into a vampire in front of the court that condemns him. This scene and what follows suggest that it is a rare occurrence. The process is highly ritualized and obliges Bill to become the permanent caretaker of the young vampire.

¹⁷ The label is defined within the narrative as a “vampire groupie.” But it also evokes the sexually derogatory term of “banging,” as well as the synecdochal use of “fang” to denote a vampire. An exception to René’s list of victims is Amy, who never has sex with a vampire, but who is undoubtedly deemed to be contaminated by René because she drugs herself on vampire blood. Jason is, however, left alive and unharmed.

characters continually warn Sookie of the danger of dating a vampire, they also suggest that she is “marked for death.” Sookie’s friend Arlene even goes so far as to hint that if Sookie continues to see Bill, she will meet the same fate as Dawn. Despite the fact that death comes from the hand of a human, these characters mark human women as “dead” through metonymy, their physical proximity to the vampire.¹⁸

As the series’ heroine, Sookie and her body are key to understanding the series’ allegory of miscegenation.¹⁹ Similar to the position of white middle and upper-class women in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century anti-miscegenation discourse, Sookie is made to embody the boundary between humans and vampires as she is metonymically defined by both identity categories. To begin with, she both plays into and escapes the stereotypes of the passive Southern belle. She is blonde and continually dressed in white, color-coding her as both “virginally pure” and racially pure (Rabin n. pag.).²⁰ The first episode of the series introduces a Sookie who is initially a virgin and demands to be treated like a “lady” – she is at one point shocked by her co-workers’ “nasty talk” about sex (*Strange Love* 11:33). Like Bella in the *Twilight* films and Selene in *Underworld*, Sookie is at the intersection of competing species/races and masculinities. She is repeatedly fought over, protected, threatened, and marked (whether by bite or by beatings) by the vampire and human men that surround her. She is consistently characterized as in need of protection; and her boss, Sam Merlotte, and her boyfriend Bill attempt to do so throughout the first season. Sam even gives Tara a job in his bar so that she can help him “keep an eye on Sookie” (*Strange Love* 30:42) while the inhabitants of Bon Temps consistently monitor her. Despite Sookie’s endangerment once she becomes

¹⁸ The characterization of these women as “dead” through mixing with vampires works with the connotation of vampires as dangerous, but also as “(un)dead” through contamination by vampires.

¹⁹ A portion of this paragraph is a revised version of a paragraph in my article, “Sullied Blood, Semen and Skin: Vampires and the Spectre of Miscegenation.” See my discussion of the characterization of white women in nineteenth-century anti-miscegenation discourse in Chapter Three.

²⁰ Nicole Rabin rightly points out that Sookie is a “symbol of racial and sexual purity” who “must be protected by the multicultural society from racial contamination or dilution” (n. pag.).

viewed as a “fangbanger” by René, most of this surveillance is due to concerns over her relationship with vampires, as her relationship with Bill appears to bear the threat of miscegenation. In contrast, Sookie is not the typical “damsel in distress.” She rescues Bill (from vampire blood drainers) in the first episode, and in the final episode of the season, she saves herself from René since neither of her “heroes” is able to come to her rescue.

More than simply embodying a contemporary image of “girl power,” Sookie cannot easily be defined as a Southern belle because she does not entirely fit into the category of “normal” human. Sookie’s telepathic ability positions her as “more than human” at the same time that it points to the fragility of the “human” as an identity category. Although this “more than human” or “hybrid” identity is not discovered until a later season, Sookie’s Otherness to both humans and vampires is a topic that is continually repeated in the first season.²¹ For the people of Bon Temps, Sookie’s telepathy makes her “crazy” and contributes to her bond with vampires. Not being able to read Bill’s mind (along with that of other vampires) allows Sookie to feel a relative sense of “normalcy” when in his company, and, if perceived through a vampire/human binary alone, Sookie is metonymically human in opposition to the vampire. At the same time however, Bill is aware of Sookie’s difference from the “human,” asking her repeatedly during their first meeting: “What are you?” (*Strange Love* 27:38). Of course, the “what” rather than “who” implies that Sookie is not “human” and may be a species Other like himself. Sookie’s unknown status and liminal position in relation to the human/vampire binary (or the human/non-human binary) contributes not only to the ways in which the series’ allegory points to the fragility of binaries in relation to identity categories, but it also troubles the boundary between inside/outside bodily metaphors. Sookie’s telepathy enables her to access the “inner” thoughts of other human characters, and they consistently remind her to “stay out

²¹ We learn later in the series that Sookie is part fairy. She is thus ironically already characterized as a mixed, composite, or “miscegenated” being.

of [their] head[s]” (emphasis added, 55:05).²² Thus, Sookie’s character cannot be fixed within firm identity categories: she is – and is marked as – both “pure” white female and not, as well as both human and non-human. This unstable position shapes the way in which she reads and interprets others, and in particular, vampires.

Sookie’s mind-reading ability not only contributes to the narrative’s allegorization of race through her liminal species status, but also through her position as primary focalizer and inscribed reader of species/racial difference.²³ As a telepath who has suffered from her “difference” and from the gaze of others, Sookie is more tolerant and less judgmental than the other human inhabitants of Bon Temps. Her telepathic ability points to the hypocrisy of the human community’s stigmatization of vampires.²⁴ Though she is at times surprised by the sexually provocative and violent behavior of some vampires, she is able to hear the sometimes violent and/or “perverse” sexual thoughts (as well as the actions that might result from them) of the people of Bon Temps. These thoughts are communicated to the spectator through voice-over as instances of direct thought, providing moments in which Sookie exceeds her narrative function as mere character and focalizer. Correspondingly, the filmic discourse (occasionally) gives the spectator direct access to the “inner” thoughts of human characters and then provides Sookie’s reaction. Sookie’s privileged position of having such insight into the human psyche

²² Harris’ *Dead Until Dark* also points to the fragility of the human/vampire binary. For instance, the town’s lawyer, Sid Matt, tells Sookie: “‘You know, Miss Sookie, I’m not for this vampire stuff. I think it’s taking a chink out of a wall we should keep built up, a wall between us and the so-called virus-infected.’” Sookie responds: “‘The problem with that, Sid Matt, is that I personally was created straddling that wall’” (Harris 296).

²³ Sookie’s position as primary focalizer is similar to *Underworld*’s Selene: Both are at the center of species/racial conflict, both are key figures in shaping the perspective of the Other, and both are accused of being untrustworthy by their own kind due to their “contamination.” Both characters are also comparable to Mina’s position in *Dracula* whose voice is deemed untrustworthy once she has been bitten by the vampire. Nevertheless, Mina agrees with this judgment of herself, siding with the other human characters and reinforcing the human/vampire binary. But Selene and Sookie not only operate as a means to destabilize the stigmatization of the Other, but also as a means to question the white patriarchal hegemonic rejection of their perspective.

²⁴ Added to this is her inability to read vampire minds, as opposed to other minds. Of course, one might argue that this reinforces essentialist notions of identity categories in that it suggests that vampire minds – in addition to their bodies – are physically and therefore fundamentally different from humans. But symbolically, it suggests that vampires are difficult to “read” and parallels the constant shifting of vampires in relation to “monstrous” and racial signifiers.

leads to her function as an inscribed reader as well as the “voice of reason” vis-à-vis the human stigmatization of vampires, providing the (moral) perspective that guides the spectator’s interpretation. For instance, when confronted with Sam Merlotte’s stereotyping of vampires, she highlights his synecdochal assumption by reminding him that it is “wrong to judge an entire group based on the actions of a few” (*Strange Love* 53:55). In addition to Sam, Sookie’s best friend Tara warns her against associating with vampires, saying, “Did you know they could hypnotize you?” to which Sookie sarcastically retorts, “Yeah, and Black people are lazy and Jews have horns” (*The First Taste* 21:50). Sookie’s remark reflects the ways in which Tara (along with others) mistakenly ascribes a certain kind of behavior to somatic signifiers, as well as highlighting the irony of Tara’s adoption of white patriarchal hegemonic discourse towards the Other, when Tara is Black and often underlines how the white people of Bon Temps might read her dark skin in problematic ways.²⁵ Sookie’s character functions as a consistent reminder of the vampire’s allegorical association with disenfranchised minorities, but this reading is only in contrast with the problematic ways in which they are viewed by the townspeople of Bon Temps. This is to say that Sookie does not impose metaphors on the Other, but shows how other characters’ metaphorical readings are erroneous. Nevertheless, Sookie’s telepathic ability is not unlimited – not only is she unable to read vampires’ minds, but she also fails to read the mind of René Lenier, who ironically passes as a friendly Bon Temps citizen more successfully

²⁵ It is worth noting that in Harris’ novel *Dead Until Dark* (as well as the novels that follow), Tara is a more minor character who is also white. That *True Blood*’s writers chose to cast a Black actress (Rutina Wesley) as well as to address racism through her character is a testament to the fact that the series openly points to race and racism. However, it could be argued that racism is mostly addressed figuratively. The scene that introduces Tara appears to set her character up as a vehicle for addressing racist stereotypes, in addition to her position as an inscribed reader which should not be imitated. Much like the “hillbilly” vampire of the first scene, Tara’s character both plays into and with racist stereotypes. Reading a white customer’s response to her poor customer service as racist, Tara cites the stereotypes she assumes her white manager and the customer have towards her as a Black woman, both confirming and dispelling them. For instance, after being called “rude” by the customer, she responds with: “Oh, that’s not rude. This is uppity,” and hits the manager (*Strange Love* 8:19). While the scene demonstrates that *True Blood* touches on racism in a literal as well as a figurative manner, Tara’s faulty metonymical reading of the customer’s attitude (from her white skin and her accusation of rudeness to the racist stereotype of “uppity”) position her character as an unreliable inscribed reader. Within the diegesis, this means that Tara mistakenly reads the racism of the past onto the present, yet overlooks if not propagates the speciesism/racism that “truly” occurs with regards to vampires.

than any other character. Sookie's failure is part of how the first season constructs the mystery surrounding the killer's identity and his connection (or not) to vampires. As de Man writes, "[a]llegorical narratives tell the story of the failure to read ... Allegories are always allegories of metaphor and, as such, they are always allegories of the impossibility of reading" (1979, 205). So although the mystery is eventually solved, the question of the vampire's metaphorical alignment to racial Otherness is left unanswered, precisely because the series underlines the ways in which both categories are constructed through fantasy.

Lilith's Brood

Like *True Blood*, Octavia Butler's trilogy *Lilith's Brood* depicts human characters that regard a species Other as a threat to "the human race." Yet unlike *True Blood's* vampires, the aliens of *Lilith's Brood*, the Oankali, are entirely peaceful beings who are concerned with the well-being of humans. The trilogy begins some 200 years after the Oankali have rescued surviving humans from an uninhabitable post-apocalyptic Earth. Able to read and manipulate the biological "make-up" of all living things, the Oankali not only heal all injured and ill humans, but they also prolong their lives. Living in a symbiotic relationship with the plants and animals that surround them, they offer to return humans to Earth and help them learn how to survive "with" rather than "off" nature. The alien Other of Butler's trilogy is thus not a figure for an oppressed minority, nor a threat to human characters, and does not easily function as a metaphor for racial Otherness. While *True Blood* uses racial metaphors as a means to "humanize" the "monster" and to allegorize racial injustice, *Lilith's Brood* highlights the ways in which gender and racial discourses are used in an illusory way to maintain the fantasy of the "human." Moreover, Oankali behavior and social practices, along with the post-apocalyptic setting, underline the human characters' attempts to reassert "human" identity as the playing out of a set of fantasies, which are contingent on concepts – such as animality and "civilization"

– which have also constructed sexual and racial Otherness. For instance, the Oankali’s three sexes and the need of five adults for reproduction challenge human heteronormativity. The human response is not only to denigrate the Oankali for their “perversion” of the sex/gender system, but also to reassert their “humanity” through patriarchal hegemony and heterosexual monogamy. In contrast to the “alienness” of the Oankali, the humans repeatedly attempt to naturalize and normalize the “human” through discursive means and social practices, demonstrating that the “human” is as performative as identity categories of race and gender.²⁶

One of the other Oankali practices that challenges human sexuality is species mixing, which is imagined and articulated through anti-miscegenation discourse. While the “threat” of miscegenation that *True Blood*’s vampires pose is fantasized within the diegesis, *Lilith’s Brood*’s Oankali mate with humans and produce hybrid human/Oankali “constructs.” For this, they are demonized through language that recalls anti-miscegenation discourse of the nineteenth-century. More than staging human prejudice and the dehumanizing function of language, Butler’s trilogy highlights the ways in which anti-miscegenation discourse is contingent on multiple discourses, such as disease, heteronormativity, and animality, which is also metonymically connected to species difference. Importantly, Butler’s fantasy narrative of species mixing points to the rhetorical means through which anti-miscegenation discourse was grounded in a fantasy of species difference – with metaphors borrowed from the plant and animal kingdoms – in order to construct racial difference.²⁷ *Lilith’s Brood* thus differs from *True Blood* as well as many of the other texts examined in this thesis in that, rather than allegorizing racial Otherness through racial discourses, Butler’s trilogy allegorizes the

²⁶ With such an emphasis on destabilizing the “human,” Butler’s trilogy can be labeled posthumanist. Neil Badmington has written extensively on the alien as a posthuman figure in his 2004 *Alien Chic: Posthumanism and the Other Within*. It is also worth noting that – insofar as the cyborg operates as a figure for the posthuman – Donna Haraway cites the trilogy in her “Cyborg Manifesto,” alluding to Lilith as a cyborg-like figure.

²⁷ This is particularly flagrant in anti-miscegenation discourse that uses animal and plant metaphors to argue that miscegenation would lead to sterile children. See my discussion of “hybridity” – a term borrowed from the botanical realm – as well as the monogenetic versus polygenetic debate in Chapter Two. But I am also thinking of the biblical book of Genesis in which Adam is created as superior to plants, animals, and his wife Eve.

“human”; and it does this by using deconstructive allegory, pointing to the metaphors that construct race and exposing the contingency of the “human” on race and racial discourses. Butler’s novels thus interrogate the “human,” species difference, as well as racial difference, by illustrating that each of these identity categories is metonymically constructed through a further concept and/or discourse. The trilogy shows that the Oankali cannot function as a metaphor for racial Otherness except through language, thereby pointing to the lack of a stable, extra-diegetic referent that exists outside of a discursive ontology.

The trilogy’s allegorization of (anti-)miscegenation discourse deconstructs the association with “difference,” its metonymical link to the concept of “hybridity,” and its inherent capacity to destabilize race. Just as Robert Young argues that “race ... only works when defined against potential intermixture, which also threatens to undo its calculations altogether,” “intermixture” loses its meaning (and its meaning as “threat”) without the “dialectical” opposition of race (19). In these ways, although the Oankali function as the means to mix or to miscegenate, although they consistently challenge the humans’ capacity to ground themselves as the norm, the narrative displaces the Oankali as a potential metaphor of “hybridity” and “difference.” This is one of the ways in which Butler’s trilogy differs from her novel *Fledgling* in that the narrative does not merely provide a counter-discourse to racial hegemony through the “monstrous” or alien Other. Rather, the novels that comprise *Lilith’s Brood* each centers around a third perspective and subject position which is in between, liminal, both and/or neither human and Oankali. The trilogy’s narrative perspective through Lilith followed by her two children, Akin and Jodahs in the subsequent novels, contributes to the destabilization of the human/Oankali binary. But it also celebrates mixing, miscegenation, and “hybridity” through the narrative’s trajectory towards an increasingly liminal status, culminating in Jodahs, the first third sexed (gender neutral) Oankali/human “construct” and the only homodiegetic narrator in the trilogy, thereby validating a subject position that is

impossible to define through traditional identity categories.²⁸ Butler's novels thus interrogate the "human," species difference, as well as racial difference, by illustrating that each of these identity categories is metonymically constructed through another concept and/or discourse. Therefore, I argue that *Lilith's Brood*'s fantasy of alien/human "hybridity" uses deconstructive allegory to expose the fantasy of the "human" as well as of the racial and sexual identity categories on which it is contingent.

The allegorization of anti-miscegenation discourse in *Lilith's Brood* illustrates the gap between the signifier and the signified in part by underlining the ways in which language shapes the concept of mixing. Human characters recall the discursive construction of anti-miscegenation through its contingency on other stigmatizing discourses, such as that of disease.²⁹ Despite having been told by the first Oankali she meets, Jdahya, that his people have "'strengthened [her] immune system,'" "'increased [her] resistance to disease in general,'" (32) and that their eventual inter-species mixing will be physically beneficial for humans, Lilith likens reproduction with the Oankali to an infection of the human race, repeating scientific and legal anti-miscegenation discourses. Reflecting on "the Dinso," the Oankali group that will reproduce with humans, she thinks: "The Dinso group was staying on Earth, changing itself by taking part of humanity's genetic heritage, spreading its own genes like a disease among unwilling humans ... It was a terrible promise, a threat" (64). While Lilith later accepts bonding and reproducing with the Oankali, other humans do not and continue to see the Oankali as a "threat." When Akin, Lilith's Oankali/human son, meets the human Tate, she reveals this to the young "construct": "'So someday [your people] will be in space again, looking for some other people to infect or afflict or whatever you call it'" (364).³⁰ Tate clearly denies any label

²⁸ "Hybridity" is not Butler's term. I use it for lack of a better word, following the term's usage in criticism on Butler's trilogy.

²⁹ See my discussion of anti-miscegenation discourse in Chapter Three, as well as my analysis of the construction of the "monstrous" vampire of Stoker's *Dracula* through miscegenation in relation to disease.

³⁰ "Construct" is the term given to human/Oankali children, which also points to the notion of identity as a construction.

the Oankali use to refer to inter-species reproduction by assigning her own – the Oankali “infect or afflict” “other people.” Lilith’s simile of Oankali “genes” as “disease” and Tate’s metaphor of “infect[ion]” then metonymically mark the Oankali as infectious disease carriers, as miscegenators (much like the early characterization of the vampire), and as a contaminating “threat” to humans. Consequently, like the Oankali, and similar to the ways in which “miscegens” or mixed-race individuals were described as ill and diseased in nineteenth-century anti-miscegenation discourse, human/Oankali “constructs” are also viewed as infectious. Upon seeing Akin’s tentacle-like tongue, Tate’s partner, Gabe, assumes he is “venomous” (350).³¹ When Akin later bites him in order to free himself from his grip, Gabe screams that he has been “poisoned” (356). Gabe’s comments demonstrate the ways in which somatic signifiers – Akin’s tongue and mouth here – function as metaphors for disease/infection in conjunction with his status as an Oankali hybrid.

However, the trilogy displaces the link between somatic signifiers as outer bodily metaphors for disease and species mixing or miscegenation, thereby thematizing the gap between the signifier and the signified. Indeed, in the second and third novels, the surface of the body becomes a site for “the play of presence and absence” as a means to reinforce human species purity (J. Butler, 1990, 184). The presence of “Oankali” somatic signifiers on “construct” bodies functions as a metaphor for species mixing in contrast to human purity which is configured as the absence of tentacles.³² Yet Butler’s third novel, *Imago*, repositions species purity in relation to the presence of somatic signifiers on the body’s surface, which also function as metaphors for disease. When Jodahs meets Tomas and Jesusa, “it” learns of their village in which humans are fertile and have been (incestuously) reproducing among

³¹ Given that “venomous” is an adjective mainly applied to animals, Gabe’s comment additionally animalizes Akin. I will return to the animalizing language that is used with regards to the Oankali and constructs below.

³² This configuration is emphasized when Akin witnesses humans considering the surgical removal of two construct girls’ tentacles, which function as sensory organs, so that they “look Human” and “grow up to be Human women” (391). More on this below.

themselves for a century.³³ But their “first mother,” the first woman to become miraculously pregnant, carried a genetic disease (which is later identified as neurofibromatosis [665]) that the entire village population inherited. Not only is species purity thus framed as incestuous and diseased, but also the villagers’ bodies are “deformed” by tumorous growths (628). In this way, the narrative reshapes the contours of pure “human” bodies to parallel those of human/Oankali constructs. Jesusa highlights this: after examining Jodahs’ tentacles, “[s]he look[s] down at her own arm and its dozens of small tumors. ‘Actually I think mine are uglier’” (634). The metaphorical meanings stemming from the presence and absence of these somatic signifiers are different, pointing to the illusory connection between disease and miscegenation. After having healed Jesusa and Tomas from their disease, Jodahs must later return their tumorous growths to their bodies so that their people will not know they have “mixed” with the Oankali. In an ironic twist then, it is the absence of outer bodily metaphors for disease that signifies miscegenation whereas their presence represents “human” species purity. The metonymical link between disease and species mixing or miscegenation is thus re-signified in the third novel, effectively highlighting the discursive connection between the two concepts.

The metonymical associations with a concept such as disease are also contingent on perspective. For the Oankali, one “human” disease is of particular interest, which also relates to the way they view species mixing. Indeed, for the Oankali, species mixing is “trade” or the trading of “genetic material” (40), and one of the advantages the Oankali receive from humans is cancer. Finding cancerous cells in Lilith and other humans, they are able to control and manipulate the cells to generate life rather than destroy it, a practice that re-signifies cancer as a potential means of health rather than illness. The disconnection between cancer and the concept of disease further illustrates that the perception of the Oankali and of species mixing

³³ The pronoun “it” is used in Butler’s trilogy to refer to the Oankali’s third sex, the ooloi. Jodahs is eventually defined as an ooloi. While the Oankali do not force humans to mate with them, they do initially sterilize them in order to ensure that all reproduction occurs only through them. More on this below.

as diseased is merely discursive. Cathy Peppers notes, for instance, the ways in which most diseases are conceptualized through metaphors of the Other, while cancer is not:

Cancer is a particularly frightening disease because it doesn't allow for the usual medicalized use of military language to describe it. We cannot "battle" cancer as a "foreign enemy" which has "invaded" us and must be "expelled"; cancer cells are not wholly other, but exist precisely on the border of me/not me. In revaluing cancer, the text is also therefore valuing "mutation" and "boundary-crossing" identity. (5)³⁴

As Peppers highlights with regards to cancer, the Oankali's use of the disease and its connection to their practice of species mixing points to the ways in which miscegenation "cross[es]" the "boundar[ies]" of "identity" and destabilizes the "me/not me."

The debate over how to characterize species mixing – "trade" for the Oankali versus "infection" or disease for the humans – is contingent on how the two groups perceive each other and their differences. On the one hand, since the Oankali view species mixing as a "trade," they are implicitly (self-)characterized as equal partners to humans. On the other hand, humans alternate between using stigmatizing and objectifying language with regards to species mixing (such as disease and contamination) versus language which corresponds with the human perception of the Oankali as their "captors" (rather than their "rescuers"). For instance, Lilith argues that the Oankali's practice of mixing is forced "breeding." When Jdahya first informs Lilith of the Oankali's intentions, he says:

"Your people will change. Your young will be more like us and ours more like you. Your hierarchical tendencies will be modified and if we learn to regenerate limbs and reshape our bodies, we'll share those abilities with you. That is part of the trade" ...

"It is crossbreeding, then, no matter what you call it."

"It's what I said it was. A trade." (42)

Lilith's label of "crossbreeding" firmly positions the Oankali as a separate species from humans, while it also implies that the Oankali dominate and control them. The label thus points to the ways in which anti-miscegenation discourse was contingent upon animalizing similes

³⁴ Here, Peppers suggests that the text condones the Oankali perspective. I will return to this below.

and metaphors, as well as to the forced “breeding” practices that occurred during slavery. Her comment illustrates the Oankali’s primary critique of humans, namely their “hierarchical tendencies,” since she implies that the Oankali animalize humans through “breeding,” and refuses to acknowledge the Oankali perspective, attempting to impose her own definition on an Oankali practice.³⁵

Just as humans employ contradictory language with regards to species mixing and the Oankali, the Oankali destabilize identity categories as well as reinforce them through the practice of species mixing. The text’s allegorization of anti-miscegenation discourse displaces metonymical associations with other discourses – such as essentialism and eugenics – through the figure of the Oankali. For instance, although the Oankali challenge “human” identity and species distinctions, their “knowledge” of humans is manifested in very strong essentialist thinking, pointing to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientific discourses in which the racially-marked body also defined the mind. According to the Oankali, the ““hierarchical tendencies”” of humans to which Jdahya refers are biological. Human ““bodies are fatally flawed”” with ““a mismatched pair of genetic characteristics””: “[i]ntelligence and hierarchical behavior” (38, 442). The Oankali call this “the Human Contradiction ... a “lethal” combination (442). While Lilith remains skeptical about these traits stemming from a ““genetic problem,”” the Oankali are convinced that their own genes and genetic manipulation will “correct” the “contradiction.” Such logic is reminiscent of racist scientific notions that reproduction between whites and non-whites would have a “civilizing” effect on the latter, and would allow for the “breeding out” of “uncivilized” and “savage” behavior. More than this, the Oankali ensure that human reproduction is only carried out through and with them – humans are sterilized and effectively barred from having their own children. As if these practices alone did not point to

³⁵ I will return to the use of animalizing language shortly. Lilith’s reference to “breeding” is also part of the reason some critics have read Butler’s trilogy as a neo-slave narrative. I will return to this below.

eugenics, human characters also remain wary of other forms of “genetic tampering” that the Oankali might have performed on their bodies and Joseph likens it to a “eugenics program” that humans (may have) enacted before the apocalypse (143). In these ways, the text disassociates discourses that have been traditionally linked with anti-miscegenation and plays with the ways in which each group can and cannot function as a metaphor for the racial Other.³⁶

The disjunction between sign and meaning, between a particular species group as vehicle and the fantasized extra-diegetical tenor of racial Otherness, is particularly evident with the humans’ (and more particularly, Lilith’s) contradictory use of animalizing rhetoric. Here, the trilogy highlights the ways in which anti-miscegenation discourse was contingent on species difference and the human/animal binary, as well as how each metonymically shapes the other. Lilith’s critique of the Oankali’s intention to reproduce with humans repeats the same animalizing metaphors of nineteenth-century scientific discourse regarding hybridity as it was applied to anti-miscegenation arguments. She tells Jdahya’s ooloi partner, Kahguyaht: “‘You could kill us. You could make *mules* of our children – sterile monsters’” (emphasis added, 55). Lilith’s comment reflects the anti-miscegenation contention that different races were in fact different species and could not ultimately reproduce from one generation to the next – therefore, interracial/inter-species mixing was “unnatural” or “monstrous.” More than imagining future generations in such stigmatizing and animalizing terms, Lilith continually likens her experiences and treatment by the Oankali to that of an animal, while the Oankali are made to adopt the role of the human who dominates, if not mistreats, animals. Lilith reflects:

In a very real sense, she was an experimental animal ... Experimental animal, parent to domestic animals? Or ... nearly extinct animal part of a captive breeding program? Human biologists had done that before the war – used a few captive members of an endangered animal species to breed more for the wild population. (60)

³⁶ The figure of the alien was also used in nineteenth- to mid-twentieth-century science fiction as a metaphor for the Other as an invasive threat. In a sense, the Oankali refer to both the contradictory discourses through which these early alien figures were stigmatized: they are both inferior, “impure,” contaminating beings, and superior as a powerful “threat” to humanity. Though I do not discuss these earlier representations of aliens, the same racializing discourses were used in the configuration of the vampire, as in Stoker’s *Dracula*.

Here, in the position of an “inferior” animalized Other, Lilith embodies the fragility of the concept of “human” since it can only be understood through binaries such as that of the human/animal. Moreover, Lilith’s references to “breeding” and (genetic) “experimenta[tion]” continue to characterize the Oankali practice of species mixing as potentially problematic, since, as she suggests, their “breeding” is contingent upon the Oankali’s aim of either keeping the humans as “domestic animals” or of saving them from extinction. Initially, Lilith seems to be convinced that the former relationship is their intention since her repeated use of animalizing metaphors with regards to herself refers to domestic animals. Having befriended one of Jdahya’s and Kahguyaht’s children, Nikanj, an ooloi who will later become her partner, Lilith is persuaded to meet its friends: “Nikanj’s friends poked and prodded her exposed flesh and tried to persuade her through Nikanj to take off her clothing ... She was nothing more than an unusual animal to them. Nikanj’s new pet” (57). Given that the Oankali do not have pets and eat a vegetarian diet out of respect for animals, Lilith’s analogy is based on a human perception of the human/animal binary. Lilith later relies on a similar use of animalizing metaphors to appeal to the “humanity” of the one human she sees while staying with her Oankali “family.” When it becomes clear that Paul Titus might rape her while the Oankali watch, she says: “‘Animals get treated like this. Put a stallion and a mare together until they mate, then send them back to their owners. What do they care? They’re just animals!’ ... ‘Don’t make yourself their dog!’ she pleaded. ‘Don’t do this!’” (95). Here, Lilith’s use of simile and metaphor suggests that Titus can keep his “humanity” by avoiding “animalistic” behavior, which is not only based on the human/animal binary but is also metonymically linked to the Oankali’s treatment of the two humans. Given that both characters are Black, Lilith’s character further underlines the ways in which the racial Other was constructed through similar animalizing tropes and practices.³⁷

³⁷ I should nuance this assertion, however, since the narrative cautions against the (over-)signification of somatic

However, Lilith and other humans characterize the Oankali using animalizing rhetoric, which not only positions them as the racial Other, but also underlines the ways in which anti-miscegenation discourse additionally stigmatized those who mix or “miscegenate,” as well as their children. Confronted with the extreme unfamiliarity of Oankali bodies, Lilith initially finds herself interpreting and defining them through familiar somatic signifiers. While some of these – such as the presence of arms, legs, and mouths – liken the Oankali to “humanoid” beings, Lilith creates analogies between other physical elements and animals, pointing to scientific discourses in which Blacks were often aligned with apes.³⁸ Jdahya’s tentacles are “a nest of snakes” (13), give him a “sea-slug appearance” (25), and make “him look ... like a misplaced sea creature” (28). Even though Lilith is made to feel like an objectified animal at the hands of the Oankali and likens herself to “Nikanj’s pet,” she uses debasing and stigmatizing terms that position the Oankali as inferior animal-like creatures. Other human characters point to the metonymical link between animality and racial Otherness by continually reducing the Oankali to the somatic signifier of their tentacles, using the synecdoche of “worms” to refer to them. Characterizations involving animalizing rhetoric instantiate the ways in which the construction of the mixed-species or mixed-race subject is contingent on that of the species/racial Other. Indeed, just as the “miscegen” in Croly and Wakeman’s 1864 pamphlet is characterized as hypersexual in the same way as the Black Other, “constructs” are animalized through the same metaphors and similes as the Oankali. For instance, Lilith imagines her future children to be like Jdahya, “grotesque, Medusa children” with “snakes for hair” and “nests of night crawlers for eyes and ears,” repeating the signifiers she had previously marked him with, in comparison to “how like her” her deceased child “had been” (13-14, 42-3). Although Lilith’s future “construct” son, Akin, does not initially display any visible Oankali

signifiers. I discuss this issue at the end of this section.

³⁸ See Chapter Two. There is an irony here since Lilith is characterized as Black, yet she is never linguistically associated to animals in conjunction with her skin color.

traits, he is called a “mongrel baby” by human resisters, recalling Lilith’s insistence that the Oankali practice of species mixing be referred to as “crossbreeding” (321, 42).³⁹ Likewise, human characters who “miscegenate” or mix with the Oankali are stigmatized as animalistic. Lilith’s partner, Joseph, is brutally murdered by a resister after witnessing Joseph’s new healing powers – a genetic modification given to him by Nikanj. For Curt, Joseph’s healing makes him less “human” and operates as a sign that points to species mixing. He tells Lilith and the Oankali: ““We didn’t kill a human being ... We killed one of your animals!”” (228).⁴⁰ In the third novel, Lilith and her future human partner, Tino, are also labeled “animals,” possessed by the Oankali with the repetition of the possessive adjective “your” (574). While the human resisters’ communication with the Oankali validates the latter as subjects, their refusal to address Lilith and Tino additionally objectifies the two characters. The resisters’ metaphor highlights the limitations of the human/animal binary – if one is not “human,” then one is “animal” – as well as its metonymical connection to anti-miscegenation discourse. Clearly, once Joseph and Lilith mate with the Oankali, they are no longer considered purely “human.” These conflicting uses of animalizing rhetoric thus point to the disjunction between sign and meaning, and highlight the ways in which the narrative’s allegorization of anti-miscegenation plays with a metaphorical association between either the humans or the Oankali as the vehicle for an (illusory) extra-diegetical racial Other.

³⁹ “Resister” is the term given to human characters who resist mixing with the Oankali, both socially and sexually.

⁴⁰ Another instance in the third novel represents a similar viewpoint, that death is better than miscegenation with, or contamination from, the Oankali. Jodahs, Lilith and Nikanj’s ooloi child, attempts to rescue his human mates, held prisoner by village elders who wish to maintain racial purity:

“Why do you want Jesusa and Tomas?” demanded the disgusted elder.
 “They are my mates.”

....

“It would be better for them to be killed than to be given to you,” the disgusted elder said. (729-30)

The elder’s remarks are reminiscent of a scene in Victor Halperin’s 1932 *White Zombie* in which Neal imagines his wife, Madeline, to be “in the hands of natives,” to which he exclaims: “Oh no, better dead than that!” (33:07). There is also a parallel to be made with *True Blood* here. René, the first season’s serial killer, clearly esteems that female “fangbangers” are also “better dead” than alive and having sex with vampires.

The narrative's problematization of animalizing discourse is underlined by another discursive means through which "human" identity was delineated at the expense of the racially "impure" and animalized Other, namely religious discourse. The title of Butler's trilogy, *Lilith's Brood*, points to the narrative's allegorization of religious discourse and the ways in which nineteenth-century religious discourse was contingent on animality in its construction and stigmatization of racial Otherness and miscegenation.⁴¹ Jesusa, one of Jodahs' future human mates, initially repeats the perspective of the resisters, stating that "[t]his is an alien thing Jodahs wants of us" (648). As if aware of the multiple meanings that "alien" might imply ("strange" as well as belonging to the alien), she continues in an attempt to clarify: "Certainly it's an un-Christian thing, an un-Human thing" (*idem*).⁴² "Alien" must be defined through oppositions, and the "thing" which she is unable to name in a precise manner – namely species mixing or mating with the Oankali – can only be understood through metonymical links to Christianity and to "humanity" as well as the metonymical link they bear to each other. Likewise, Lilith is characterized as "un-Christian," and therefore evil, and as "un-Human," and thus animalistic. Lilith tells Tino, a young man who leaves the resisters and later becomes her

⁴¹ See my discussion of anti-miscegenation discourse in Chapter Three.

⁴² The shifting of animalizing and objectifying signifiers and practices in relation to the humans and the Oankali is also present with regards to the definition of who or what is defined as "alien." The term is used several times during the second chapter of *Dawn* when Lilith meets her first Oankali, Jdahya. Yet, rather than referring to him as an alien, the narrator, along with free indirect discourse through Lilith, employ the word to describe Jdahya's body and behavior. Lilith at first hesitates approaching him due to "his alienness, his difference, his unearthliness" (13). She "need(s) to hear him speak. Silent, he (is) utterly alien" (14). His "movements (are) so fluid and natural, yet so alien that it fascinated her" (17). In these instances, the term "alien" is used as an adjective that defines something as "strange, unfamiliar, different" (*OED*, n. pag.), reflecting Lilith's attempt to understand Jdahya rather than to fix him within an identity category through the use of the term as a noun. However, it is not merely Jdahya's behavior that is described as "alien" in this scene. When Lilith asks Jdahya if he "understand(s) ... what happened" to humans during their nuclear war, he responds: "I'm aware of what happened. It's ... alien to me. Frighteningly alien" (16). Jdahya thereby reverses the position of who or what appears as or acts as "alien" and even suggests that it is human behavior that is to be feared rather than Oankali behavior. The term is also applied in a later situation when Lilith meets a Black human man, Paul Titus: "He looked wrong to her at first – alien and strange, yet familiar, compelling" (85-6). The description not only suggests that Lilith's notion of what is "alien" and "strange" is altered after having spent time with the Oankali, but it also continues to highlight the fragility of the meaning of the term "alien," which is additionally contradicted by its juxtaposition with her labeling of Paul as "familiar." The lack of the signifier "alien" (at least through Lilith) as an identity category, and its use in relation to shifting positions of perception vis-à-vis the self and the Other, highlights the inability of such terms to fix stable identities as well as stable points of reference for the self and the Other.

partner: “[N]ow and then when we get ex-resisters traveling through Lo and they hear my name, they assume I have horns. Some of the younger ones have been taught to blame me for everything – as though I were a second Satan or Satan’s wife or some such idiocy” (297).⁴³ Lilith’s stigmatization involves a network of stigmatizing discourses: religious, human versus animal, and anti-miscegenation. Because she reproduces with the Oankali, she is fantasized through the mythology surrounding her Biblical namesake and imagined to bear the signifier of “horns” like a creature of “Satan” – an implication of her evil, “un-Christian” and “un-Human,” and thus animalistic identity. The trilogy’s title, *Lilith’s Brood*, implies the mixed-species children she produces with the Oankali are not only animalized as a “brood” but are also characterized as demonic through their metonymical relationship with and belonging to Lilith.

Lilith’s name and her fantasized relationship with Satan in conjunction with anti-miscegenation discourse point to another discourse on which the category of the “human” is metonymically contingent: heteronormativity. Indeed, just as the human/animal binary is wielded to delineate the category of the “human,” Butler’s trilogy points to the ways in which anti-miscegenation discourse and its stigmatizing language were constructed through heteronormativity, illustrating Judith Butler’s contention that “homosexuality and miscegenation ... converge at and as the constitutive outside of a normative heterosexuality that is at once the regulation of a racially pure production” (1993, 167). In addition to being animalized for their relationship with the Oankali, Lilith and Joseph are also dehumanized

⁴³ Butler’s decision to name her main character Lilith evidently draws from the ancient Biblical connotations of this figure. “In rabbinic literature Lilith is variously depicted as the mother of Adam’s demonic offspring following his separation from Eve or as his first wife. Whereas Eve was created from Adam’s rib (Genesis 2:22), some accounts hold that Lilith was the woman implied in Genesis 1:27 and was made from the same soil as Adam. Insolently refusing to be subservient to her husband, Lilith left Adam and the perfection of the Garden of Eden; three angels tried in vain to force her return. According to some mythologies, her demonic offspring were sired by an archangel named Samael and were not Adam’s progeny. Those children are sometimes identified as incubi and succubi.” (Britannica.com)

through the gender and sexual binaries – characterizations that highlight the performativity of gender as well as the “play” of metaphors “on the body’s surface” (J. Butler, 1990, 184). Lilith’s superior strength and regenerative capacities – another genetic modification from Nikanj – not only cause certain humans to question whether or not she is in fact “human,” but also whether she is a “man” and/or a lesbian (180, 147, 299). Likewise, Joseph is characterized as a “faggot” (159). The homophobic metaphors imposed on Lilith and Joseph point to the ways in which species/racial mixing is configured as sexually perverse – the “constitutive outside of a normative heterosexuality.” Lilith is also repeatedly called a “whore” – a reminder that monogamy is inherent to heteronormativity and to the concept of racial purity, particularly with regards to female bodies.⁴⁴

The narrative complicates the resisters’ views of heteronormativity through the topic of incest – the great “taboo” according to Claude Lévi-Strauss and his work *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949). Both the Oankali and human resisters’ means of reproduction demonstrate the ways in which the framing of incest, as taboo or not, is culturally contingent, in addition to being tied with disease and species purity versus mixing. While the Oankali typically reproduce through an ooloi and an Oankali brother and sister, their mixing with humans involves a human couple who are unrelated – that is, until the third novel. Jodahs becomes chemically attached to the brother and sister pair of Tomas and Jesusa and offers to cure their neurofibromatosis as well as to mate with them, an idea that Jesusa finds disturbing. Jodahs explains to her:

“We keep one another well and make children together. We – ”
 “Have children with my brother!” ...
 “Your people have been breeding brother to sister and parent to child for generations.”
 ...
 “People had to do what they did in the past. Like the children of Adam and Eve. There wasn’t anyone else ... They told us you were of the devil.” (636-7)

⁴⁴ Lilith’s stigmatization as a “whore” is similar to Sookie’s and other “fangbangers” in *True Blood*. See my discussion of the Croly and Wakeman pamphlet in Chapter Three. The writers devote a chapter to white women as particularly susceptible to the charms of Black men, and thus to miscegenation, and ignore the role of white men vis-à-vis Black women.

Jesusa's explanations illustrate the ways in which Christian ideology has been utilized to normalize the forced incestuous "breeding" in her community, and to deny disease propagation in order to promote species purity in opposition to mixing. While Jodahs offers her a relationship that might be viewed as incestuous, he highlights the contradiction in her objections. From the resisters' perspective, incest is only viewed as problematic when it involves species mixing, whereas for Jodahs it is only problematic when it results in disease propagation. The narrative thus highlights that a sexual practice's framing as non-normative and "taboo" is contingent on other discourses, such as religion, (anti-)miscegenation, and disease.

The differing sex/gender system of the Oankali contributes to their species Otherness, and underlines the metonymical relationship between heteronormativity and the "human." For instance, the existence of a third Oankali gender, the ooloi, highlights the limitations of language to "humanize," or rather to validate certain Oankali individuals as subjects, at the same time that it continually positions the ooloi as the inferior Other. With no third gender pronoun in English, Lilith has no choice but to refer to an ooloi as "it." Initially, because the ooloi are less "humanoid" than the other female- and male-sexed Oankali, Lilith finds comfort in the objectifying pronoun, thinking that "(s)ome things deserved to be called 'it'" (49). And yet "it" is later deemed a sign of respect, an opposition to the imposition of gender normativity in human terms. In the third novel, Jodahs observes that Lilith "insert[s] the English 'it'" while speaking Spanish "because in English the word was truly neuter" (656). Jodahs notes that "Spanish did not have a word that translated exactly. Spanish-speaking people usually handled the ooloi gender by ignoring it. They used masculine or feminine, whichever felt right to them – when they had to use anything" (*idem*). The move from the meaning associated with "it," as well as the lack of a pronoun to refer to the ooloi in Spanish, highlight the disjunction between sign and meaning along with the illusion of sex/gender as something that is pre-discursive. The

humans' difficulty in conceptualizing the Oankali sex/gender system in language is additionally emphasized with regards to sexual relationships with the ooloi. The ooloi's more active role in sex and reproduction, along with their use of tentacles to "penetrate" the human nervous system, are continually interpreted as masculine, which metonymically shapes the act of sex between an ooloi and a male as homosexual. When Jodahs first meets a human male resister, the latter tells it: "'You take men as though they were women!'" (599). Although Joseph is stigmatized as a "'faggot'" by other humans, he also seems to feel that his sexuality is threatened by intercourse with Nikanj. But he displaces this fear onto Lilith and relates it to the need to "protect" Lilith's body from the Oankali. He tells her: "'I don't want him here again ... Don't let him touch you! If you have a choice, keep away from him! ... 'It isn't male, Joseph' ... 'What difference does that make!'" (170). Joseph's denial of Nikanj's third sex status imposes heteronormative logic on the Oankali. But he also attempts to reassert his masculinity by "protecting" Lilith's body, an act which would equally "protect" her from miscegenation with the Oankali.

Oankali discourses and practices expose the "human" as performative, contingent on a set of fantasies that cannot be played out in the post-apocalyptic setting. The three novels continually illustrate "human" performativity and human characters' attempts to repeat and (re)assert the "human" in opposition to the alien (and racial and/or sexual) Other. Human performativity is illustrated not only through the stigmatization of those who are different, but also through acts and gestures that are contingent on multiple identity categories. One of these is gender and the repetition of traditional gender roles. In the first novel when Lilith is in charge of the first group of newly awakened humans, she is confronted with men (as well as some women) who see the need to form heterosexual couples as a duty to the human race, regardless of whether or not certain women refuse to comply. After a violent altercation, Lilith tells the group:

“‘There’ll be no rape here ... Nobody here is property. Nobody has the right to the use of anybody else’s body. There’ll be no back-to-the-Stone-Age, caveman bullshit! ... We stay human. We treat each other like people, and we get through this like people. Anyone who wants to be something less will have his chance in the forest. There’ll be plenty of room for him to run away and play at being an ape.’” (178)⁴⁵

More than objecting to a particular performance of masculinity, Lilith’s discourse reveals another binary through which the “human” and gender are constructed: civilization versus nature/savagery. Her arguments not only demonstrate the contingency of “civilization” on the human/animal binary (“play[ing]” “ape”), but also its metonymical construction through accepted cultural practices. So while for some male characters, enacting an aggressive patriarchal role is a “human” necessity, for Lilith, sexual violence and treating people like “property” is the behavior of the “caveman” and the animal. She thereby denies “human” status to those who once engaged in such (historical and cultural) practices.

The trilogy stages a series of fantasies that demonstrate the ways in which (“human”) identity is contingent on the conceptualization of space. While Butler plays with the notion of space shaping the bodies that reside in it – as, for example, the oolois Jodahs and Aaor whose bodies adapt to the environment around them – her human characters use and define space in relation to identity in ways that illustrate the fragility of these notions.⁴⁶ For instance, in the fourth part of *Dawn*, entitled “Training Floor,” humans are placed in an environment that resembles a forest on Earth, but that is actually part of the Oankali spaceship (the goal being to help them learn to live and survive in the wilderness). Yet several humans are convinced that they are no longer on the Oankali ship and have returned to Earth; therefore, they immediately begin to put distance between themselves and the Oankali. In the same scene in which Lilith and the Oankali confront Curt and his fellow resisters for killing Joseph, Curt rejects them:

⁴⁵ In the second novel when the Oankali release humans on Earth, Lilith’s proposition for the future becomes reality since women are then regularly kidnapped and sold as sexual objects.

⁴⁶ In *Imago*, Jodahs reports Aaor’s continual shape alterations: “It changed radically: grew fur again, lost it, developed scales, lost them, developed something very like tree bark, lost that, then changed completely, lost its limbs, and went into a tributary river ... Hozh showed me what Aaor had become – a kind of near mollusk, something that had no bones left” (674).

“‘This is a human place! ... It’s off limits to you and your animals’” (227). Curt’s attempt to create a boundary separating humans from non-humans is also an attempt to define Lilith, along with the Oankali, as non-human and “animal.” The fact that Curt creates an illusory boundary between them, along with the fact that he mistakes the “human place” for Earth, suggests that these defining lines are fantasy. Nor does Curt recognize the irony in his comment: not only is the wilderness traditionally home to many animals, but he also overlooks the ways in which Indigenous populations have been denied human status partly through their relationship to the wild. Once on Earth in the second novel, humans quickly separate into those groups who are willing to mate with the Oankali and those who are not; and they form villages accordingly. Lo is the village where Lilith resides with her children and several Oankali, and it is stigmatized by humans from other villages. When Tino first arrives in Lo, he declares: “‘It’s primitive! You live like savages! ... Why don’t you at least build real houses and get rid of these shacks! ... You’ve got kids to plan for and provide for, and you’re going to let them slide right back into being cavemen!’” (280). Not only are Tino’s remarks reminiscent of Lilith’s from the previous novel, but they also highlight the ways in which space is defining of and intersects with race and class (and stigmatizations thereof). Like Curt, Tino initially imagines space as formative of identity – the Lo villagers and their children are and will be “primitive,” “savages,” and “cavemen.”⁴⁷

Tino’s remarks refer to another fantasy involved in “human” performativity, that of the family, a construction that contributes to the trilogy’s allegorization of anti-miscegenation discourse through the play of presence and absence of “alien” versus “human” signifiers on the surface of the bodies of children. In the same way that humans imagine space should be

⁴⁷ The metaphorical alignment of the Oankali with “primitive” “savages” is also called into question through their intentions with Earth. Indeed, once they have finalized their genetic “trade” with humans, their ship (an organic plant/animal-like being) will consume most of the planet’s resources and leave nothing but rock behind. Despite the Oankali’s superior knowledge of Earth’s plant and animal species, this final act positions the Oankali as colonizers and places a parallel between the humans and Indigenous populations.

manipulated to enact and to represent what is “human” as “civilized,” so too should the bodies of those who reside in “human” space embody and perform the “human” in contrast to the alien Other. Phoenix is defined by the adults that live in it as a human village, and as the village’s name suggests, it will be the site of humanity’s rebirth (368). Yet, because humans are sterile, the “birth” and continuation of the human race can only be enacted through the kidnapping and adoption of human/Oankali construct children. Because Akin’s only sensory tentacle is his tongue, the somatic signifier that otherwise marks him as Oankali remains largely concealed; he can pass as human and facilitate the Phoenix villagers’ illusion of parenting human children. But two construct girls with tentacle-like sensory organs on their head and throat are soon threatened by some of the villagers who wish to cut them off, believing that the absence of the tentacles will make them “human.” Neci, one of the primary advocates for removing the tentacles, argues: “Girl children who might someday be the mothers of a new Human race ought to look Human – ought to see Human features when they [look] in the mirror” (391). While this first comment of Neci’s suggests that she is conscious of the fact that the notion of human identity relies on somatic signifiers that must be repeatedly reinforced through the gaze (whether from another or from the self in the mirror), her later comment proves otherwise: “‘It *must* be done! We must raise Human children, not aliens who don’t even understand how we see things’” (393).⁴⁸ Neci’s perspective is clear: the construct children can only be one or the other, either “alien” with visible “alien” physical properties, or “human” without. Her argument points to essentialism – as if the absence of Oankali tentacles would give the girls a more “human” perspective – as well as racist discourses and practices. As Roger Lockhurst notes, this is “an almost textbook Fanonian moment of the ‘dirty nigger’ reduced to object and morselated by the white gaze” (37).⁴⁹ Moreover, while several villagers do not wish to see the

⁴⁸ This is one of the few instances in which the word “alien” is used to define the Oankali within the identity category. That it comes from the mouths of human resisters, and particularly racist characters, is significant.

⁴⁹ One might also be reminded of boarding schools for Native American children, in which “civilizing” methods included cutting long braided hair. The desire to surgically remove body parts might also refer to the operations

girls mutilated, Neci's comment nevertheless represents their perspective vis-à-vis mixed children such as Akin.

The construct children's experiences with the human resisters point to the fragile definitions of mixed-race children in relation to race, reminiscent of the continual shifting of the racial binary through blood quotas and anti-miscegenation laws and discourse. For the two construct girls, it seems possible to reshape the contours of their bodies, erasing "alien" somatic signifiers, in order for them to cross the "color line." Nevertheless, Akin's experiences highlight the fact that such a repositioning is also contingent on "human" performativity through the repetition of acts and gestures. Akin's "alien" acts and gestures are continually conceptualized through animality, disease, and disability discourses. Despite his ability to pass, Akin is first "outed" when he speaks and reveals intelligence beyond his physical appearance of a two-year-old human child (as one of his kidnappers remarks: "'It's just what we knew it was ... a *mongrel* baby'" [emphasis added 321]). In addition to being labeled as "venomous" by his adoptive father Gabe once he uses his tongue in a "non-human" manner, other resisters call him a "midget" due to his "unusual" size and the sound of his voice (350, 360). In contrast with the dehumanizing discourses that the resisters impose on him, Akin attempts to assert his "human" identity. Initially, Akin repeats the Oankali's vision of hybridity and tells Tate that her desire to have "pure" human children "'concerns him too'": "'I'm Human like you – and Oankali like Ahajas and Dichaan'" (403). Because Tate is convinced that Akin's part-Oankali status means that he is not human, she asserts that he does not "'understand'" and it does not concern him, imposing logic like the One Drop Rule on Akin's mixed-species status (*idem*).

Akin's attempt to "understand" another (or the opposing) point of view is mirrored in the trilogy's use of narrative perspective, which also problematizes the traditional allegorical

that are performed on children who are not born with a clearly defined male or female sex. Another human who agrees with Neci implies that the constructs' sex/gender identity is as much a factor as their human status: "'They're alien. Un-Human. How can little *girls* grow up to be Human *women* when their own sense organs betray them?'" (emphasis added, 391).

alignment of each group with the tenor of either racial Otherness or whiteness. While the first novel is focalized through Lilith who gradually comes to accept the Oankali way of life, the second novel is focalized through Akin who eventually adopts the human resister perspective in opposition to the Oankali, specifically in relation to species purity versus mixing.⁵⁰ Rather than continuing his attempt to assert partial “humanness,” Akin later advocates Tate’s point of view and argues with Dichaan that even with human genes, the new “species” will be thought of as an Oankali species:

“Then it will be an Oankali species ... It will grow and divide as Oankali always have, and it will call itself Oankali.”

“It will be Oankali. Look within the cells of your own body. You are Oankali.”

“And the Humans will be extinct, as they believe.”

“Look within your cells for them, too. Your cells in particular.”

“But we will be Oankali. They will only be ... something we consumed.” (443)

Akin points out that the definition of Oankali as hybrid or mixed is problematic when it does not allow for the existence of another way of being, one that does not involve hybridity or mixing with the Oankali. When Akin learns that the Oankali have a separate group (or “race”), the Akjai, that never mixes with other species, his sense of the Oankali injustice towards humans becomes even more acute. These realizations then lead him to argue in favor of the human resisters, that they too should be allowed to have an “Akjai” group, and to convince the Oankali to restore their fertility and to help them start a colony on Mars. Through Akin, “the Oankali come to understand a different difference, so to speak, one which retains a desire for similitude *against* vertiginous hybridization” (Lockhurst 37). Indeed, here, human (racial) purity is rewritten as “difference” in relation to the Oankali’s hybrid “sameness.” As Walter

⁵⁰ Lilith’s adoption of the Oankali perspective is voiced in the second novel when she advises Akin to follow the “Oankali way” while she also demonstrates an understanding of the metonymical construction of the “human”: “Human beings fear difference ... Oankali crave difference. Humans persecute their different ones, yet they need them to give themselves definition and status. Oankali seek difference and collect it. They need it to keep themselves from stagnation and overspecialization. If you don’t understand this, you will. You’ll probably find both tendencies surfacing in your own behavior ... When you feel a conflict, try to go the Oankali way. Embrace difference.” (329)

Benn Michaels writes: “Insofar as identity and difference are complementary rather than oppositional terms, the human desire to stay human is simultaneously (and without contradiction) the desire to stay the same and the desire to be different” (“Political Science Fictions” 658).

While Akin initially challenges human resister prejudice towards the Oankali, the second novel’s focalization through his character also stages the ways in which hybridity can become a hegemonic discourse. Lockhurst writes: “The maturity and complexity of Butler’s work lies in portraying how [Homi Bhabha’s] ‘something different’ can entrain a recrudescence of conservative and racist thought as much as positive disruption to such paradigms” (Lockhurst 37).⁵¹ Coupled with Akin’s questioning of Oankali species mixing as a benefit to humans is its framing as a biological need rather than a cultural practice, a displacement that aligns hybridity with essentialism. Referring to the Oankali “organelle” and its role in reproduction and species mixing, Molly Wallace writes that the “ominous personification of the organelle hints at a less positive consequence of the genetic exchange”:

For if the Oankali value difference, they tend to reproduce their own identity. What the organelles would “do on their own” is what they do in more controlled ways in Oankali bodies – introduce themselves into another species’ gene pool, turning [them], once “other,” into Oankali “self.” (105)

The Oankali’s unshakeable faith in the organelle, along with their continual naturalization of the body as a means to understand the “self,” not only repeat essentialist discourse, but also render their position as inscribed readers problematic.⁵² Although the Oankali point to the disjunction between sign and meaning in human characters’ readings of the body’s exterior,

⁵¹ While Bhabha evokes the idea that hybridity creates a third space (“*neither the One ... nor the Other ... but something else besides*” [Bhabha quoted in Young, 23]), “where the binarisms of cultural politics are suspended altogether” (Moslund 10), Robert Young asserts that, despite what Bhabha suggests, the hybrid third space cannot escape binary thinking: “Hybridity here becomes a third term which can never in fact *be* third because, as a monstrous inversion, a miscreated perversion of its progenitors, it exhausts the differences between them” (23).

⁵² Although it can be argued that Oankali biology and practices subvert the humanist discourse of the mind/body dichotomy through the erasure of this distinction, their essentialist readings lead rather to its reversal. See the examples in the following note.

they impose their own essentialist readings, suggesting that the body's interior offers signs for a character's or group's behavior. More than this, the Oankali's reading of (human) biology also functions as a means of domination.⁵³ The Oankali's definition of "the Human Contradiction" (intelligence and hierarchical behavior) is a "genetic problem" which they read as more prevalent in males, and becomes a reason for their controlled reproduction of "Human-born" male construct children, Akin being the first. Akin is watched carefully, and in some ways, his behavior confirms Oankali gender essentialism.⁵⁴ Yet his fight for a human "Akjai" group exposes the Oankali to their own contradictions of "intelligence and hierarchical behavior," and positions his character as the voice of equal rights with regards to (inter)species reproduction.

The narrative perspective in the third novel continues the trilogy's questioning of the two group's inscribed readings of the Other and foregrounds the problematic imposition of identity categories. Jodahs is the first "Human-born" ooloi construct, and it is also the only homodiegetic narrator of the trilogy. Since Jodahs was originally genetically programmed to be male, Jodahs' metamorphosis into an ooloi is unintentional, and both human and Oankali characters alike are initially frightened by its changing sexual identity, continually labeling the change and Jodahs itself as "wrong."⁵⁵ Jodahs' subsequent exile emphasizes the character's liminal position between and/or outside the two groups, despite Nikanj's reassurance that the

⁵³ Other examples occur in the first novel before Akin's birth. For instance, Nikanj impregnates Lilith without her knowledge and before she deems herself to be "ready" (246). Nikanj's deciding in her place parallels an earlier instance after it has intercourse with Joseph (Lilith's chosen human partner in the first novel) and the latter protests. Nikanj tells Joseph: "Your body said one thing. Your words said another" (190). As Roger Lockhurst notes, Butler thus "includes deeply problematic scenes where Oankali justify the enforcement of interspecies sex by reading biological 'urges' over and above conscious refusal" (37). In other words, not only do the Oankali behave as if they are superior to humans, but they also believe that they have more knowledge of humans than the latter do of themselves and that this grants them a certain amount of authority over human bodies.

⁵⁴ Soon after Akin is born, Nikanj tells Lilith: "He'll be like Oankali-born males now – a solitary wanderer when he's not mated ... Most Human males aren't particularly monogamous. No construct males will be" (260). Later in the novel when Akin is older, two of his father figures discuss whether or not "the boy" is in fact "wander[ing] too much" (421).

⁵⁵ This is a term that human resisters, Tino initially included, use to refer to Akin in reference to his Oankali characteristics.

“‘child is perfect’” (539). Drawing from Donna Haraway’s “Cyborg Manifesto,” Cathy Peppers repeats Nikanj’s term and argues that “by the time we get to the third novel, the text fully embodies in its construct ooloi hero(ine) Jodahs a cyborg identity which breaks down the boundaries between human/nonhuman, male/female, and natural/technological,” noting that with Jodahs, “the trilogy has come to the ‘perfection’ of a new species” (10). While the three novels’ titles – *Dawn*, *Adulthood Rites*, and *Imago* – do appear to symbolize a progression from birth to adulthood, from immaturity to maturity, Peppers’ use of the term “perfection” ignores the ways in which the narratives problematize the idealization of hybridity. As Sten Pultz Moslund has asserted regarding the discourse of hybridity, and as the trilogy illustrates, it is not “an exceptional language of discursive transgression and liberation,” but as Peppers’ contention shows, a “language that has in many cases become dominant and normative” (11). Jodahs’ voice and use of “I” do not function as a strategy to symbolize an ideal position (and what is more, the only ideal position in the trilogy), but rather to assert a subject position in contrast to its (in)definability through inscribed readers. Moreover, given that Jodahs’ body continually changes depending on the identity categories of the characters and the space around it, Jodahs’ character illustrates the construction of identity through metonymy. It becomes ooloi due to close proximity with Nikanj (537) (and its sibling, Aaor, also correspondingly becomes ooloi), it grows breasts to attract a human male (601), and becomes “frog-like” while traveling on a river (591, 604).⁵⁶ Lilith’s response to Jodahs in the latter case is reminiscent of her use of stigmatizing discourses towards the Oankali in the first novel:

“What are you doing?” my Human mother asked. “Letting your body do whatever it wants to?” Her voice and posture expressed stiff disapproval.

“As long as I don’t develop an illness,” I said.

She frowned. “I wish you could see yourself through my eyes. Deformity is as bad as illness.”

I walked away from her. I had never done that before. (591-2)

⁵⁶ The biological sexes of the Oankali function through metonymy: the metamorphosis of one sibling into a male contributes to the metamorphosis of the next child into a female. Since Jodahs becomes ooloi rather than male, Aaor also becomes ooloi rather than female as originally programmed by Nikanj.

Although Jodahs does technically have the power to “see [it]self through [Lilith’s] eyes” by linking one of its tentacles to Lilith, the use of the homodiegetic narrator is otherwise what enables the narrative NOT to adopt Lilith’s point of view, as well as for Jodahs to signify through silence and action the rejection of her problematic use of disability discourse to characterize its body.

Like *True Blood*, Butler’s *Lilith’s Brood* contains a diverse “cast” of human characters, and does not relegate all references to race to a figurative level of meaning. But if race can be said to be represented in a “literal” or “realistic” sense in the narrative, the text continues to demonstrate that race is discursive. Indeed, race is not a topic made present through its diverse human characters alone – such an argument would problematically impose (extra-diegetical) meanings on the somatic signifiers of the characters. As Tucker implies, this is what many critics have done, using Lilith’s dark skin color (as well as Butler’s) and “allusions to slavery” (172) to read the narrative as a traditional allegory of American slavery. Referring to *Lilith’s Brood* as well as Butler’s *Kindred*, Tucker writes that “the author’s race has overdetermined these stories’ interpretations, leading readers mistakenly to see both storylines as imaginative recreations of ante-bellum American slavery,” despite Butler’s denial of the reference in *Lilith’s Brood*, as well as the “limits” of reading the Oankali as “figures for white slave owners and overseers” (173-4). Such an interpretation also overlooks the fact that while Lilith experiences discrimination from the human resisters, it is due to her superhuman strength – a sign of her contact with (or “contamination” from) the alien Other and a deviation from her gender role – and not a result of her skin color. Rather, since other human characters do experience racial prejudice, race is shown to be discursive through inscribed readings, demonstrating that race is made “real” through racism. The thematization of the difference between sign and meaning that occurs regarding species difference and the destabilization of each group’s reading of the other (or Other), also extends to the reading of race. The most

blatant examples come from the human resisters who discriminate based on the somatic signifiers of both the Oankali and fellow humans. For instance, Joseph is “dislike[d]” for “the shape of his eyes” (159). Akin is “driven out of ... a village of English-speaking people because he was browner than the villagers were” (434), his “race” ironically appearing to be more threatening than his species difference. Significantly, racial categories are not named, underlining the fact that racism operates through the meanings attributed to somatic signifiers. Though the Oankali do not adopt human racism, they do ascribe problematic meanings to human somatic signifiers. Dichaan voices what the Oankali perceive as the reason for human “differences”: “The differences you perceive between Humans – between groups of Humans – are the result of isolation and inbreeding, mutation, and adaptation to different Earth environments ... Joseph and Lilith were born in very different parts of this world – born to long separated peoples” (262). Whether the reason is genetic/biological or environmental, the Oankali also perceive “groups of Humans” based on somatic signifiers, each of which is given an “origin” that is pre-discursive.⁵⁷ While Tucker takes issue with critics’ reading of race in connection to slavery, he draws from Dichaan’s quote to suggest that Butler does not necessarily dispute racial categories. He cites the trilogy’s “assertion of African-derived cultural heritage,” later writing: “To the extent that *Xenogenesis* engages in a critique of race as a theoretical concept, its investment in the assertion of a black, African-derived cultural identity suggests that the real target of Butler’s critique is the racist deployment of race by white supremacy” (174-5). His own argument employs another way in which race is metonymically constructed: through culture. As Stuart Hall has argued:

nature and culture operate as metaphors for one another; they operate metonymically. It is the function of the discourse and of race as the signifier to make these two systems, nature and culture, correspond with one another in such a way as to read off the one against the other ... It is constituting a system of equivalences between nature and culture which is the function of race as a signifier. (1996, n. pag.)

⁵⁷ Dichaan’s comment is also reminiscent of the nineteenth-century monogenetic discourse regarding the “origin” of racial categories. See Chapter Two.

Tucker's linking of "black" to "African-derived cultural identity" illustrates Hall's contention that race is often naturalized through the metonymy of culture, or that "nature and culture operate as metaphors for one another" (*idem*). Such readings mirror the imposition of (racial) meanings on characters' bodies, which occur within the text through inscribed readers. This – not "the racist deployment of race by white supremacy" alone – is precisely what the text "critique[s]."

True Blood and *Lilith's Brood* use the figure of the "monster" to point to the problematic ways in which "monstrosity" has functioned as a metaphor for racial difference. *True Blood* does this by repeating "monstrous" metaphors in conjunction with racial discourses and exposing the ways in which these connections operate metonymically rather than metaphorically. *Lilith's Brood* also does this, but uses the figure of the "monster" to expose the "human" more particularly as a fantasized category through its contingency on racial discourses. Both texts illustrate the ways in which race is comprised of (and part of) a network of discourses, each of which relies on another. Both use deconstructive allegory by thematizing the "difference between sign and meaning," by displacing the links between signifiers and signifieds, and by staging the ways in which inscribed readings of the racial or species Other are erroneous. Each text illustrates the performativity of identity categories through the disjunction between performance and the "play" with absence or presence of signifiers on the "body's surface" (J. Butler, 1990, 184). Perhaps more so than *True Blood*, Octavia Butler's text appears to offer an alternative means of perception through its alien Other. Even here, the Oankali and their "constructs" are ultimately inserted back into a binary logic and understanding of difference. In allegorizing race, the two texts highlight the self-reflexivity of language, where both "literal" and figurative meanings operate through the same mechanisms

of metaphor which are ultimately metonymical. The extra-diegetical “reality” of race – the concept of the racial Other – is exposed as being as much a fantasy as is the “monster.”

Conclusion

This thesis has pinpointed the ways in which racial differences are (de)constructed in relation to monstrous figures in contemporary fantasy fiction, by showing the ways in which the fantastical monster is part of the network of discourses that constitutes race. The project began with the idea that fantasy fiction offers a “safe space” where the contentious topic of race can be explored, where identity categories can be played with and subverted. However, this space is only “safe” insofar as it is perceived as ontologically distinct from an extra-diegetical reality. One of my starting points is that there is no “real,” non-fictive ontological basis of race – it is not pre-discursive, it is not grounded in the body. It only exists in discourse, and it becomes a lived experience when it is imposed upon individuals or groups through the discursive effects of racism and white privilege. Even so, the “exclusion, erasure, violent foreclosure, abjection” of those marked as racially Other, “return[s] within the very terms of discursive legitimacy” (Judith Butler, 1993, 8). If race is understood as illusory, it is also textual, a fantastical linguistic construction. The language of race can be incorporated into fantasy texts, and fantasy narratives

can (and do) (re)produce the illusion of race. Fantasy can both play into and destabilize the hegemonic perception and construction of race. The distinction between reinforcing race and its subversion is not clear-cut along the lines of earlier versus contemporary fantasy fiction. Contemporary renditions of monsters rewrite, put into question, and/or destabilize racist characterizations of monsters in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century fantasy fiction, such that certain contemporary configurations of the monster have persisted in the constitution of race. In this sense, these narratives *represent* racial differences, with all that the term “representation” implies – that there are real racial differences which can simply be portrayed in fantasy fiction. In this light, the difference between contemporary fantasy narratives and earlier constructions of the monster lies only in the fact that more recent fiction also performs the discursive effects of racism and white privilege. However, there are some contemporary fantasy texts that engage with these discursive effects while showing the ways in which race is comprised of metonymical relationships between and among signifiers and signifieds. Narratives that highlight the disjunction between sign and meaning continually displace race, the body, the “human,” and the “self” as potential transcendental signifiers. The different ways in which contemporary fantasy narratives are embedded in the network of discourses comprising race is, as I have argued, based on their use of allegory, whether in its traditional function as a series of metaphors or in a deconstructive manner, where metaphors are ultimately exposed as metonymical.

It was necessary to begin with an examination of the network of racial discourses in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries, that which forms the (con)textual historical background for the use of allegory in contemporary works. In Chapter Two, I looked at scientific discourses that claimed to describe what was perceived as the physical reality of race. The focus of Chapter Three was American legal discourses, those which endeavored to prescribe racial boundaries based on what was conceived of as a “natural” division between

racess. These scientific and legal discourses were thus written and pronounced under the assumption that they reflected the ontological extra-diegetical reality of race. The textual nature of race, the very thing these discourses aimed to circumscribe, was not acknowledged. By the same token, the rhetorical strategies and figurative language used to define race and racial differences were essentially over-looked. In cross-referencing these discourses with fantasy narratives of the same periods, my intention was to illustrate the ways in which figurative constructions of racial Otherness are repeated in the characterization of monstrous figures. More than this, I aimed to show that this repetition could occur because – regardless of the fictional or non-fictional status of the text – the metaphorical vehicles within each text are fantasized. If the language used in the definition of race is not factual or literal, particularly within a text that asserts a realistic truth-value with regards to that which it defines, nor is the extra-diegetical tenor of race. For Paul de Man, all language is “metaphorical metalanguage,” and because “metaphor is error,” language is allegorical (1979, 153, 151). In this sense, the discourses that constitute race are allegorical. In Chapter Two, animality, sexual deviancy, disease, contamination, and degeneration were analyzed in order to underline the metonymical contingency of race on these concepts, which are themselves constructed through figurative language. In Chapter Three, the legal discourses of (anti-)immigration, (anti-)miscegenation, and (anti-)passing were studied in order to show the ways in which race was by no means a stable concept, but was subject to the continually expanding, and sometimes contradictory, limitations that circumscribed the white American citizen. Each concept and ideology was cross-referenced with examples of monsters in fantasy narratives of the same period, which – like the discourses from which they draw – are allegorical, adding another level of meaning. A monstrous character such as Dracula highlights the fragility of the accumulation and imbrication of these concepts. For instance, Dracula threatens contamination through sexual deviancy which is contingent on animality; and animality is itself a sign of (potential)

contamination and/or degeneration. He embodies the passing immigrant who poses the danger of miscegenation, but because he can pass, he is also already miscegenated in addition to being fixed as the ethnically Other immigrant. Yet the metonymical contingency of these concepts, the ability to read *Dracula* and the novel through deconstructive allegory and, indeed, *Dracula*'s subversive threat to white hegemony, are ultimately stabilized and fixed through metaphor. *Dracula* is the vehicle for all that is Other, the constitutive "outside" to the transcendental signifier of the "human."

Part Two of the thesis then examined contemporary configurations of monsters. I contend that these fantasy narratives allegorize race through the allegorization of scientific and legal discourses and earlier fantasy fiction. But again, some contemporary narratives repeat and reinforce the stigmatizing construction of the racial Other. This is the case with the narratives discussed in Chapter Four which appear to rewrite the monster in relation to racial Otherness. The *Twilight* films, Stephen Norrington's *Blade*, and Len Wiseman's *Underworld* humanize their monstrous characters, reconfiguring the vampire and/or the werewolf as wrongfully stigmatized, misunderstood creatures, and victims of racism. They allegorize the monstrous threat of miscegenation – repositioning species/racial mixing either as a form of racist oppression or as a positive phenomenon. Yet their repetition of racial discourses operates through metaphors of the body. Somatic signifiers are grounded in the body's interior, a figurative relationship that mirrors each narrative's use of traditional allegory. So although the villainous characterization of the monster is displaced, the figure's "monstrous" traits are essentialized as the vehicle for the tenor of the racial Other. Signs of animality, hypersexuality, and disease are fixed to the literal meaning of the racially Othered body. Even though within the diegesis, the position of the "human" can figuratively include a monstrous character, the extra-diegetical "human" is reinforced as normative and white. These three texts thus continue to circumscribe the "human" as a transcendental signifier while naturalizing the body of the

racial Other through the same mechanisms as those found in the racist discourses of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries.

While the narratives in Chapter Five question and displace many of the problematic associations between racial Otherness and the monster, they reproduce a metaphorical relationship with the racial binary through traditional allegory. William Crain's *Blacula*, Octavia Butler's *Fledgling*, and Jewelle Gomez's *The Gilda Stories* are counter-narratives to the traditional white, hegemonic vampire narrative. Like the texts discussed in Chapter Four, they re-characterize the monster as a victim of racial oppression, but they empower their vampires with a subject position and highlight the illusory connections between Blackness and the concepts of animality, hypersexuality, and disease. These narratives underline the ways in which race is contingent on the identity categories of gender, sexuality, and class, as well as the performativity of each of these positions in and through each other. Each text illustrates Stuart Hall's assertion that race is a "floating signifier," demonstrating that the meanings to which the signifier is attached are subject to continual deferral. However, these texts also reflect Hall's argument that race is persistently fixed to the body via the somatic signifiers of skin "color" and "bone," "constitut[ing] a system of equivalences between nature and culture" (1996, n. pag.). Although the Black monster is "redeemed," the figure retains its Othered opposition to white hegemony, which naturalizes the binary structure of race.

In Chapter Six, it is the absence of extra-diegetical racially Other signifiers which enables the narratives discussed here to illustrate both the apparent absence of race and also the performativity of race, leading to the legitimization of whiteness as a figurative authority. The mutant in the *X-Men* comics and films, the zombie in Andrew Currie's *Fido*, and the cyborg in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* are constructed as metaphors for the racial Other through arbitrary somatic signifiers in conjunction with each narrative's allegorization of the racial discourses of immigration,

segregation, passing, and miscegenation. It is only through metonymical relationships between signifiers (such as spatial borders, collars, and physical examinations) that these monstrous characters are made to function as metaphorical vehicles for the racial Other. These narratives self-consciously perform race and expose it as a signifying practice that is also contingent on other identity categories. However, the predominantly white cast of characters in each narrative reinforces the position of the fantasy genre as figurative, textual, and discursive in opposition to a literal, extra-diegetical reality. Not only does this traditional allegory do little to insinuate that race is also a fantastical construction, it also reinforces whiteness as a transcendental signifier – capable of occupying the figurative position of racial Otherness while the racial Other is literalized and remains “outside” the text.

In contrast, the narratives discussed in Chapter Seven use deconstructive allegory, emphasizing the metonymical links between signifiers and continually displacing the relationships between signifiers and signifieds. HBO’s *True Blood* and Octavia Butler’s *Lilith’s Brood* assert a metaphorical relationship between the monster and racial Otherness, but consistently disrupt this association. The narratives highlight the performativity of race by continually interfering with citational and repetitive practices invoking racial meanings, to show how race is (de)constructed through a network of discourses that are staged through and against each other. In these texts, figurative and literal meanings conflict, one “denies precisely what the other affirms” (Owens, 63). These maneuvers do not reinforce binary constructions, but rather illustrate that their meanings cannot hold. The transcendental signifier of the “human” is dislodged from its central position and exposed as an illusory concept, through the disjunction between signs and meanings. As a result, these narratives reveal that race is a figurative, discursive, and ontological fantasy.

The primary corpus of the thesis is dominated by the figure of the vampire. As Donna Haraway has argued: “for better and for worse, vampires are vectors of category transformation

in a racialized, historical, national unconscious.” It is “a figure that both promises and threatens racial and sexual mixing” (1997, 214). Yet this capacity to subvert and transform categories is a removable characteristic that can easily be substituted for glittering skin. Vampires can be vampires whether they glow, are vegetarian, or use guns instead of fangs, whether they are pale or not, whether they can shape-shift or not, and whether they are “allergic” to the sun or not. They are constituted as vampires through signifying relationships. They are an example of Stuart Hall’s point that differences exist, “but what matters are ... the systems we bring to those differences,” how meaning is attributed to “those differences” (1996, n. pag.). In this light, other monstrous figures can also be “vectors of category transformation,” just as they can easily reinforce the contours of normative identity categories.

Many other kinds of monstrous figures and other texts might have been discussed in this thesis. James Cameron’s 2009 *Avatar* uses the animalized body of the alien as a metaphor for Indigenous peoples and as an allegory for colonization. The cyborg in NBC’s 2004-2009 television series *Battlestar Galactica*, the zombie in Jonathan Levine’s 2013 film *Warm Bodies* and the 2010 novel on which it was based by Isaac Marion, as well as the dinosaur in Eric Garcia’s *Anonymous Rex* trilogy of novels (1999, 2001, 2004), all align passing as human to racial passing through allegories of enslavement, segregation, and (anti-)miscegenation. Samuel Delany’s 1984 novel *Stars in My Pocket Like Grains of Sand* destabilizes the figure and the notion of the “alien” as a racial/species Other through the continual questioning of diverse (cultural) meanings. More recent texts include HBO’s 2016 *Westworld* series, which could have been analyzed for the narrative’s use of the cyborg as a means to play out fantasies of white supremacy and manifest destiny. FX’s humorous vampire series, *What We Do in the Shadows* (2019), might have been examined for its use of the discourses surrounding citizenship and national belonging. Netflix’s 2021 series *Sweet Tooth* would have provided an additional example of the illusory connection between disease, animality, and hybridity. The

works examined in this thesis are symptomatic and not necessarily unique in their approach to the topic of race. However, they effectively stand for contemporary conceptualizations of race and racial differences. These conceptualizations cross genres, media, and “high” versus “low” cultural texts. Whether they do so explicitly or not, they illustrate and contribute to the American fantasy of race.

Appendix: Figures

Chapter Two images

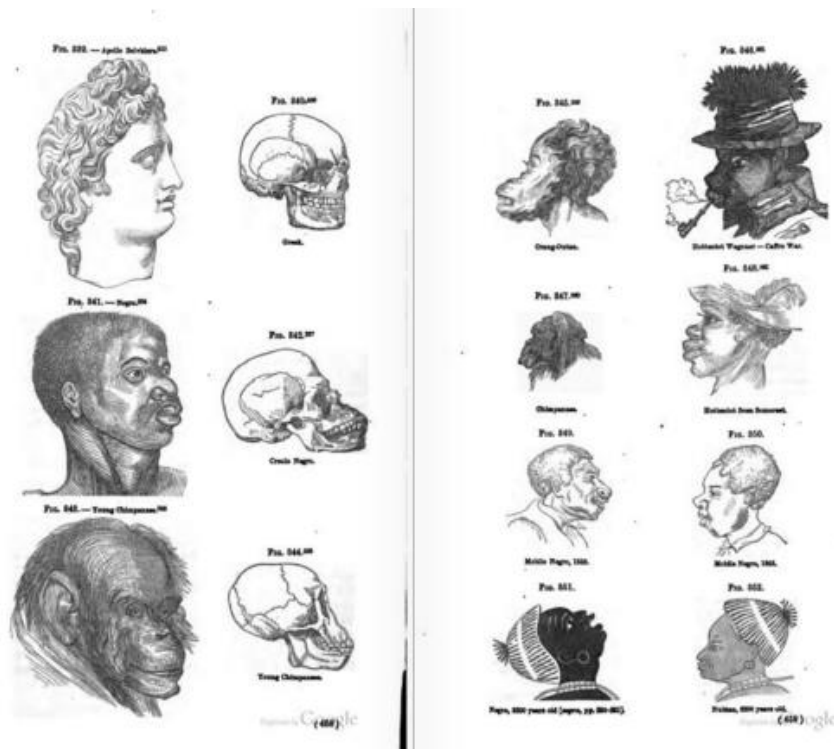


Figure 1: “Comparative Anatomy of Races” (in Nott and Gliddon’s *Types of Mankind*, 458-9)



Figure 2: “Divine” “line of kinship” (Carroll)



Figure 3: “The Image of God” (Carroll)

Chapter Three images



Figure 4: A Fu Manchu-like figure
(*Weird Tales* cover May 1931, designed by C.C. Senf)



Figure 5: *White Zombie* movie poster (TMDB)

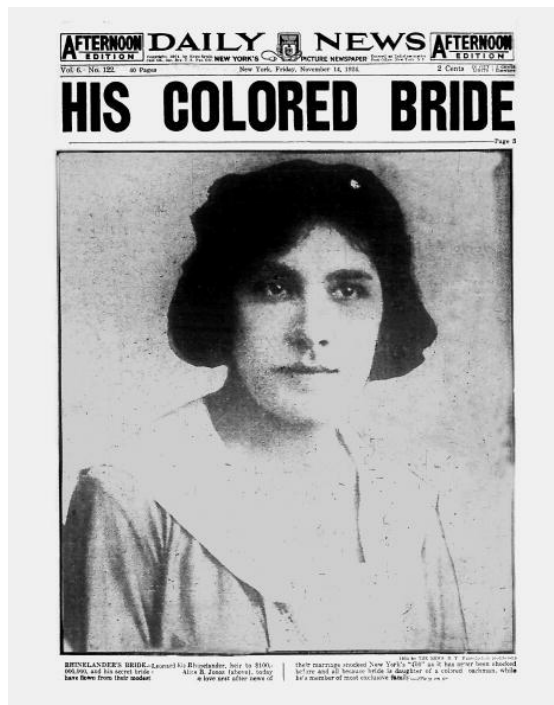


Figure 6: Alice Rhinelander, the “Colored Bride,” Nov. 14 1924
(PBS *Black Culture Connection*)

Chapter Four images



Figure 7: *Breaking Dawn, part 1* movie icon (TMDB)



Figure 8: *New Moon* movie poster (TMDB)



Figure 9: Wolfman and Colan's *Tomb of Dracula*, Issue No. 61, p. 2, 1977



Figure 10: Wolfman and Colan's *Tomb of Dracula*, Issue No. 61, p. 3, 1977

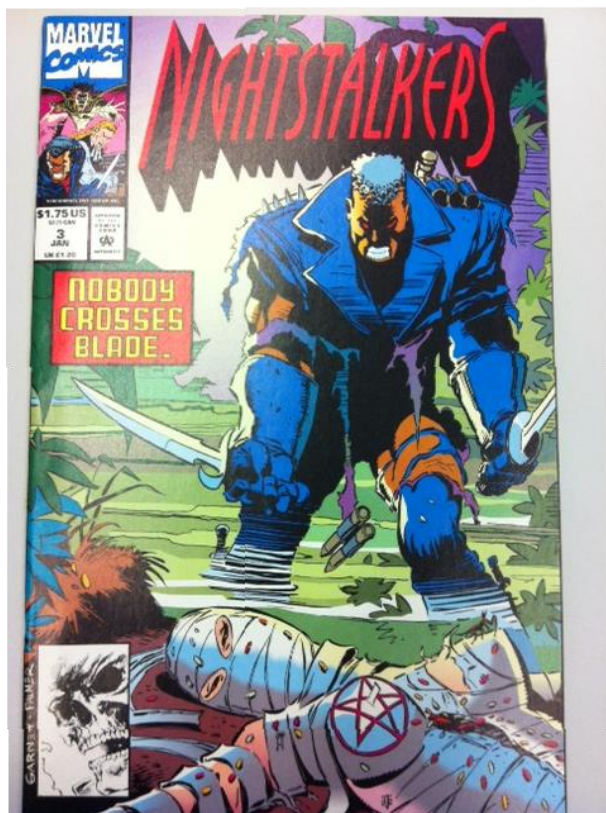


Figure 11: *Nightstalkers*, Issue 3 cover



Figure 12: *Nightstalkers*, Issue 3 splash page



Figure 13: Blade versus Deacon Frost in *Blade: the Vampire Hunter*, Vol. 1, No. 7, 1995, n. pag.

Chapter Five images



Figure 14: Dracula's harem of "white" vampires (4:00)



Figure 15: Part of Blacula's "Black" harem (1:13:17)



Figure 16: Blacula about to feed (14:55)

Chapter Six images



Figure 17: X2 movie poster (*Amazon*)



Figure 18: *Astonishing X-Men Vol. 1: Gifted* p. 22



Figure 19: *Astonishing X-Men Vol. 1: Gifted* p. 23



Figure 20: *Astonishing X-Men Vol. 1: Gifted* p. 24

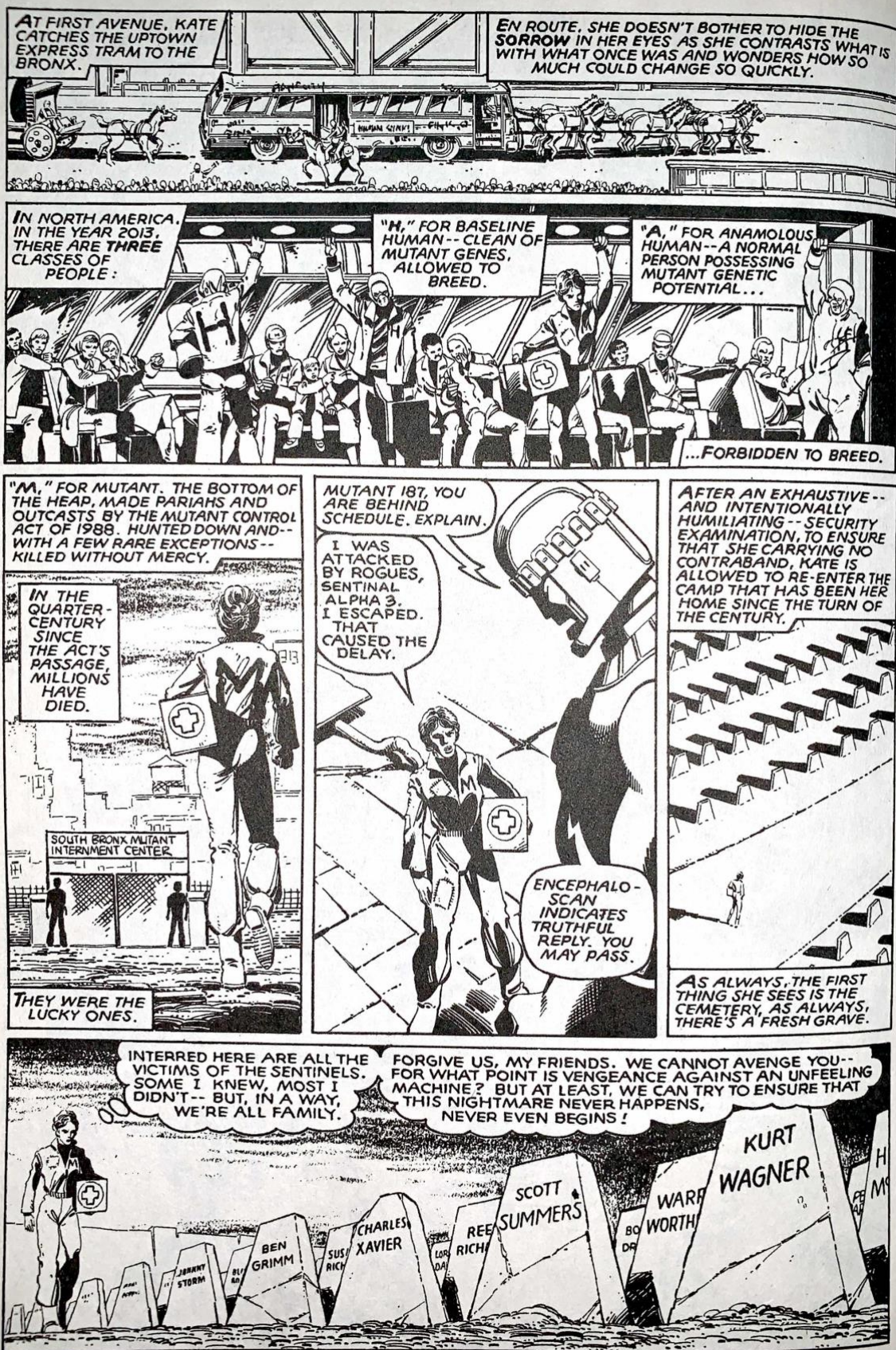


Figure 21: X-Men "Days of Future Past" (n. pag.)



Figure 22: *God Loves, Man Kills* p. 8



Figure 23: *God Loves, Man Kills* p. 9



Figure 24: *God Loves, Man Kills* p. 10

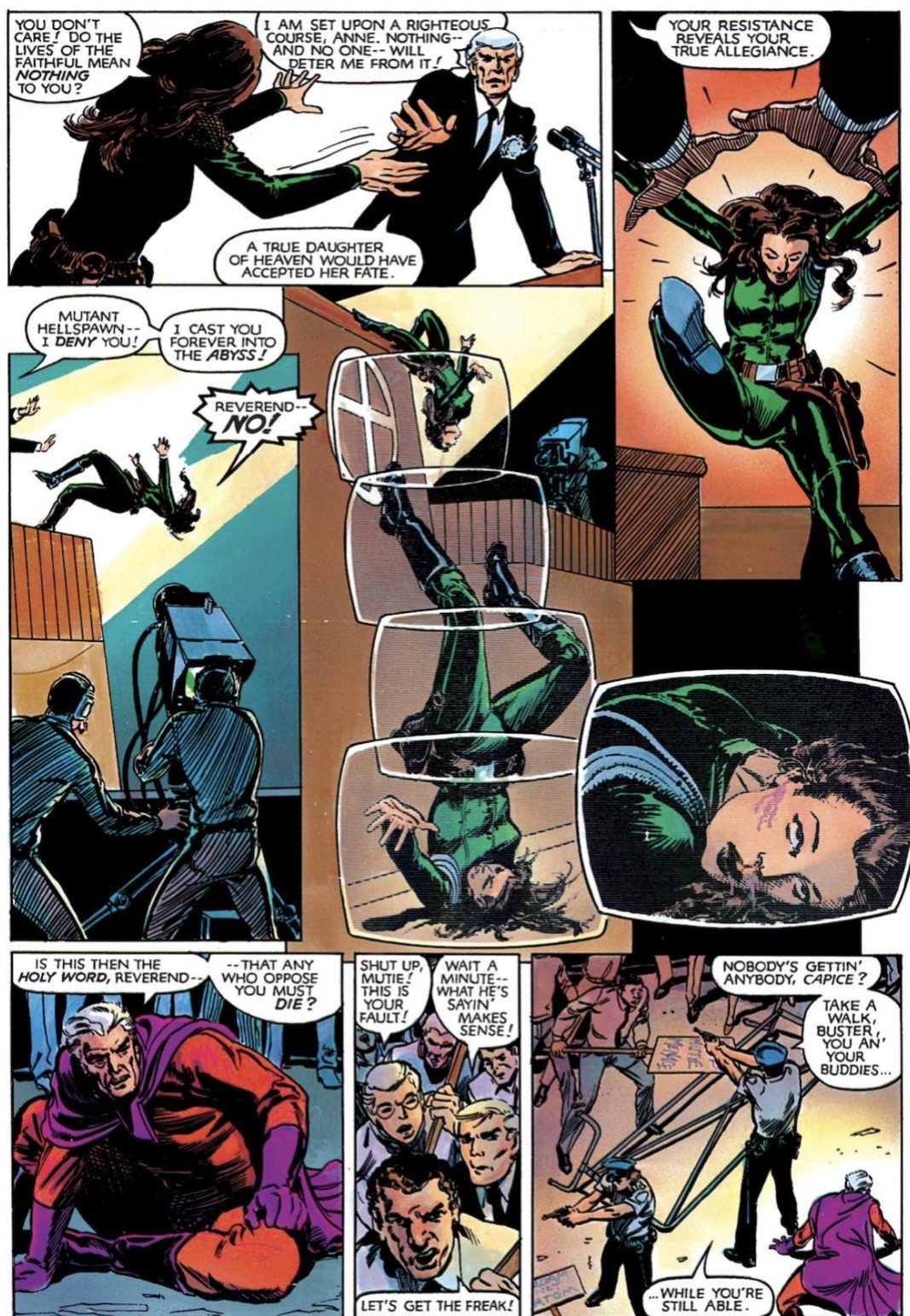


Figure 25: *God Loves, Man Kills* p. 61



Figure 26: X-Men spread (1980, reprinted in Sabin, 159)

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