

Vampires, Anxieties and Dreams:
Race and Sex in the Contemporary U.S.

“philosophizing was always a kind of vampirism”
Friedrich Nietzsche
The Gay Science

There is a recurring dream in the unconscious of these white United States. It is a dream of passion, of violence, of transgression and invasion and all the titillation that these bring. It is also a dream of power, of violation, of purity, of strict and rigid and obsessive fascination with boundaries. Some would say it is a nightmare. I insist it is a dream, with all the mixing of hopes and anxieties that only our sleeping consciousness, our fantasy life, can entertain. It is a dream rarely mentioned but always circulating, rarely noticed but always present.

The dream is of the black rapist—the black male savage ravaging the innocent white purity of a young white girl’s body. It is the dream, the fantasy, that convicts Bigger Thomas. It is hardly an easy, happy or comfortable dream.

One of the first fears young white girls (and, I would argue, all young girls) in the United States internalize is the fear of being raped. Often before she might even know what this word means, a young girl in the United States knows, at least in some unspoken space of her broadening psyche, that the world is a place of possible violation.

This fear does not lodge itself in her psyche in some direct and clearly articulated way. It comes in the ways she learns to speak herself into the world. It comes, as Lacan describes the difficult move from the mirror to identity, through the representations that draw her—force her? seduce her?—into language, shaping her entrance before she has

even awakened to having entered. It comes through her gendering, through her marking as a feminine subject—a marking that is necessary if she is to become any kind of legible subject at all in our cultural symbolic.

And, as one of the most powerful fantasies constituting our cultural symbolic, it produces anxieties around sexuality in the girl. To be sexual? Not to be sexual? To be a virgin? Or a whore? The fear of rape entwines itself deeply with her growing sense of desire, as fear and desire feed on and ricochet through one another. And these anxieties, growing out of fear and desire, are products not only of gender and sexual dynamics, but also of racial ones. They are, as Richard Dyer shows so eloquently, at the core of whiteness.

Western Subjectivity: The Haunting Otherness of the Body

Perhaps here my more philosophical telling of this story can begin. I begin, as I ever seem compelled to do, with Lacan and his dear mentor, Hegel.

As both of these writers, writers who are surely exemplars of ‘western civilization’s ethos’, develop across their corpus of texts, Otherness is that disavowed but constitutive necessity for the possibility of subject formation. Otherness is that which we (we good, white, rational, upstanding subjects, that is) depend on and simultaneously disavow. We disavow our dependence, thereby announcing ourselves as freely created individuals, freely chosen subjects in a world made for our taking.

For Hegel, the subject craves the recognition of another subject to affirm his –and for Hegel and Lacan, it is always his—place in the world as a subject who is seen, not an

object who is looked upon. It is that scopophilic locking of eyes that the Hegelian subject craves. And yet, as the drama of the *Phenomenology* unfolds, we find that it is exactly this reciprocal ‘looking’ that seemingly can never be achieved. Bound by his Cartesian roots, Hegel cannot fathom the possibility of two subjects. And so the subject himself splits into the warring factions of Master and Slave, where the drama of disavowal and dependence concludes with a consciousness that can never be happy, a consciousness that can never enter into a subject-subject relation—a consciousness that is body-less, floating off through skepticism into the ahistorical, immaterial world of pure spirit.

The stuff of dreams...

In good twentieth century form, Lacan re-writes this drama in the register of psychic development, replete with yet more harrowing twists, turns, reversals and evasions. In the dense eight pages on the mirror stage, he narrates the emergence of this necessary—and necessarily disavowed—Otherness as a projection of the infant’s battles with his own reflected image, his own physical otherness of the reflected whole body that does not match his internal fragmentation. It is the simultaneous desire for and fear of this wholeness that then marks his dynamics with Otherness throughout his psychic development. It is this simultaneous desire and fear, simultaneous dependence and disavowal, that shapes him into a split, violent subject warring always against the Otherness of his own embodiment.

The stuff of nightmares . . .

I want to look more carefully at these boundaries—boundaries between self and Other, and the projection of this internal, psychic Otherness onto boundaries between

physical selves and others. I want to look more carefully at these boundaries and projections, at our cultural obsession with them, and at the violences that these produce.

It is all too easy in the telling of this story to turn one more time to dear Descartes and lay this all at his doorstep—Descartes, the dualistic madman who forever severed our bodies from our minds, and consequently our selves from other selves. That story is both too easy and too worn to tell us much about these dynamics. In a more contemporary telling of the Cartesian dualism, Lacan portrays for us in the mirror stage the formation of a subject as an effect of the idealization of a body-in-control. To become a body-in-control—or at least to pursue this as an ideal, which is necessary to become a legible and meaningful subject in western symbolics—the subject must clearly identify the rigid boundaries between itself and others, including that Other which is reflected back to it in the image of the mirror. The warring against his Otherness that marks this subject as forever split demands that he separate himself from that Other—that he construct clear and distinct and rigid boundaries between himself and the Other, even if this Other resides internally within his own psyche, within his own body. It is a futile task. But the effort becomes frantic in the face of its futility: as many post-colonial and feminist theorists have shown, the more the subject realizes his dependence on the Other, the more vehemently he rejects all connection to and violently distances himself from that Other.¹

While many feminist have also labored to show that this subject is always a male subject in Lacan's discourse (cf., e.g., Grosz 1990, Irigaray 1985a), locating this subjectifying separation in the idealization of the phallus, I want to show that this subject is also always a white subject. And it is both the whiteness and the maleness of the

Lacanian subject that belie our cultural racializing of sex and sexualizing of race—it is both the whiteness and the maleness of the Lacanian subject that perpetuates my opening dream sequence and lingers in anxious fascination before the images of the vampire.²

Whiteness, Maleness, Heterosexuality: The Guises of Universality

Richard Dyer, in his brilliant book *White*, argues that heterosexuality always protects whiteness. Giving us a thumbnail sketch of the white male sexuality that is guarded by this protective stance, Dyer links the white ideal of masculinity to the figure of Christ, notably invoking race and religion simultaneously as signifiers for ‘whiteness.’ As the savior of a religion fraught with somatophobia, Christ represents that incomprehensible fusion of the divine and the human—or the spirit and the body. The principle of incarnation, which sets Christianity apart from other monotheistic religions, is, as Dyer develops, to be *in* the body but not *of* it—to appear in the world in flesh but always to be capable of transcending it, to suffer the temptations of the flesh but always to transcend them into the purified realms of spirit. This tension, this pull, this Lacanian splitting is what distinguishes whiteness and maleness from their counterparts (of ‘non-whiteness’³ and femaleness) in our binary symbolic—for it is the special attribute of whiteness and maleness, as they come together in white male heterosexuality, both to engage this struggle between spirit and body, but also always to transcend the body in a successful conquering of the struggle. The white male is in the body, but is not ultimately captured or constrained by it (and hence never at fault or slandered for submitting to it).⁴

And here the resonances with western subjectivity's haunted relation to otherness ensue. Just as the Hegelian-Lacanian subject is haunted by his dependence on the Other for his concept of self, so too is the white male haunted by his dependence on his body for his identity—both physically and psychically. As a quintessentially Cartesian subject, it is clear to him that he must have a body to exist (and to feel pleasure, those temptations of the flesh), but he also cannot get mired in particularities that will block his participation in the universal, in that 'human nature' which has played such a large role in shaping our white, male symbolic. He must have a body, but just as necessarily he must get rid of it, transcend it. How does he navigate these dependencies that must also (necessarily) be disavowed? Where does he project these dependencies?

As both Luce Irigaray and Elizabeth Grosz develop, this body-in-control of the straight white male symbolic is haunted primarily by one substance—fluidity.⁵ To be a body-in-control, it must be tightly sealed—rigidly separated, distinctly individual and straightly impermeable. A metaphysics of solids is integral to its survival as a participant in the universal. Strict boundaries between itself and the Other are what allow this subject to count itself as a solid individual with universalizable traits (e.g., rationality, free will, conceptual understanding and other such clear and solid faculties). And yet it is fluids that it contains—soft, gooey, sticky fluids circulate through this body's veins and cavities. And so, as yet another disavowed dependency, it is the control and containing of these fluids—in their sexualized and racialized forms—that this tightly sealed body-in-control must maintain. Lest they jam the theoretical machine, fluids must be kept always at an idealized distance from the Real, always excluded from any mode of symbolizing,

as Irigaray shows (Irigaray 1985b). It must be a solid body, not a leaky one. Or, as Grosz suggests, it must be a straight male body, not a queer one (Grosz 1989).

And whiteness both feeds on and re-enforces this rigidity.

As Richard Dyer writes, “[t]he invisibility of whiteness as a racial position in white (which is to say dominant) discourse is of a piece with its ubiquity” (3).

Invisibility and ubiquity. 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.’ Of course, 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.’ Again, the erasure of the body is a fundamental necessity for the universality of the subject. It can maintain its strict and rigid boundaries from all others by denying itself the very condition of possibility of boundaries, corporeality. Transcending the question of how there can be a self without a body, this white male heterosexual rests assured that there can be no Other or others within the totalizing, body-less spirit of the universal.

With several ironic twists of ‘logic,’ the white male heterosexual body erases its own corporeality—its own particularity and specificity—so that it can enter into the totalizing realm of the universal. In turn, it assures its strict and rigid boundary from the Other by erasing all otherness—to be Other is to be in the body, to be particular, to be less than the universal, to be flawed, limited, marked, *different*. And this difference makes no sense without any access to that guarantor of meaning, the universal, which of course, in turn, necessarily erases any difference—any particularity, any body, any

Otherness. A perfectly sealed circle of self-reflecting, solipsistic Sameness—or what has passed as ‘truth.’

The boundaries are thus maintained through whiteness’ and maleness’ and heterosexuality’s invisibility. But this invisibility is itself haunted by the possibility of its being revealed—as both Lacan and Irigaray recognize, the power of the phallus relies on its remaining veiled. And what might make this invisibility, this ‘invisible body’, more graphically visible than the spilling of fluids? To write Grosz’ reading of Kristeva’s and Douglas’ readings of menstrual blood in the registers of both sex *and race*, what might make it more gruesomely visible than the spilling and mixing of blood?⁶

Festivals of Vampires

In *Modest_Witness @ Second_Millennium.FemaleMan_Meets_Oncomouse*, Donna Haraway beckons us to the figure of the vampire: she initiates us into the rituals surrounding the vampire’s nutrition, the rituals of blood. As she writes,

A figure that both promises and threatens racial and sexual mixing, the vampire feeds off the normalized human, and the monster finds such contaminated food to be nutritious. The vampire also insists on the nightmare of racial violence behind the fantasy of purity in the rituals of kinship. (214)

If the obsession with strictly defined and rigidly upheld boundaries haunts western conceptions of subjectivity, perhaps the figure who lives by crossing those boundaries tells us something about how they are made and how they might be dismantled. And so I turn to the vampire.

The iconography of vampires has been alive and well in western European and north American cultural psyches since the popularization of vampire stories in the late 18th century (Haraway, 215; Case, 4). As many studies have shown, the linking of racism, sexism, homophobia and anti-Semitism is often unmistakable in the majority of these stories.⁷ Jews, like whores and blacks and queers, are vampiric—in the fantasy life of western European and north American psyches.

And so what is it to be a vampire? And what are these anxieties that keep calling us white folks back to their bloody stories?

Veronica Hollinger explains that, in these days of deconstructing boundaries, vampires have become “the monster-of-choice . . . since it is itself a deconstructive figure” (201). As she elaborates, “it is the monster that used to be human; it is the undead that used to be alive; it is the monster that *looks like us*” (201). But it is not us. It is the monster that is closest to us, seducing us into its erotically charged feeding frenzies, only to be dispelled, even expelled—fantasized into some neatly confined unreality of the unthinkable, the undead.

But the vampire crosses all boundaries. As Eric Lott writes in his glossary of “whiteness,” Dracula functions as a “sort of one-man miscegenation machine” (cf. Jones, 153). The vampire is a bloodsucker. He/she sucks blood, transferring an illegitimate and disavowed substance, transforming his/her ‘victims’ from the living to the undead, giving birth without sex, trafficking in the strange and unruly logics of fluids, mixing and spilling and infecting blood. As Haraway writes, the vampire “drinks and infuses blood in a paradigmatic act of infecting whatever poses as pure” (214). The vampire pollutes

all systems of kinship, pollutes all systems of blood, pollutes all systems of race and sex and desire that must be straight. He/she infects the body and thereby *alters the spirit*—no body can transcend the metamorphoses of his/her bite, not even the straight white male body that is in the flesh but supposedly not of it. The vampire crosses even these boundaries and, with powers that are transfixing for the rigid self of the white male heterosexual, brings his/her victims across them as well.

Where does the vampire get these powers?

According to the orthodoxy of vampirism, the vampire can never become a legible subject in the straight white male symbolic of western Europe and north America. He/she can never become a subject in the ways that Lacan has read subject formation, for the vampire does not have the one necessary condition to become an upstanding, rational, straight, white, male body-in-control: it has no mirror reflection. This ‘lack’ (which is certainly not any lack Lacan conceptualized) is traditionally linked to the embedding of vampire stories in Christianity, where the lack of a mirror reflection is most often read as the lack of a soul, which is then connected to the vampires’ fear of crucifixes. While this connection in itself already places the fascination with vampires in the fantasy life of the straight, white, male, Christ-like psyche, the lack of a mirror reflection troubles the logics of subjection and abjection that we find in the Lacanian schema of our cultural psyche.

The vampire does not even register on the radar of identity-formation—he/she does not have the necessary condition for the possibility of becoming a subject. But, consequently, nor can he/she be fully abjected, nor can he/she be caught, labeled, categorized and expelled as the Other. The vampire is neither subject nor Other. The vampire, that crosser of boundaries extraordinaire, is forever haunting because he/she is

forever beyond the grasps of straight white male subjectivity. The vampire infects his blood, alters his spirit and—damned most of all—exceeds his concepts. And in exceeding them, he/she always carries the power to expose them, to expose them and their anxieties—about blood, about boundaries, about kinship and purity and control, about the racing of sex and the sexing of race.

The Other of the Other: Jewelle Gomez' The Gilda Stories

If we can find ways to follow the vampire through his/her erotic acts of transubstantiation, we may discover that these acts expose some of the fundamental knots of race and sex—and racism and sexism—in our cultural symbolic.

Jewelle Gomez gives us such an opening in her vampire novel, *The Gilda Stories*. Rather than Bram Stoker's Dracula, who is neatly expelled from the rational, virtuous, patriarchal world of Victorian England and thus, as Hollinger again writes, "in its role as evil Other, necessarily guarantees the presence of the Good" (202), Gomez' protagonist turns the structures of racism, sexism, homophobia and anti-Semitism in classical vampire narratives against themselves. Referring to her vampire novel as a recasting of (straight white male) mythology, Gomez' protagonist is not a white European aristocrat, but a black lesbian descendent of African-American slaves. Gilda is, in every way possible, the opposite of Stoker's Count—the vampire-norm.⁸ And in being the opposite of the desired opposite, the Other of the Other, Gilda opens the volatile powers of the vampire and disrupts the desired return to the Same.

As Gomez describes her own text, "the vampire functions . . . as a floating category of all things 'alien' to the normative forces of official cultural discourses"

(Gomez 1997, 154). The vampires in Gilda's family range from her Native American lover/mother/sister to her African American lover/brother to the pair of white male lovers who are her best friends and brothers. (The only white straight male in the novel is a deranged, obsessive stalker who should have never been brought into the family—a nice inversion of the usual narrative traps of homophobic Hollywood.) For Gomez, the vampire 'floats,' assuming many different embodiments. It is slippery. It cannot be neatly reined in, categorized as the Other and expelled in an act that reinstalls the power of the Same. In enacting their sensual, erotic bloodsucking rituals, Gilda and her family expose what is already at play across the genre of vampire stories and vampire readers: they expose the dynamics of sensuality and power fundamental to the figure of the vampire—and invert them.⁹

In classic vampire stories (and, particularly, films), the moment of transubstantiation, the bloodsucking ritual that will either kill the victim or initiate him/her into the realm of the undead, often violates—and enacts—one of the greatest taboos of this straight white male mythology: the male vampire, with greedy lust in his eyes, leans in to take his victim's blood, a thinly veiled act of penetration. In the cinematic telling of this moment, the camera often shifts to the perspective of the victim so that the viewer becomes the victim being taken and penetrated by these male, lustful eyes. For women, this is no new story; for men viewing these films, this enacts a cinematic climax par excellence. Filled with the fear and exhilaration that only a homoerotic act can bring in this straight white male symbolic, it is a moment of climactic truth.

The electrifying fear of this moment is one of its defining features. It is not a simple fear, not a simple helplessness in the face of something abhorrent. To the contrary, this highly charged fear is filled with erotic tension that only titillating desire can bring. We love vampire stories, we long for them; moreover, in my merely anecdotal experience, white straight males particularly hunger for and devour them. Beckoning these creatures of the undead to ‘scare’ us, what is it in this fear that draws us towards it?

My opening dream sequence may give us some helpful clues here. The myth of the black male rapist also feeds on fear—it both feeds on fear and, in turn, feeds it. But, as we can see all too easily, the beneficiary of this fear is absent from the scene. As many feminist and anti-racist theorists and historians have exposed, it is the white straight male who benefits from demonizing black men and thereby further controlling white women by posing as their protectors (preferably while wearing crucifixes).¹⁰ If forced to choose (or to admit), the white straight male identifies with the rapist in this violent scene—he identifies with the body who instills fear in the white female and thereby controls her. But, as ever, he is absent from the (necessarily corporeal) scene. He is behind the scene, working the projector. Literally, he has projected this violent control and diet of nutritional fear onto the black male body, disavowing yet again that he has any such urges—or any such body. He disavows not only responsibility, but uses this fear to legitimate violence against these (allegedly, apparently) threatening black male bodies. He thereby avoids the threats and violences that emerge from such demonizing: the white male body—or, to bring race and religion together explicitly—the white male Protestant body—is never the body that is lynched.¹¹

Now, what can this tell us about the cultural fascination with classic vampire stories? I suggest that for the white straight male viewer/reader, these stories operate differently than for the rest of us. For the rest of us, when the vampire is male as in classic vampire narratives,¹² we are constantly placed in the role of victim, identifying easily with the victim that is taken by the vampiric powers. But for the white straight male, identification with the victim or the vampire may not be so simple. He may, although most likely not consciously, identify with both. Or, to put it differently, he may identify with the fear itself—the titillation of the climactic scene may be in identifying as both the penetrator and the penetrated, a homoerotic identification *par excellence*.

In playing out the *mise-en-scène* of vampiric fantasies, this straight white male symbolic plays with fire. As Sue-Ellen case elaborates so well, bringing this queer desire to life may unleash all the ‘unnatural’ powers that the queer has historically constituted. As she writes, tempting same-sex desire into the scene of representation may drive a stake into the heart of this straight white male ontology, shifting “the ground of being itself, thus challenging the Platonic parameters of Being—the borders of life and death” (3). Feeding on the fear itself, the white straight male attempts to transcend this bloody mess by neatly projecting it across all other bodies. He strives to protect his self as the body-in-control. But the cracks are already seeping open in his desire.

It is here that Gomez interrupts the classic vampire narrative and ushers in new ontologies. If the (good) vampire is never a straight white male, then identification with the ‘penetrator’ for the white straight male is rather troubled. For example, if the vampire is a black lesbian, the white male symbolic resists identification with her. Suddenly, this is no ordinary vampire story, which in turn exposes the subtle mechanisms of

identification at play in classic vampire narratives. This crack in the straight white male mythology allows other questions to surface: what is this fear that beckons really about? And, following out the more explicit connections to the sibling myth of the black male rapist, what fear is being enacted and exploited there? If it is the case that the white straight male body is pulling the strings on both of these scenes, what fears of the Other drive it? What fears of blackness? Of femininity? Of homoeroticism? Of the body and all its messy desires? And, finally, who is the real monster here?¹³

Interrupting the classic identification schemas, Gilda and her family open other possibilities for this powerful nexus of Eros and Thanatos. While the straight white male body is troubled in his habitual identification with the vampires, other bodies find themselves amidst unusual opportunities. As listed above, it is the non-white, non-male and non-straight bodies that assume vampiric powers here. But, fittingly, those powers are themselves quite different.

Rather than feeding on fear, Gilda and her family detest the act of killing as a part of their feeding rituals. They condemn the taking of a mortal's life in replenishing their own lifesource. (If they must kill, they are obligated to memorize the face of the dead, ushering him/her into the realm of the undead in some form.) Rather than inciting fear, this family of vampires always leaves a small gift with their 'victims.' Most often, they enter the psyche of the victim, calm any fears that might reside there and replace these fears with dreams, aspirations, new resolves for greater love and life. These vampires feed on—and feed—hope, not fear. And, in sucking the blood from mortal's bodies (an

act that the mortal is never conscious of), they inspire greater hope and resolve for love in the world.

It is a simple tale, as all vampire stories appear to be. But the cracks and inversions that it works upon a classic genre of narrative in our cultural symbolic invoke different thinkings and imaginings. Gilda always refers to her close network of fellow vampires as her ‘family’. And, in opening the possibilities for others to identify with them, Gomez thereby opens us up to the differences in kinship systems that the vampire, and particularly these vampires, beckon us towards.

Mixed Race, Eternal Queers—Strange Fruit

As several white straight male vampire enthusiasts have informed me, there really is no ‘origin story’ to the genre of vampire narratives.¹⁴ And that lack of a clear beginning, which Irigaray shows so deftly in *Speculum* haunts this white straight male symbolic, already sets questions of kinship and purity, and the blood and race and sex that come in their wake, into different patterns. Gilda’s family is no ordinary family, as Gomez traces out the exciting shifts in our concepts of kinship that these vampire narratives invoke.

Perhaps exemplary among these shifts is the way that vampires reproduce themselves. Although a highly erotic act, reproduction does not occur through any act that we would traditionally signify as sexual. Vampires reproduce themselves through the sharing of their blood, the spilling of the gooey, messy fluids that course through our bodies. Whether a mutual sharing, as in Gomez’ text, or an infecting of another’s blood without their consent, as in classic vampire narratives, blood is the sole vehicle for the

transfer of eternal life. Transferring immortality through fluids, this bizarre reproduction without sex takes us out of that sacred metaphysics of solids that is so dear to this western, white straight male symbolic. Indeed, there is nothing ‘solid’, no singular phallic actor, at play here at all. Reproduction without a phallus? Clearly, something ‘unnatural’ is going on here.

Occurring in a scene drenched with homoeroticism, the climactic act does not follow the traditional prescriptions of homosexuality. Contrary to the infertility that has banished homosexual acts from the realm of the natural and damned them from the realm of the (morally) living, the vampiric moment of transubstantiation ushers in a radical shift in the western ontology of straight white reproduction (a.k.a., ‘love’¹⁵). As case unravels the workings of the queer here, “queer desire punctures the life/death and generative/destructive bipolarities that enclose the heterosexist notion of being” (Case, 4).¹⁶ Giving life to ‘unnatural’ desires, the vampire—in a quintessentially subliminal homoerotic act in traditional narratives and often an explicitly homoerotic act in Gomez’ stories—performs one of the straight white male symbolic’s greatest fears: immortality has nothing to do with the phallus.

Moreover, it has nothing to do with whiteness or the purity on which it feeds. Inverting the racist one-drop rule, whereby the sexual act must be vigilantly protected as a purely white act, Gomez locates the gift of immortality in the intentional *mixing* of blood. And who better to do this than a descendant of African-American slaves, whose blood, thanks to the violences of their white owners, seems always already to have been mixed? Often in inter-racial exchanges, Gilda and her family carefully mix their blood with those whom they love and wish to live with eternally. Playfully mimicing

traditional narratives of motherhood, not penetration, the vampire and the vampire-to-be suck at a delicate slash just below the breast of her/his beloved, giving birth to immortality through a deliberate mixing of blood and blurring of ‘race.’ By the end of the story, tellingly 2050, this realm of the eternally undead, filled with mixed-race queers, has become the singular savior for a technologically induced apocalypse.

No phallus, no purity, no death—strange kinships, strange loves. Strange fruit.¹⁷

Transforming Concepts of Kinship

Running with these transformed and transformative dynamics of vampiric kinship, Donna Haraway offers ways around apocalyptic prophesies of 21st century technoscience. She develops these vampiric kinship dynamics as dynamics of affections and affinities, not of substance. No longer a matter of nature or biology, kinship becomes a particular mode of reading the many flowing affections, affinities, connections and intensities that circulate amidst bodies in the world. Removing us from romanticism’s last vestiges in the neo-Darwinian valorizing of organic bonds (whether read through hematology or genetics)¹⁸ towards the technoscientific, cyborg connections of affinities, intensities and energies, Haraway asks us to follow the vampire through its mazes of connections and disconnections—not just to continue to indulge it in some unexamined voyeuristic fantasy. Just as Gomez beckons us, so too Haraway asks us—we who are not straight white males, that is—to identify with the vampire, not with the victims. She beckons us to follow her down different lines and regions of ‘kinship’—lines opened already in our cultural fascination with vampires and further accentuated and fractured in the 21st century of technoscience.

Begging us to pay attention to kinship, Haraway asks, in the world of early 21st century technoscience, “Who are my kin in this odd world of promising monsters, vampires, surrogates, living tools, and aliens? How are natural kinds identified in the realms of technoscience? What kinds of crossings and offspring count as legitimate and illegitimate, to whom and at what cost? Who are my familiars, my siblings, and what kind of livable world are we trying to build?” (52) In this world of 21st century technoscience,¹⁹ where computers and chips and screens and wires and databases and units of information forge the bases—or, at least, the conditions of possibility—of many of our relations, the traditional criterion of blood to determine who is ‘related’ to whom no longer functions. As vampires teach us, blood is not what we, trapped in a metaphysics of solids, might like to think it is. No longer can we draw neat boundaries between what is organic and not organic, what is natural and unnatural, what resembles us and what does not resemble us.

But rather than read this as apocalyptic, Haraway encourages us to see the liberatory effects here. Leaving behind the natural/unnatural dichotomy, and all of the (sexual, racial, religious, national) violences it has brought upon us, can we not at last engage kinship, as Haraway encourages, as “a technology for producing the material and semiotic *effect* of natural relationship, of shared kind” (53, my emphasis)? Can we not at last re-think relation as a set of open-ended affections, affinities and possibilities, rather than a pre-determined, closed set of (often incompatible) organic bonds?

In echoes of Deleuze & Guattari, Haraway’s vampiric retooling of kinship categories and concepts turns things upside down just a bit. No longer is kinship—i.e., that joining of race and sex in the reproduction of a pure, unsullied, white, straight

bloodline—a matter of discovering pre-made, biological, organic identities. Rather, in good late 20th century form, identity itself is turned inside out. Identity is no longer the precious stronghold of all things private, internal, ‘natural’ and sacred; rather, it is the fabrication of nodes of connection via affinities, affections, tastes, distastes, labors, pleasures, technical wirings, attractions, repulsions and chemical responses. Identity changes and shifts and cracks open as these dynamics change and shift and crack open. Stability or fixity becomes a *matter* of effects—historical, material, semiotic, chemical, *etc.* Radically open-ended, radically temporary.

All boundaries are crossed here—human/non-human, organic/inorganic, biological/chemical, chemical/mechanical and, yes, alive/undead, male/female, white/black, straight/queer. In Haraway’s rendering of the world of technoscience, a world that echoes the worlds of vampires, “any interesting being, . . . such as textbook, molecule, equation, mouse, pipette, bomb, fungus, technician, agitator, or scientist, can—and often should—be teased open to show the sticky economic, technical, political, organic, historical, mythic, and textual threads that make up its tissues” (68). In teasing open such threads, the structures and slippery dynamics of both racism and sexism often surface. That which appeared as solid and unmovable—even as ‘natural’ and eternal—may now appear as a radically temporary and contingent *effect*, sedimented by repetition into a pattern that appeared as solid. To be more explicit, race, which continues to haunt us in its biological appearances and patterns despite all our talk of social construction,²⁰ may finally begin to appear as the subtle effect of investments in 19th century concepts of the organic, the ‘natural,’ the rational, the unmovable and

eternally true. Investments by that absent body, the body-in-control, the straight white male body. But investments that we need not continue to treat as unmovable or eternal.

These multiple vectors of kinship that cross all boundaries are already circulating in our bodies, our bodies that are far from purely organic, in the early 21st century. And the dramas of relations and kin no longer move down the linear paths of identities and reproductions and weighty moralistic (both sexually and racially) questions about who shall marry whom. They no longer circulate around ‘family values’—the family itself, that bastion protecting racism and sexism, has been retooled.

Spilling Blood

I return us again to my opening dream sequence—the dream of the black rapist, a dream that I insist is a dream, a fantasy, not a nightmare. To be a nightmare, it would need some pattern in waking life to which it might attach itself: it would need to seem ‘real.’ But, as we have already seen, this fantasy has no foothold in any historical or physical ‘reality.’ Rather, it is a fantasy of the straight white male body, that same straight white male body that raped black slaves in the kitchen (mixing with their blood) as their white wives slept in their conjugal bed upstairs, that same straight white male body that has raped black and white and brown and red ‘bodies’—both physically and psychically—for years and years and years. It is a fantasy that both protects and constitutes this reality, the reality of the violent and violating straight white male body. It protects it from exposure, allowing it to appear as a detached, pure, rational body-in-control—a ‘subject.’

But vampires haunt this body, this white phallic symbolic that saturates our cultural scenes. We see it in our continuing fear of infected blood. Whether through laws and mores of miscegenation or the raced and sexed cultural anxieties around AIDS, the spilling and mixing of fluids continues to be one of our culture's greatest fears—projected time and time again all over the racialized and sexualized body of the Other. Perhaps we should follow the retooling of identity that these 19th century vampiric festivals of blood open. Perhaps we should pick at and irritate the anxieties that linger in their narratives. We need not read these anxieties as some deep and abiding structure intrinsic to white rational identity. We could, rather, read them as the word 'projection' suggests—as so many intensities, attractions, repulsions, disavowals and denials projected across the surface of young girls' bodies, of black male bodies, of any body other than that body in which the anxiety originates. Projecting outward from the hollowness at the core of whiteness, at the core of maleness—a hologram of fear, posing as an unmoving substance of control.

Re-reading these myths of blood and purity, we might find more and more tools to undo and re-do the myths of kinship, the myths of race and sex, the myths of purity and control that continue to circulate through our cultural bodies. We might find more tools to read the slippery ways that both race and sex continue to be signified as 'biological,' immediately erasing the birthing power of signification—and concealing the whiteness and maleness and straightness that such signifying practices benefit. We might find ways to live out the practices that Haraway longs for. To give her the final words here, "I believe that there will be no racial or sexual peace, no livable nature, until we

learn to produce humanity through something more and less than kinship. I think I am on the side of the vampires, or at least some of them.” (265)

¹ Homi Bhabha offers one of many ...

² As I will develop ...

³ The language of...

⁴ Kevin Spacey’s character...

⁵ See Grosz 1989, “Sexed Bodies” and Irigaray 19xxx, “Fluids of Mechanics” (CHECK TITLE)

⁶ It is particularly telling...

⁷ Hitler’s...

⁸ As Gomez tells us...

⁹ As Gomez further explains...

¹⁰ bell hooks...

¹¹ As chronicled...

¹² As Nina...

¹³ Gomez herself...

¹⁴ As Nina...

¹⁵ The interruptions...

¹⁶ Case develops...

¹⁷ From David Margolick’s book...

¹⁸ As Haraway notes...

¹⁹ Here I must...

²⁰ For a ...