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Us versus Them, or We?

**Post-2000 Vampiric Reflections of Family, Home and
Hospitality in *True Blood* and *The Originals***

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Verena Bernardi

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Table of Contents

Introduction – Are Vampires Better Humans?	1
1. Intersected American / Southern Gothic - Post-2000 American Vampire Humanity, or Rather Human Monstrosity?	23
1.1 <i>True Blood</i> and <i>The Originals</i> – A Dichotomy of American / Southern Gothic	39
1.2 Vampire Humanity or Human Monstrosity?	55
2. Post-2000 Vampires and Family – Eternal Blessing or Eternal Curse?	61
2.1 Non-Vampire Families in <i>True Blood</i> and <i>The Originals</i> : Traditional Values and Happiness Be Gone	70
2.2 Vampire Families – Loyalty Beyond the Grave?	92
2.2.1 Eternal Commitment: The (Adaptable) Relationship between Maker and Progeny in <i>True Blood</i>	96
2.2.2 <i>The Originals</i> : From Monstrous Patriarchy to Unruly Modern Family	120
2.3 Consanguinity: A Dichotomy of Life and Death, of Unity and Corruption	148
2.3.1 “I Hereby Release You.” Blood Relations and Dominion in <i>True Blood</i>	155
2.3.2 Blood Wars: Sirelines, Belonging and Corruption in <i>The Originals</i>	166
3. The Power of Hospitality: (Re-)Claiming One’s Home	185
3.1 Home and Identity	191
3.1.1 “Coming out of the Coffin” and the Question of Belonging in <i>True Blood</i>	206
3.2 Home and Hospitality, Marking Humanity or Monstrosity?	217
3.2.1 Whose Home Is It? <i>The Originals</i> and the Fight for New Orleans	235
Conclusion and Outlook	261
Bibliography	272
Filmography	286
German Summary	291

Introduction – Are Vampires Better Humans?

We are all humans, but some of us are just more mortal than others.
(Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 15)

That humanity can be monstrous is not a new fact. Human history is proof of that. Ever since the first recordings of historical events, writers of all genres have chronicled both the horrors and terrors that tormenting events such as raids, battles and wars conjured up in the minds of people, portraying the effects these events had on later generations. The invention of the moving picture (television and cinema) in the 19th and 20th century respectively greatly contributed to and enhanced the possibility to reach larger audiences, enabling the dissemination and discussion of societal and political issues across national boundaries, even around the whole globe. Throughout history, it has become common practice to displace social or political criticism onto fictional characters in order to prevent the loss of reputation or societal standing. Nowadays, this practice is continued on the small and big screen as it enables screenplay writers and producers to explore issues and ideas in more creative ways while ideally although not always simultaneously reaching a mass audience and making large financial profits. The figure of the vampire is one of the best-known figures used to express anxieties and criticism and has done so in rather explicit terms for a long time.¹ As their formerly although no longer human existence has presented a brightly lit stage for the negotiation of an almost inexhaustible repository of societal and political ills of its times, vampires have presented a means to reach a large audience with their exploration of issues and ideas which occupied the audience of their times. Already in the first paragraph of her influential work *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, Nina Auerbach comments on the versatility of representations when she states, “there are many Draculas – and still more vampires who refuse to be Dracula or to play him” (1). Auerbach voices these

¹ See, e.g. Nina Auerbach’s assertion that “[i]n England (at least until the coming of Dracula), vampires offered an intimacy that threatened the sanctioned distance of class relationships and the hallowed authority of husbands and fathers” (6), while “[v]ampires in the American century embody seditious urbanity rather than dangerous intimacy . . . gravitat[ing] to leadership, aping the tyrants they parody” (7).

figures' strong connection with Anglo-American culture as she continues, "what vampires are in any given generation is a part of what I am and what my times have become" (1). I agree with Auerbach's assertion that vampires are a product of their time, embodying discourses that characterize the period, location and context in which they were created (as texts, not as vampires). As they essentially also reflect on humankind in its current stages, the present work focuses on the discourses of family, and home and hospitality as presented in the two vampire-themed television series *True Blood* (2008-14) and *The Originals*² (2013-18), which will serve as case studies to show how the discourses of these concepts have changed in the twenty-first century. Supporting my argument with examples from the small-screen and film, I assert that vampires – especially from the post-9/11 era – do substantial cultural work around the changing understanding of humanity in post-2000 Western society as demonstrated by both series, thus creating an awareness of the similarities between the former monsters and humans and using these similarities to ultimately advocate for greater tolerance and acceptance.

Ever since their literary debut in John William Polidori's short story "The Vampyre" (1819), vampires have continuously stood in for the trials and tribulations of humanity.³ Now readying themselves to celebrate two hundred years of literary existence, these creatures are acknowledged and appreciated for their mutability in appearance and behavior, as well as for their constant adaptation to the culture and era in which they find themselves. Vampires have occupied a central position in the cultural output of the Western world (i.e. through poetry, literature, theatre-, television- and cinema-

² Note that the analyses in this dissertation only encompass Seasons One to Three of *The Originals*.

³ See, e.g. Gordon Melton's work *The Vampire Book: The Encyclopedia of the Undead*, in which he states that "[t]he vampire invites exploration of the 'dark side,' which should not to be confused with one's evil side but includes, rather, those aspects of the personality that are suppressed by one's culture or by one's personal situation" (xvii).

productions)⁴ and have enjoyed enormous popularity with their audiences. While novels such as Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) or Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) appear to have never truly lost their fascination,⁵ vampires reached their zenith in terms of representations at the end of the twentieth and throughout the first two decades of the twenty-first century, gaining a renewed and broadened popularity across multi-media and around the globe. Here, the installation of television sets in private homes in the 1950s as well as the introduction of color broadcasting in the following decade contributed to these figures' ability to express the fears and horrors of their respective times, as vampires suddenly became "media stars" (Auerbach 1), breaching the safety of private homes in the process. With such a long history of being used as an immensely versatile canvas, stories and plots about and around vampires continue to mirror each generation's concerns and achievements by highlighting, criticizing and discussing societal and political issues, at times even offering possible approaches to solve impending dilemmas. Attesting to the vampire's protean character, its multi-faceted applicability and longevity is an impressive body of multi-volume vampire-themed narratives, such as the *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter* series by Laurell K. Hamilton, which consists of twenty-six novels, all written within a little over a quarter of a century (1993-),⁶ as well as television and movie formats

⁴ See, for example, Augustin Calmet, *The Phantom World: Or, The Philosophy of Spirits and Apparitions* (1850); Theophile Gautier, "La morte amoureuse" (1843), English translation "The Dead Lover" (1979) by F. C. de Sumichrast; Aleksey Tolstoy, "La Famille de Vourdalak" (1884, first published in Russian); James Malcom Rymer and Thomas Peckett Prest, *Varney the Vampyre – Or, The Feast of Blood* (1847); F. Marion Crawford, "For the Blood Is the Life" (first published in 1911); Carl Jacobi, *Revelations in Black* (1947), Richard Matheson, *I Am Legend* (1954); Norine Dresser, *American Vampires* (1990), etc.

⁵ The continued interest in Le Fanu's work can be discerned from the creation of the web series *Carmilla*, which is loosely based on the original story and aired its three seasons on the "Vergegirl" YouTube channel (rebranded to "KindaTV" in 2016) from August 2014 to October 2016. In October 2017, the feature-length film "The Carmilla Movie," which was based on the web series, entered Canadian theatres. For a sampling of materials that reflect the vast number of adaptations of and research on *Dracula* across film and television, see *Dracula*, directed by Dan Curtis (1974); *Dracula*, created by Cole Haddon (2013-14); *Dracula 2000*, directed by Patrick Lussier (2000); *Dracula Untold*, directed by Gary Shore (2014); *Young Dracula*, created by Danny Robins and Dan Tetsell (2006-14); Roger Luckhurst (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Dracula* (2017).

⁶ Another example can be found in the *Argeneau* series by Lynsay Sands, which encompasses twenty-seven novels published between the years 2005 and 2018.

which have run over the course of several years,⁷ such as *The Vampire Diaries* (eight seasons on *The CW* between 2009 and 2017) or the *Twilight Saga* (five movies in theatres between the years of 2008 and 2012).

A key part of the vampire genre's fascination for its early readers was most likely the figure's subversiveness and its ability to discuss issues which society deemed improper or outright deviant. Addressing concerns such as (homo)sexuality (e.g. *Carmilla*) or xenophobia and religion (cf. *Dracula*), these narratives usually ended with the successful expulsion or even elimination of the dangerous fiends, which ultimately acted as a deterrent to those who did not adhere to society's code of conduct. These narratives also reassured model citizens that the normative and supposedly collectively desired state would be restored and that moral integrity would be rewarded.

Since the late nineteen-fifties, the Western world, and the United States of America in particular, have experienced several waves of progressive steps towards the achievement of equal rights for their different communities. Yet, in the first half of the twentieth century, the figure of the vampire largely continued to be depicted as the threatening "other" that needed to be eradicated for the benefit and well-being of contemporary, dominating, white, heteronormative society.⁸ Once again, *Dracula*, the progenitor of the modern-day vampire figure, comes to mind, whom Auerbach eloquently describes as "animal rather than phantom, mesmerist rather than intimate, tyrant rather than friend" (1). The traditional vampire was "the foreign Other" (Tomaszewska 3), who intended to enter

⁷ E.g. *True Blood* aired in seven seasons between 2008 and 2014 (80 episodes) and is based on *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*, also known as *The Sookie Stackhouse Novels*, which consist of fourteen novels published between 2001 and 2013; *The Originals* is currently in its fifth and final season (92 episodes) airing on *The CW* since 2013 (three novels were published in 2015).

⁸ In *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (2003), Rosemary Jackson suggests, "otherness is transcendent, marvellously different from the human" (16), where "[a] stranger, a foreigner, an outsider, a social deviant, anyone speaking in an unfamiliar language or acting in unfamiliar ways, anyone whose origins are unknown or who has extraordinary powers, tends to be set apart as other, as evil. Strangeness precedes the naming of it as evil: the other is defined as evil precisely because of his/her difference and a possible power to disturb the familiar and the known" (24). Similarly and in reference to *Dracula*, Margaret L. Carter explains, "Stoker objectifies forbidden desires in the vampires . . . in order to assert the conservative values of established society by exterminating the vampires, and with them, the 'subversive' drives that threaten to break free" (29).

and feed on the civilized world⁹ and appeared as “a false friend” (Tyree 37) who would leave his or her victims in a “place filled with life-draining abuse and manipulation” (37). The depiction of the undead, neither fully human, nor fully non-human, hence, early on drew on what Julia Kristeva would define as the notion of ‘abjection’: “what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite” (4). This supports Judith Jack Halberstam’s contention that the Gothic monster produces “monstrosity as never unitary, but always as an aggregate of” (“Technologies” 334) several factors or issues, such as most commonly “race, class, and gender” (334).¹⁰ The continuation of the vampire figure’s surrogate function has reflected the slow pace with which true societal and political change has been and continues to be effected. While in Victorian novels, for instance, a vampire might already have exerted “a magnetic attraction” (27) or evoked sympathy, as Margaret L. Carter explains in “The Vampire as Alien in Contemporary Fiction,” vampirism itself continued to be seen as evil and “[a] fictional vampire aroused positive emotions in spite of, not because of, his or her ‘curse’” (27). With the move towards the extension of civil rights in post 1950s American (and beyond) also the relationship to the ‘other’ was changing. The first novel of Anne Rice’s *The Vampire Chronicles* series, *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), hence, signifies a second turning point for the tradition of the “othering” of the vampire.¹¹ While the

⁹ A great deal of work already exists on the use of Gothic monsters for discussions of race and sexuality which Judith Jack Halberstam, for instance, summarized as follows: “Class, race and nation are subsumed, in other words, within the monstrous sexual body; accordingly, Dracula’s bite drains pleasure rather than capital, Mr. Hyde symbolizes repression rather than the production of self, and both figure foreign aspect as a threat to domestic security” (*Skin* 7). See also, e.g. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s edited volume *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* (1996), or Marina Levina and Diem-My T. Bui’s edited volume *Monster Culture in the 21st Century* (2013).

¹⁰ In “The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization,” Stephen D. Arata emphasizes the vampire figure’s usefulness to discuss questions of race, stating, “In *Dracula* vampirism designates a kind of colonization of the body. Horror arises not because Dracula destroys bodies, but because he appropriates and transforms them. Having yielded to his assault, one literally ‘goes native’ by becoming a vampire oneself” (630), continuing that Dracula’s victims “receive a new racial identity, one that marks them as literally ‘Other’” (630).

¹¹ In “Vampire Fiction from *Dracula* to *Lestat* and Beyond,” John Edgar Browning states that Polidori’s “The Vampyre” “transformed the vampire from the hideous walking corps of folklore into the form recognized today of an aristocrat who feeds upon high society” (158).

novel's vampires were still predators, its main character, Louis de Pointe du Lac, did express guilt for the destruction he caused and therefore questioned his own violent and monstrous existence and made great efforts to retain his humanity. Suddenly, the figure of the vampire was given a voice. Louis' ability to tell his story from his own point of view represented a major change in vampire narratives as, until then, these creatures' words or actions had only found expression through other characters' tellings, if at all.¹² Starting with Anne Rice's novel, the undead began to verbalize their mourning of their lost human existence and felt disgusted by what they had become, by their monstrosity.¹³ With this newly-gained ability to express their personal reflections upon their actions and their attempts to be more than the instinct-driven, cold-blooded monsters they used to be, the "cultural attitudes toward the outsider, the alien other" (Carter 27) began to change. While this development broached "an unusual kind of horror, that inflicted *on* and not by vampires" (Tyree 34), vampires, henceforth, rather exuded attraction *because* of their vampirism and not *in spite of* it (Carter 27), leading this improved version of the vampire to no longer be appreciably different from humans.

Unlike previous representations of vampires, which tended to depict the ways in which these monsters were different from humans, hence the "Other," the portrayal of these figures – beginning with Louis at the end of the twentieth century and continuing with post-*Interview with the Vampire* representations – started to explore both species' similarities. Calling into question human moral superiority, the undead (i.e. in literature, on stage, on the big screen, and on television) would no longer pose a threat, for instance, to their readers' and viewers' souls and sexualities. Instead, they began to emerge as

¹² See, e.g. the character of Dracula in Stoker's eponymous novel, whose voice is the only one not included in the collection of Jonathan Harker's journal entries. Fred Saberhagen was the first writer to permit a vampire a voice. *The Dracula Tape* (1975) was published one year prior to *Interview with the Vampire* (1976), but never gained the same fame as Anne Rice's work. In the novel readers are presented with a transcript of a tape on which Dracula recorded his life story from his point of view.

¹³ In "The Monstrosity of the Multitude: Unredeeming Radical Theology," Karen Bray, for example, defines monstrosity as "that which wanders away from demands of social cohesion, and thus resists redemptive wholeness" (1), which can be seen as befittingly describing the transformation of a human into a vampire.

potentially kindred spirits, creatures who suffered from their portrayal as outsiders, being othered for something they themselves could not change. In her work *Vampire God: The Allure of the Undead in Western Culture* (2009), Mary Hallab states that “[t]he vampire is popular because it will not die, and however monstrous it may seem, unlike other monsters, it remains a human” (7). With this contention, Hallab straightforwardly overwrites nineteenth and twentieth century discourses of the undead as *inhuman* due to their supposed soullessness, as was discerned most popularly by their lack of reflection in mirrors. In *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthuman Theory*, Cary Wolfe reiterates this popular assumption that “it was possession of a soul” (2) which was considered to be the first of “the traditionally distinctive marks of the human” (2), in contrast to the animal.¹⁴

While prior to Anne Rice’s vampires, audiences were, for the most part,¹⁵ able to distance themselves from these creatures’ animalistic urges and lack of morality, the clear-cut distinctions between humans’ and vampires’ behavior¹⁶ slowly vanished as audiences gained insight into the internal conflicts and mental and emotional processes of the progressively less monstrous undead. Firmly warranting the postmodern vampire’s placement in the tradition of the Gothic monsters, which Judith Jack Halberstam states “not only reveal certain material conditions of the production of horror, but . . . also make

¹⁴For detailed definitions and analyses of the ‘post-human vampire’ and ‘posthumanism’ see, e.g. Patrick Day’s chapter “Post-Human Vampires: ‘We Are Animals’” (2002), Neil Badmington’s essay “Theorizing Posthumanism” (2003), or Cary Wolfe’s work *What is Posthumanism* (2010), in which Wolfe explains that posthumanism “may be traced to the Macy conferences on cybernetics from 1946 to 1953” (xii), which “converged on a new theoretical model for biological, mechanical, and communicational processes that removed the human and *Homo sapiens* from any particularly privileged position in relation to matters of meaning, information, and cognition” (xii).

¹⁵ See, e.g. the Gothic soap opera *Dark Shadows* (1966-71 on ABC) introduced the 175-year-old vampire Barnabas Collins, whose initial appearance as a blood drinking, impulsive creature gradually transforms into a character capable of emotions such as guilt and devotion.

¹⁶ The assimilation of vampires’ outward appearance to that of humans begun much earlier. Thinking back of the German movie *Nosferatu* (1922), for example, already the 1931 rendition of *Dracula*, starring Bela Lugosi, portrayed its vampire to blend effortlessly into human society. Stoker’s original Dracula was capable of mostly hiding his true nature although certain aspects of his appearance remained monstrous, such as, for instance, when Jonathan Harker describes that Dracula’s “fingers and toes grasp the corners of the stones . . . just as a lizard moves along a wall” (50) as he observes his host crawling down the outside wall of his castle.

strange the categories of beauty, humanity, and identity that we still cling to” (*Skin* 6), Veronica Hollinger asserts that “[e]vil is not simple, not unproblematic, not outside the characters – whether human or vampire – not clearly marked off as something that can be expelled” (203). Alluding to the convergence of the depictions of humans and vampires, Hollinger emphasizes that the postmodern vampire tends to replace its evil otherness with more complexity of the figure’s individual representations as well as their reputation and appearance as a group or community. This suggests that vampires are now seen as progressive and willing to adjust to new societal and political situations. Along with this evolution, it is now the humans whose depiction is marked by antiquated behaviors, which ultimately stand in the way of promoting progress and philanthropy.

As will be explained in Chapter One, contemporary vampire narratives continue the traditionally Gothic preoccupation with the inner workings of the mind, for which early examples of the American Gothic are famous.¹⁷ American Gothic works by Charles Brockden Brown or Edgar Allan Poe, for instance, brought horror as close to the home as possible,¹⁸ by explaining its origination in the minds of ordinary people, such as Theodore Wieland’s murder of his wife and children in their home due to unexplained voices commanding him. Similar to the development of this henceforth-characteristic feature of the Gothic genre upon its arrival in the New World, the late twentieth century into the post-2000 era, however, would follow this interest in mental and emotional processes, making the vampires’ tortured soul and existence a salient subject of its narratives.¹⁹

¹⁷ Following the example of Gothic works such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, which has been considered “a case study of internal monstrosity” (Courville-Nicol 71), where “monstrosity is discovered to be interior to the protagonist” (71).

¹⁸ In her essay “Horrors at Home: From Sensation Scandal to Gothic Melodrama,” Gretchen Braun explains the connection between horror and the home, stating “[i]n literary contexts horror has generally been understood as complementary to but fundamentally different from terror. Whereas terror is associated with the soul-expanding sublime, horror is experienced as a contraction of self grounded in physicality” (73).

¹⁹ Margaret L. Carter, for instance, explains that “[t]hrough this exercise of entering the mind of the alien, we may become freer to understand the frightening yet attractive ‘other’ sexes, races, and species that share our planet with us” (44).

Alongside closer inspection of the emotions and consciousness of the undead, post-2000 representations in particular have attested to the vampires' progressive participation in human society and the formation of a society of its own kind. Although the resurgence of the vampires' popularity began as early as the late twentieth century, it is the twenty-first century that has seen a distinct rise of the undead literally and metaphorically stepping out of the shadow and into the light. One might wonder why this renewed and enhanced popularity of the undead happened shortly after the turn of the century. I will argue that it was primarily one particular incident in the recent history of the United States that contributed to the change in the way vampires were perceived. 11 September 2001, the day when four U.S. passenger aircrafts were hijacked by terrorists and flown into iconic buildings²⁰ along the East Coast, shocked the American nation and with it the whole world. The realization that the most powerful country had been attacked on their home soil, I contend, played a large role in the subsequent humanization of the vampire figure along with the dehumanization or even "monstrification" of humans in vampire-themed narratives.²¹ The events of 9/11 forcibly reminded the world of the danger humanity poses to itself through undelayed coverage via various media outlets. This realization would emerge within twenty-first century popular culture, as for instance in vampire narratives which are the subject of this dissertation. While traditional depictions of vampires

²⁰ Two aircrafts were flown into the North and South tower, respectively, of the World Trade Center in Manhattan, one was flown into the Pentagon in Arlington County, Virginia, and a fourth plane was crashed in Pennsylvania on its way to Washington, D.C. after its passengers had attempted to overcome the hijackers.

²¹ The dehumanization of humans in popular culture is, of course, not limited to vampire or supernatural narratives. The Netflix series *Sense8*, for instance, also broaches the issue in its discussion of the persecution of the Sense8 population. When the sensate Will Gorski enquires, "When you said we are not like them. Did you mean we're not human?" (S01/E08, "We Will All Be Judged by the Courage of Our Hearts"), Jonas Maliki calls into question what it really means to be human, explaining, "What is human? The ability to reason? To imagine? To love or grieve? If so, we are more human than any human will ever be" ("We Will All Be Judged by the Courage of Our Hearts"). In similar terms although with respect to technological advancements, Elaine L. Graham argues, "[f]ar from assisting human development, technology will bring about alienation and dehumanization, the erosion of the spiritual essence of humanity" (6).

“personified the fears within the supposed national bliss”²² (Auerbach 4), the majority of representations of vampires in 21st century appear to be less dangerous and threatening to humans than humanity itself.²³ The undeads’ utmost likeness to humans’ outward appearance²⁴ and their increasing interests in human values, almost demanded that audiences readjust their perception of these creatures who were no longer fit to function as the antagonist to human morality and even human humanity.²⁵ In “Trauma, Gothic, Revolution,” David Punter asserts that “it is the force of the truism that nationalism – a sense of living, and lived, history – exists only insofar as it is defined by its other” (15). Hence, if we define ourselves by what we are not, the “other,” why would we then slowly eliminate that which makes us different from the undead, our monstrous counterpart of so long? In *The Wreck of Western Culture* (2008), John Carroll argues that the mind behind the attacks of 9/11, Osama bin Laden, did not only assault the United States of America,

²² Here, Nina Auerbach mentions for instance, “fears of communism, of McCarthyism, of nuclear war, of not being certified sexually normal by paternalistic Freudian authorities – fears that fueled the ghastly compulsion to be liked” (4). In the introduction to his book *Violence and the Body: Race, Gender, and the State*, Arturo J. Aldama – not referring to the vampire figure – explains that “[t]he propagation and internalization of fear in the social body attempts to keep people docile, numb, silent, afraid to challenge the status quo of racist, sexist, and global capitalist hegemonic ordering and orders in the United States and other Euro-Western nation-states” (1). He elucidates the versatility of fear stating, “Fear of unconformity, fear of race, fear of disease, fear of touch, fear of blood, fear of nonstraight sex, fear of workers, fear of desire, fear of women, fear of subaltern rage, fear of color, fear of desire, fear of crime, fear of ‘illegals,’ and the fear of uprising: Fear is both the metanarrative that drives the disciplinary apparatus of the nation-state (police, Immigration and Naturalization Service [INS], military, schools) and the intended effects of the body politic” (1-2).

²³ At this point, it should be noted that there exist also texts that have come out in the twenty-first century that one could equally argue are a product of a post-9/11 world but which return to a vampire as ‘other’ image such as *30 Days of Night: Blood Trails* (TV miniseries from 2007 based on the horror comic book miniseries published in 2002) or *The Strain* (TV series 2014-17 based on the novel trilogy published in 2010-12). However, these texts are more overtly horror texts – more niche than the hybrid TV series, which I will discuss in this dissertation.

²⁴ Traditionally, vampires’s outward appearance already mirrored their monstrous, animalistic character. In her essay “Vampirism and the Degeneration of the Imperial Race – Stoker’s *Dracula* as the Invasive Degenerate Other,” Monika Tomaszewska links Stoker’s *Dracula*’s outward appearance to the Italian criminologist and physician Cesare Lombroso’s “idea that habitual criminals exhibited atavistic similarity to animals” (2). Referring to *Dracula*’s pointed ears, and his “‘beaky nose’ and ‘big white teeth . . . pointed like an animal’s’ (207)” (2), for example, Tomaszewska asserts that *Dracula*’s “anatomical stigmata provide an external proof of his moral degeneracy” (2).

²⁵ E.g. Rosi Braidotti asserts, “That humanity be in a critical condition – some may even say approaching extinction – has been a *leitmotif* in European philosophy ever since Friedrich Nietzsche proclaimed the ‘death of God’ and of the idea of Man that was built upon it” (6).

but targeted the whole Western World, ultimately professing what Carroll paraphrases as follows:

. . . all you believe in is the modern metropolis created by humanist will and reason, bathed in clear light, as on a sublime, sunny September morning in New York – efficient, opulent and comfortable. If the pillars of your culture are the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center then I can bring them down using disciplined men unafraid of death – you who are cowards, terrified by death. (250-51)

Explaining that “it was vital that the man who had done this was an outsider, an alien personification of evil” (250), John Carroll states that “the entire modern West” (250) would unite as “‘US’” (250) with the common expectation that “to kill him would fix the problem” (250). In line with Carroll, Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo and Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo state that membership to a nation is constructed through the “invocation of an us/them binary” (273).²⁶ It therefore stands to reason to expect that post-9/11 vampire narratives would continue the tradition of eradicating the monster and of demonizing the other into a monster, as some have argued.²⁷ Would it not be understandable if such national and worldwide trauma were to find its digestion in the amplified othering of fictional figures, who, for the appeasement of its audience, would need to be eradicated?

The parallels between John Carroll’s description of the public perception of Osama bin Laden and the figure of the vampire are undeniable. Both remained hidden until they struck, representing the “Other” to the Western “We,” which, for a long time, was only

²⁶ Supporting John Carroll’s claim, Mary K. Bloodsworth-Lugo and Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo, for instance, state: “Since September 11, 2001, and the onset of the U.S.-led ‘War on Terror,’ U.S. presidential rhetoric has consistently acted to demarcate the boundaries of the ‘American’ and ‘un-American’ by reinforcing the contours of multiple binary pairs. These binaries convey a story of citizenship, race relations, and nationality, which began in the immediate aftermath of the September 11 events when President Bush remarked, ‘Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.’ The invocation of an us/them binary did not simply convey to a preexisting American audience the president’s direction in a post-September 11 world; rather, the framing served to interrogate the very categories of ‘American’ and ‘un-American,’ acting to construct them anew. In the new constitution of the American subject, a conflation between citizenship and nationality was invoked” (273).

²⁷ See, for instance, Linda Heidenreich’s claim – in reference to SB 1070 and Proposition 8 – that “[i]n our dominant U.S. popular culture, fears collide. Given the current political discourse of immigrant threat and penetration – ‘aliens’ are penetrating ‘our borders’ – and current threats to conservative family values – ‘homosexuals’ are penetrating ‘our families’ – it is not surprising that there has been a concurrent explosion of vampiric cultural reproduction” (93).

able to save itself by destroying this evil. However, instead of returning to early vampire-imagery and widening the gap between humans and vampires into a yawning and impassible chasm, post-2000 depictions of the undead have continuously worked towards closing this gap and reducing the vampires' traditional portrayal as outsiders. While the idea of "us" versus "them" has been a common theme in the Western world, for example Christians versus Jews versus Muslims, the post-9/11 vampire has counterintuitively developed in the opposite direction, becoming more "us" than "them." Just as the terrorists had risen from the shadows to enter the Western world, which until then was "bathed in clear light" (250), they were "men unafraid of death" (250), according to Carroll. This description, as I argue, can be interpreted as creating yet another link and similarity to vampires, who do not fear death, for they "live" and experience life on a daily or rather nightly basis. Although Carroll's account, the public perception and the political depiction of terrorists offered an undeniable connection between religious fanatics and vampires, representations of the undead across different media (e.g. television, movies, literature) took a different path. Instead of falling into the old pattern of using the vampire as an outsider to be eradicated through uniquely human truth and morality, vampires have become more human-like in the twenty-first century. In line with posthuman ideologies, which reject "simple binaries (human/alien, human/animal), showing each as constitutive of the other" (Nayar, "A New" 813-14), the audience is denied allegorical displacement. I argue this has been employed to help avert post-9/11 paranoia, showing that outward appearance and behavior are not reliable denominators to identify a threat.²⁸

²⁸ While, as I argue, vampire representations on the small as well as the big screen have come to be portrayed as less threatening and dangerous to humans than before, there have been other formats which openly discuss the dark side of humanity and how these supposedly morally inferior examples of the human race ought to be treated. Arturo J. Aldama, for instance, explains "in the late 1990s and 2001, . . . spectacles of terror, where 'real criminals get what they deserve,' are now televised in such reality programs as *COPS* and *LAPD: Life on the Beat* and *America's Most Wanted*, further creating a voyeuristic approval between the use of technologically sophisticated disciplinary violence, race, and class" (4).

As stated above, Anne Rice's vampire Louis can be said to have had a severe impact on the slow process of the humanization of vampires. This domestication²⁹ prompted readers to relate to these predators by giving Louis a voice, by letting him tell his story to a reporter. Continuing and promoting this trend, television series, such as the Canadian series *Forever Knight* (1992-1996), or the U.S. formats of *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and *Angel* (1999-2004), and the British and American versions of *Being Human* (UK: 2008-13, US: 2011-14) functioned as a transition in this development, which would culminate in the publication of Stephanie Meyer's novel *Twilight* and its sequels (2005-08). Marking an indisputable change in the vampires' depiction and perception, Meyer no longer showed the undead to be alienated, but instead to be perceived as one of "us." Suddenly living amongst humans, although still hiding their true natures, the vampire family of the Cullens proved to be real philanthropists, who instead of endangering humanity even cared for their health, as seen in the father figure Carlisle's dedicated service as doctor in the town hospital. I assert that to a nation such as the United States of America – still recovering from the shock of 2001 while perpetually experiencing the utter dismay and loss the war on terror brought with it – Meyer's representation of gentle, sentient and compassionate vampires helped to gradually relieve its audiences of some of its potentially entrenched fear of further terrorist attacks, which had generated a sense of collective wariness in many of the American people.³⁰ For Americans, reminded of their vulnerability and mortality, this new type of vampire fiction helped to shift the focus away from humans as victims. Instead, these series have aimed the spotlight on the undead and

²⁹ See, for example, Pramod Nayar's "How to Domesticate a Vampire: Gender, Blood Relations and Sexuality in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*" (2010), Elisabeth Johansson's *A Domesticated Vampire - How the Vampire Myth Has Changed since Bram Stoker's Dracula to Stephenie Meyer's Twilight* (2010), or Lisa N. Bounds's *Taming the Vampire* (2012).

³⁰ For comprehensive analyses of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga*, see, for instance, Rebecca Housel and J. Jeremy Wisnewski (eds.). *Twilight and Philosophy: Vampires, Vegetarians, and the Pursuit of Immortality* (2009); Giselle Liza Anatol (ed.). *Bringing Light to Twilight: Perspectives on a Pop Culture Phenomenon* (2011), Lisa N. Bounds, *Taming the Vampire* (2012), and Lorna Piatti-Farnell, *The Vampire in Contemporary Popular Culture* (2014).

their attempts to retain their humanity, which Deborah Mutch supports, saying, “the trope of the vampire [is] no longer a site of national anxiety to a globalised, post 9/11 context where national identity is renegotiated and transformed” (“Coming” 75). Contrary to many examples of post-humanist vampires, the post-2000 vampires, I argue, do not continue to function as a deterrent from humanity’s evil and frightening future. In “Post-Human Vampires: ‘We Are Animals,’”³¹ Patrick Day claims, “The post-human vampire most often equates nature with primary biological desires such as sex, aggression, and hunger, along with the notion that our intellects are our most distinctive human quality” (83) and that this figure “provides images of our essential inner emptiness and victimhood” (99). No longer reduced to an existence guided by their predatory instincts and need for human blood, twenty-first century vampires have ceased to be the monsters they were made out to be for so long.

In *Children of the Night: Of Vampires and Vampirism* (1999), Tony Thorne argues that there has been a “constant presence of a Vampire or vampire-like monster in our narratives – both grand and humble – and our popular culture” (4) which “has survived by repeatedly mutating into whatever our society shuns but secretly demands” (4). Although the post-2000 undead appear to be somewhat reformed, their Gothic nature has not been completely erased and they continue to be predatory in one way or another. Those who refrain from drinking human blood, for instance, do after all still struggle to withstand the temptation, as can be seen on the examples of Edward Cullen in *The Twilight Saga* (2008-12) as well as Stefan Salvatore in *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-17).³² Yet, at the same time,

³¹ See, Chapter 4 in Patrick Day’s *Vampire Legends in Contemporary American Culture: What Becomes a Legend Most* (2002).

³² Both vampires, Edward and Stefan, decide to sustain themselves on animal blood (game and rodents respectively), but still struggle to restrain themselves at the smell of human blood. Edward, for instance, can barely stop himself from attacking Bella Swan when she sits next to him in class. Stefan Salvatore, who turns into a bloodthirsty killer, aka The Ripper, after consuming human blood, explains to his love interest Elena Gilbert – who tries to convince him that he will be able to control his bloodlust – “You don’t get it. I can’t stop, Elena! I’m a ripper! A ripper doesn’t stop! I listen to the words that come out of your

these twenty-first century representations show a growing tendency to portray aspects of what humanity should be like. Holding up a mirror to contemporary society, vampires have outlived their role as outsiders, instead becoming insiders to humanity's fears and difficulties, presenting what can be done differently to make humanity more humane again.

Summarizing the purpose of his work in his final chapter "The End: September 11, 2001," Carroll proclaims, "humanism is dead and has been so since the nineteenth century" (261). He goes on to say, "New York will continue to erect Freedom Towers. Here is the reason that the corpse has been in our midst for so long without the appropriate response. Our healthy instincts have been rationalized virtually out of existence by this sickness, this illusion – by now unredemptive – that mind can reform being" (261). Carroll calls for the Western world to "recognize just how fed up we are with this heritage – fed up in a way that frees us to move on" (261-62). While it appears that some have given up on Western cultures' redemption, I argue that post-2000 vampire fiction is a tool that can help us to achieve exactly that. Offering the depiction of a better version of humanity in their narratives, fiction or the television, for instance, present their audiences with new pathways for a different, possibly better way of cohabitation. Considering that we, humans, are the creators of myths, folklore and fiction about the vampires, the monsters – however monstrous they may be – I contest Carroll's statement that it is an illusion that "mind can reform being" (261). Using vampires and other monsters (i.e. zombies, witches, wereanimals, etc.) as discursive figures, metaphors and signifiers, our minds create realities³³ which can in fact direct our being and actions. The fact that the undead are highly mutable in their appearance and character and have become even more so in the twenty-first century, I argue, leaves room to hope that humanity will be able to change for

mouth, and all I hear is the sound of your heart pumping blood through your body" (S03/E05, "The Reckoning").

³³ See, for example, Jochen Walter and Jan Helmig's discursive analysis of metaphors as "a massive influence on the construction of reality" (2).

the better, similar to post-2000 vampires who – in their undead state – appear to adhere to and perform human values better than humans or other species do, as shown in *True Blood* and *The Originals*. If the undead can become more humane after their human lives have ended, why should humans not be able to turn things around while still alive?

As I have stated earlier, the metaphorical relationship between humans and vampires existed early on, already in myths and folklore.³⁴ In their introduction to *Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture* (1997), Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger claim that “contrary to the old legends that tell us that vampires have no reflection in the mirror, we do indeed see many diverse reflections – of ourselves – as the vampire stands before us cloaked in metaphor” (3). Reminding their audience of the popular traditional myth and fictitious representation of the vampires’ absence of reflection, which vampire characters have repeatedly denied or corrected,³⁵ Gordon and Hollinger assert that vampires, however, have always served as stand-ins for contemporary societal and political issues and dilemmas. Following their contention “that any treatment of the figure of the Other is an ideological moment that can usefully be interpreted for political and cultural significance” (2), this dissertation aims to uncover the ways in which the two popular vampire-themed television series *True Blood* and *The Originals* help to reflect, comply, contest and challenge the dominant-hegemonic discourses of family, home and hospitality in twenty-first century America. My aim is to carve out both series’ representation of the shifting discourses of these cultural concepts, which, as I argue, have seen a distinct surge after the events of 9/11. Thus, I will focus on the interdependence between the continuous humanization of vampires and aesthetic and conceptual changes to

³⁴ Cf. Summers, Montague. *The Vampire in Lore and Legend* (2001).

³⁵ See, for instance, Bill Compton (*True Blood*) who explains, “We started most of the myths about ourselves many centuries ago” (S01/E07, “Burning House of Love”) when Sookie is surprised to see his reflection in the bathroom mirror. Also, Louis de Pointe du Lac (*Interview with the Vampire*) comes to mind, who negates several popular stereotypes about vampires saying, “Peasant rumors, superstitions about garlic, crosses, stakes in the heart, all that – how do you say again? Bullshit” (Warner Bros., 1994).

the discourses of family, home and hospitality. I will show how vampire television series, with occasional reference to films, in the twenty-first century present vampires in the community as a model for coexistence and tolerance of the “other” in the community, rather than a monster to be feared and shunned.

The enormous expansion of this genre since the late twentieth century offers a vast variety of texts from which one could draw examples. I will concentrate on a close analysis of *True Blood* and *The Originals*, as I argue that these television series together can be understood as one dichotomous image of contemporary U.S. American society. This approach allows for a close inspection of these highly popular TV series as case studies, while at the same time cross-referencing other recent vampire narratives and representations on the small and the big screen.

Beginning with both series’ reactionary function to discuss societal issues, Chapter 1 of the present study will map out the ways in which *True Blood* and *The Originals* are rooted in the genre of American/Southern Gothic. Complementing each other in their enmeshment of discourses on family, and home and hospitality, both series ultimately do not only address a broad audience but also depict a wide spectrum of contemporary American society. Before I go on to analyze how both series, together, create one picture of the Gothic dichotomies of rural/urban, past/present and exterior/interior (Jowett and Abbott 108), which will be important for my analysis, I will provide a brief introduction to the genre of American Gothic and offer some background information about the series’ target audience as well as their production. Readers of this dissertation should note that this chapter does not seek to give an in-depth analysis of genre characteristics in both series. Instead, I intend to lay the groundwork for the inspection of the concepts of family, home and hospitality as well as justify the joint examination of *True Blood* and *The Originals* within this work. Family, home and hospitality have been traditional tropes in the

American Gothic³⁶ from its earliest beginnings. The interrelation of these three contexts can, for instance, be seen in the famous painting by Grant Wood, *American Gothic* (1930). The painting depicts a man and seemingly younger woman, arguably his daughter, who stand in front of a house of Rural Gothic architectural style. The fact that the man is holding a three-pronged pitchfork while both, he and the woman give a sullen look, conveys an unhospitable atmosphere. Beholders could well imagine a tragedy to have caused the sourly expressions as well as the possibility that the man is trying to scare someone off his property.

Seen as the founder of the Gothic genre in the New World, Charles Brockden Brown's first published novel, *Wieland, or the Transformation* (1798), for instance, unites a discussion of all three aspects where the horror resulted in the mental decline of one of the narrative's main characters, although his breakdown was caused by an outside source, a ventriloquist. In the narrative, Theodore Wieland emphasizes these Gothic tropes by murdering his wife and children— in their own home — hence destroying his family in their supposed safe place. He commits these acts supposedly commanded by the voices he hears, which were caused by the stranger Carwin, who hid on the Wielands' premises. Combining the discourses of family, home (and hospitality) and the "other" in his novel, Brockden Brown hence introduced a tradition which later American Gothic writers, such as Edgar Allan Poe, would continue and which finds expression in contemporary popular culture, such as the television series discussed in this dissertation.

Chapter 1, 'Intersected American / Southern Gothic – Post-2000 American Vampire Humanity, or Rather Human Monstrosity?,' functions as an introduction to and foundation of the main focus of this dissertation, as presented in Chapters 2 and 3. Before giving a detailed analysis of the discourse of family, home and hospitality as I see them negotiated

³⁶ See, e.g. Lloyd-Smith, Allan. *American Gothic Fiction: An Introduction* (2004); Riley, Meagan Elizabeth. "The Family Gothic: Identity and Kinship in the American Gothic Tradition" (2016); Piatti-Farnell, Lorna, and Maria Beville (eds.). *The Gothic and the Everyday* (2014), etc.

in the series, I will provide a theoretical framework for each concept at the beginning of each chapter. I will round the chapters off with conclusive observations on how the analysis pertains to current and contemporary events, developments and discourses. The examples discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 occasionally overlap, which is due to the fact that the concepts of family, home and hospitality are co-dependent and necessitate mutual inspection to recognize the indivisibility of their analysis and focus as part of the socio-political and cultural work both series fulfill.

Chapter 2, ‘Post-2000 Vampires and Family – Eternal Blessing or Eternal Curse?’ is divided into three larger parts. First, laying out the numerous ways in which human, or non-vampiric families are shown to fail in both series, this chapter goes on to provide a comprehensive analysis of the concept of vampire families and the role which blood plays in their setup. Referencing some of the changes the concept of family has undergone in the twentieth and twenty-first century, I will show how the vampire families in *True Blood* and *The Originals* mirror “the interplay of shifting social conditions, contested ideals, and people’s attempts to build their lives amid the constraints of their time and place” (Gerson and Torres 3).³⁷ Occasionally referring to prior or contemporaneous representations of such unions in other television series or movies, I will focus on how vampires are depicted to be more loyal and reliable than humans. In contrast to vampires’ traditional representations as individuals who had to lead a rather solitary existence to avoid detection, the post-2000 undead display a tendency to cohabitation and agglomeration, facts which can hardly be ignored. Departing from different starting points in terms of the series’ vampires’ understanding and discourse of family³⁸ and the progressivity of this concept, *True Blood*

³⁷ For a more comprehensive study of the developments of the concept of family see, for instance, Settles, Barbara H., et al. (eds.). *Concepts and Definitions of Family for the 21st Century* (1999), or Hanson, M.J., and E.W. Lynch. “Family Diversity: Implications for Policy and Practice” (1992).

³⁸ Vampires in *True Blood* are shown to be more tolerant and open-minded in their understanding of family. Here, it is common that sires and their progenies or progenies of the same sire might – and, in fact, most often do – entertain sexual relationships although they have a paternal connection or refer to each other as brother and sister, such as Eric and Nora, for instance. In contrast, the original siblings in *The Originals* set

and *The Originals*, unlike other filmic representations,³⁹ display a development towards the necessity for more tolerance as well as the recognition of the positive and negative connotations of blood relations within this discourse.

Chapter 3, 'The Power of Hospitality: (Re-)Claiming One's Home,' examines the twenty-first century vampires' noticeable tendency to create a home, or to reclaim the home they inhabited during their human existence. Following Kimberly Dovey's assertion that "[h]ome . . . is a highly complex system of ordered relations within place, an order that orients us in space, in time, and in society" (39), I intend to unravel the synergy of the concepts of home and hospitality. Focusing on the attempts of two main male characters – Bill Compton and Klaus Michaelson – to reclaim their respective homes, this chapter is concerned with the productivity of the analysis of their endeavors to uncover prevailing discrimination and spatial segregation in U.S. society. In surveying the role of a home for the achievement of a sense of belonging and the stability of one's identity, I will provide an analysis of the socio-political effects the notion of home has on its dwellers. The discussion of home includes the concept of hospitality,⁴⁰ whose communicative role in the dynamics of social organization should not be ignored, as it can grant a notable amount of power to individuals, communities, and even whole nations.⁴¹

As has been stated and will become more obvious throughout this study, post-2000 vampires are in the process of closing the gap between the categories of monster and human. No longer does the vampire represent that which threatens order and stability.

out to be shown as a rather traditional patriarchal family, led by the half-brother Niklaus (aka Klaus) Mikaelson.

³⁹ See, e.g. "Vampires Among Us," where Linda Heidenreich, referring to *Dracula*, states, "In a time when those invested the nuclear family feared a loss of its constitutive gender roles, Dracula was constructed as a monster that could reproduce himself" (94) and, hence, "The body of the Count represents the perfect dual fear of penetration: the white body and the white nation. In the end he was destroyed, it is both the middle class white family and its empire whose boundaries are protected" (94).

⁴⁰ Jacques Derrida creates a connection between home and hospitality stating that it is "the own home that makes possible one's own hospitality" (*Of Hospitality* 53).

⁴¹ See, for example, McGarry, Orla and Agnieszka Stasiewicz-Bieńkowska (eds.). *Landscapes of (Un)Belonging: Reflections on Strangeness and Self* (2012).

Instead it is humanity itself which threatens and breaches symbolic order and stability. With *True Blood* and *The Originals* directing the focus on the human experiences⁴² and concepts of family, home and hospitality, the fictional characters' actions and behavioral traits once more resonate with contemporary U.S. American society, their issues and concerns. The perceivable alteration of the participation of the undead in human society – be it hidden or open – brings with it a reduced tendency to eradicate these creatures, a common practice until the mid and late-twentieth century.⁴³ Rather accepting them as part of our world, *True Blood* and *The Originals* once more prove that “the vampire as living dead belongs to and has meaning in the culture in which it appears” (Hallab 10), reverberating Nina Auerbach's assertion that “[v]ampires are neither inhuman nor nonhuman nor all-too-human; they are simply more alive than they should be” (6).⁴⁴ I argue that the representation of vampires as part of human society (*True Blood*) as well as their depiction as belonging to a multifaceted and multiethnic, although secret, society (*The Originals*) aim to reflect contemporary Western society with its shortcomings as well as potential mainstays for the improvement of a coexistence between people – regardless of race, sexual orientation or similar – in a continuously more globalized world. With the vampires' continuous and progressive assimilation to humans and their growing agency, the Manichean thinking in terms of good and evil and the binary of “us” and “them,”⁴⁵ begins to falter and fade, slowly losing the particularly strong meaning these categories have held since the times of colonization and their reintroduction in times of international terror. I assert that blurring these oppositional positions, the vampires' more progressive realization of the discourses of family, home and hospitality initiates the necessary

⁴²Referring to science and popular culture, Elaine L. Graham states that both may “be regarded as *representations* of the world, in that both deploy images and rhetorical conventions which do not simply report reality, but construct, mediate and constitute human experience” (14).

⁴³ See, for instance, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), *Blade* (1998), etc.

⁴⁴ Similar to Nina Auerbach, Mary Hallab interprets the vampire as “a human that does not die” (10).

⁴⁵ Peggy Ochoa, for example, explains, “colonialism fosters dualistic Manichean thinking. This oppositional thinking leads to discourse that incorporates and perpetuates the binary oppositions of ‘self’ versus ‘other,’ ‘us’ versus ‘them,’ ‘colonizer’ versus ‘colonized,’ and even ‘definers’ versus ‘defined’” (221).

retrospection of human behavior as well as the acknowledgment that the convergence of continuously humanized monsters and monstified humans today calls for their summary under a collective “we.”

1. Intersected American / Southern Gothic - Post-2000 American Vampire Humanity, or Rather Human Monstrosity?

Before the next century [the twenty-first century] is over, human beings will no longer be the most intelligent or capable type of entity on the planet. Actually, let me take that back. The truth of that last statement depends on how we define human. . . . The primary political and philosophical issue of the next century will be the definition of who we are.

(Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines* 2)

There is no escape. Trends are perennial. We know this from clothing to music and from many other mundane areas of our lives. Trends that have vanished for a while but are never truly forgotten – hidden in the back of people’s closets or stored in the depths of one’s basement – suddenly reappear and make a great comeback. Just like the above-mentioned trends, the twenty-first century has seen a great resurgence of vampire fiction, most notably on the big as well as the small screen.¹ Although descriptive details of the vampire figure (especially via its origins in myth and folklore) vary, its representations in literature and moving pictures have aligned over the course of time.² Here, three particularly unrelenting characteristics have remained consistent: vampires have fangs (although possibly retractable), they need or crave human blood or some other kind of human essence³ (e.g. psychic, emotional or sexual energy, or even the soul) and vampires function as a canvas upon which human deficiencies and desires can be projected.

¹ John Edgar Browning refers to this resurgence as “the ‘vampire renaissance’ that occurred roughly from the late 2000s through the early 2010s” (162).

² Commenting on the evolution of the vampire figure from myths and folklore to the twentieth century, Carol A. Senf asserts: “While the vampire in most folklore versions had been simply a hungry corpse with no special preferences about the choice of victim, Polidori suggests an erotic attachment—often perversely so—between vampire and victim, an attachment that will become much more than a suggestion in both ‘Carmilla’ and *Dracula*, not to mention many of the twentieth-century versions” (34).

³ See, e.g. in the 1985 movie *Lifeforce*, vampires live off the psychic energy of humans; in the novel series *Anita Blake: Vampire Hunter* by Laurell K. Hamilton, the vampire Jean-Claude belongs to the type of vampires who are called “incubus,” feeding off sexual energy by engaging in the actual sexual act or draining the sexual energy of other people in close proximity.

While the figure of the vampire had its beginnings in European poetry of the seventeenth century,⁴ the mass-fascination with and fear of vampires began in the early eighteenth century when these creatures made their debut as central characters of novels. Arguably the first story which successfully merged “the disparate elements of vampirism into a coherent literary genre” (Frayling 108), John William Polidori’s “The Vampyre” (1819) marked the beginning of what would become a trend across different genres around the globe. As a result, the nineteenth century would see vampires become a popular element of Gothic Fiction. The creatures of the night, henceforth, quickly appeared at the center of plays, penny dreadfuls (e.g. *Varney the Vampire; or, the Feast of Blood*, 1847⁵) and other notable literary publications such as Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s novel *Carmilla* (1872). Of course, the most renowned nineteenth century work of vampire fiction is Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), a story about the vampire Count Dracula’s move from Transylvania to England and his eventual death at the hands of a group of men and women led by Professor Abraham Van Helsing. Echoing Nina Auerbach (1995), Teresa A. Goddu states that “Dracula . . . is important less for the tradition he shapes than for the one he breaks: he embodies the shift from the nineteenth century’s ghostly intimate to the twentieth century’s ‘power-hungry predator’ (7)” (“Vampire Gothic” 129). Suddenly the vampire would not only visit a chosen person or family member at night, but would slowly enter society in aristocratic disguise and firmly establish itself as a Gothic trope, one of the stand-ins for societal issues and horrors that would continue to occupy the minds of its readers and the people at large at any given time. Henceforth, the vampire would not always be frightening but forever remain thrilling and fascinating.

⁴ Among the most famous examples, German poets such as Heinrich August Ossenfelder’s poem “Der Vampir” (1748), and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s “Die Braut von Corinth” (1797).

⁵ The text first appeared as a series of weekly pamphlets, so-called “penny dreadfuls,” between 1845 and 1847 and was published in book form in 1847.

Just like the Gothic genre itself, vampire fiction also has its beginnings in Europe and eventually traveled across the Atlantic where it would develop into a popular kind of fiction. In reference to the European tradition of the Gothic genre, which allegedly began with Horace Walpole's novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Allan Lloyd-Smith states that "[i]t is frequently assumed that Gothic fiction began as a lurid offshoot from a dominant tradition largely realist and morally respectable fiction" (*American Gothic Fiction*⁶ 3) with "representations of extreme circumstances of terror, oppression and persecution, darkness and obscurity of setting, and innocence betrayed" (3). In this respect, the Gothic dealt especially "in transgressions and negativity" (5), with "the return of the past, of the repressed and denied, the buried secret that subverts and corrodes the present, whatever the culture does not want to know or admit, will not or dare not tell itself" (1). When the Gothic, however, set foot on American soil, the populace of the New World – having left behind their potentially haunting pasts together with their motherlands – faced new dangers and threats. These dangers and threats would change this genre's tropes and motives and create its own tradition, the American Gothic.

As the beginnings of American fiction were produced during "the great period of British and European Gothic" (Lloyd-Smith, *A.G.F.* 26), the first American literary outputs would be marked by a distinctly "Gothic mode" (26). Becoming a tool for American writers to express the locally and culturally specific pressures of their time, this literature, just like its European precursor, would become a "reactionary form" (6) for the discussion and discourse of contemporary concerns which greatly varied between Europe and the New World.

Arriving on the shores of America and led by "utopian visions of freedom and prosperity" (Lloyd-Smith, "Nineteenth-Century" 2) to be achieved in the colonies, the early settlers quickly realized that the promised opportunity for advancement and

⁶ Henceforth referred to as *A.G.F.*

prosperity was met with a wilderness which they first had to survive and conquer, and that their continued existence was linked to this realization. As Lloyd-Smith states, “The Puritan consciousness itself, although waning in this period, had established a profoundly ‘Gothic’ imagination of good and evil, and the perilous human experience” (2). In this imagination, four indigenous features – the frontier, the Puritan legacy, race and political utopianism (1) – would emerge as the cornerstones of an arising American Gothic tradition.

While later generations of early American settlers, as well as newcomers to the land in the late eighteenth century, did not experience the exact same difficulties, dangers and hardships anymore as the first European settlers had battled, the country was yet experiencing extensive political and societal changes in the second half of the seventeenth hundreds. These would also find their expression in Gothic modes. Political events such as the American Revolutionary War (1775-83), the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, resulting in the country’s ultimate detachment from European rule, as well as the abolition of slavery in the Northern states at the end of the century, among other events, put the American people in a time of great upheaval and uncertainty.

Celebrated as the inventor of the American Gothic novel, and having grown up in Quaker Philadelphia during the American Revolution and its wake, Charles Brockden Brown produced novels mirroring the European Gothic mood, but reworking its traditional settings and tropes into ones more befitting of the conditions found on American soil. As the new land was devoid of European Gothic relics such as castles, monasteries or a debased aristocracy, Brown employed distinct American landscapes as well as the settlers’ fears of the “other,”⁷ be that Native Americans, African slaves or certain immigrant

⁷ In her work *The Posthuman*, Rosi Braidotti analyzes “the posthuman condition as a crucial aspect of our historicity, but also of concern for its aberrations, its abuses of power and the sustainability of some of its basic premises” (3-4). On this basis, she explains that “[s]ubjectivity is equated with consciousness, universal rationality, and self-regulating ethical behaviour, whereas Otherness is defined as its negative and

groups. Essentially a female narrator's account of a family drama, his first published novel *Wieland; or the Transformation* (1798) was set at the brink of the Pennsylvania wilderness, where, after their father's death, the two siblings Clara and Theodore Wieland create their own utopian realm on the family's property together with Theodore's later wife Catherine and her brother Henry Pleyel. The novel eventually reveals that most of the disaster that befalls the group happened due to the ventriloquist abilities of the Irish immigrant Carwin, an unsuspectedly appearing "other," who hid on the siblings' premises. However, Carwin's denial to have told Wieland to kill his family also represents the early application of psychological horror, a key element of American Gothic especially of the later nineteenth century. Relying on the until this day popular feature of Gothic, repetition, the recapitulation of the events through Brown's narrator Clara reveal that her brother, just like their father, appears to have been a religious fanatic, which ultimately leads him to lose his mind and kill his wife and children.

While according to Lloyd-Smith, "American Gothic might be seen to offer a 'voice' for the culturally silenced, and the repressed events of American history" (*A.G.F.* 26), *Wieland; or the Transformation* has been considered an outspoken representation⁸ of the cultural landscape at the time. Following the European Gothic custom to situate the Gothic "in areas of liminality, of transition" (Lloyd-Smith 6), Charles Brockden Brown voiced fears of threats to the order of the new Republic from the outside (e.g. immigrants as seen on the example of Carwin, the ventriloquist) as well as of corruption from the inside (e.g.

specular counterpart. In so far as difference spells inferiority, it acquires both essentialist and lethal connotations for people who get branded as 'others'. These are the sexualized, racialized, and naturalized others, who are reduced to the less than human status of disposable bodies" (15).

⁸ Referring to "representations of human identity in a digital and biotechnological age" (1), Elaine L. Graham's assertions are equally applicable to the discourses of Western culture through different popular culture representations, such as for instance the figure of the vampire, when she states, "To interrogate such representations is to draw out the implicit desires, anxieties and interests that are fueling humanity's continuing relationship with its tools and technologies. The 'worlds' engendered by the creative imagination – in myth, language and religion – are just as revealing, in their own way, of the ethical and political dimensions of the digital and biotechnological age as are the material artefacts of humanity's technological endeavors" (1).

religious zealotry); maybe even questioning whether the American people were truly ready to govern themselves.

Wieland's only partial liability for murdering his family – after all, Carwin's ventriloquism was what supposedly jump started his psychotic decline and breakdown, his “divided self” (Weinstock 4) – marked the beginning of American Gothic writers' later “growing popular interest in psychology and deviance” (Lloyd-Smith, *A.G.F.* 11). The short stories “The Black Cat” (1843) by Edgar Allan Poe, as well as “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892) by Charlotte Perkins Gilman are counted among the most famous examples of this American Gothic literary tradition. Each pre-occupied with the dangers that lie dormant within human nature, Poe's as well as Perkins Gilman's works present their readers with an unreliable and unnamed first-person narrator whose mental stability deteriorates with the course of the story.⁹

Poe's male narrator starts out as a fanatic pet lover who, partially due to alcoholism, reveals his violent and abusive side. While the narrator explains that he began to grow “day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others” (272) even before his addiction to alcohol, he soon tortures the family cat (cutting out one of its eyes) and eventually kills it by hanging it from a tree. Ultimately, his “perverseness” (273), “one of the primitive impulses of the human heart – one of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of Man” (273), grows until – in a fit of rage, wanting to kill his new cat, he accidentally murders his wife and immediately conceals the deed by walling the body up in the cellar. The murder, however, is discovered when the police upon their search for the narrator's wife, hear howling in the basement and find the cat with the decaying body entombed in the wall.

⁹ Charles L. Crow comments on the versatility of the American Gothic and its occupation with the human nature, saying, “American Gothic is no longer defined as a narrow tradition bound by certain props (ruined castles, usually in foreign lands, and imperiled maidens). It is now usually seen as a tradition of oppositional literatures, presenting in disturbing, usually frightening ways, a skeptical, ambiguous view of human nature and of history. The Gothic exposes the repressed, what is hidden, unspoken, deliberately forgotten, in the lives of individuals and of cultures” (*History* 2).

Similar to Poe's main character, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's female narrator's mental condition also deteriorates with the progression of the story. While Poe's narrator describes his personality as marked of "docility and humanity" (271) and a "tenderness of heart" (271) before the incidents, Perkins Gilman's narrator, from the very beginning, states that her husband diagnosed her with a "temporary nervous depression" (648). Kept in the nursery of "[a] colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house" (647), the woman claims that the yellow wallpaper in the room exacerbates her condition. Eventually, recognizing "a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design" (650), the narrator begins to identify the figure as a woman who, as she observes, even exits the wallpaper and creeps "all around the garden" (654). Her condition, arguably a form of postpartum depression as every so often her baby is mentioned, deteriorates throughout the story until she believes herself to be one of the women behind the wallpaper. Tearing it off, ultimately marking the zenith of her mental decline, she is then able to creep around the room as much as she likes without fearing to be put back inside by her husband.

As the summaries of Poe's and Perkins Gilman's works have attempted to show, both short stories are examples of how American Gothic employed psychological horror to distinctly bring the Gothic not only closer to home but into the home. While Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* still used an outside force (a hiding ventriloquist) to drive his main character mad, Poe's and Perkins Gilman's narrators suffered from mental breakdowns seemingly on their own accord. However, following Freud's interpretation of "the uncanny," corresponding to the notions of 'eerie,' 'unhomely' or 'hidden,' "Something must be added to the novel and the unfamiliar if it is to become uncanny" (*Uncanny* 125). In fact, in each of the above-mentioned works, something *was* added to the home, a hidden person, a new cat and, presumably, a newborn, which, instead of being terrifying themselves, caused the main characters to manifest their Gothic nature. Not only

was the Gothic now domestic but it also unmistakably targeted the American family. While, until then, the monsters visited and haunted the home, they were suddenly part of the home, with a murdering husband and a psychotic wife and mother as examples, crossing behavioral as well as spatial boundaries.¹⁰

As the “theme of the divided self” (Weinstock 4) shows, the American Gothic, just like the European tradition, is concerned with the loss and/or achievement of control. Here, a distinction is drawn between whether an individual contends “against impersonal forces” (4) or whether the obstacle is a “specific other or others (a human villain or monster) that itself is the symptom or reflection of larger impersonal forces” (3). The notion of control inevitably encompasses the question of power and its inequitable distribution (11), which according to Weinstock is stressed by the American Gothic tradition of focusing on the “transgression of cultural boundaries” (11),¹¹ also a cornerstone of the Southern Gothic occupation.

It would be too obvious and oversimplified to say that the tradition of the Southern Gothic focuses solely on the topic of slavery and its aftermath and impact. Although a region with such a problematic history concerning race could not ignore the topic of race in literature, television and film, Charles L. Crow reminds us that the topic of race and discrimination “is a national, not a regional issue” (“Fear” 141). Instead of using slavery as its main point of departure, Southern Gothic fiction “is characterized by an emphasis on

¹⁰ In her analysis of horror films, Barbara Creed states “the concept of a border is central to the construction of the monstrous in the horror film; that which crosses or threatens to cross the ‘border’ is abject. Although the specific nature of the border changes from film to film, the function of the monstrous remains the same – to bring about an encounter between the symbolic order and that which threatens its stability. In some horror films the monstrous is produced at the border between human and inhuman, man and beast (*Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *King Kong*); in others, the border is between the normal and the supernatural, good and evil (*Carrie*, *The Exorcist*, *The Omen*, *Rosemary’s Baby*); or the monstrous is produced at the border which separates those who take up their proper gender roles from those who do not (*Psycho*, *Dressed to Kill*, *Reflection of Fear*); or the border is between normal and abnormal sexual desire (*Cruising*, *The Hunger*, *Cat People*)” (49).

¹¹ See, e.g. Charles L. Crow’s assertion that “[t]he Gothic patrols the line between waking and dreams, human and machine, the normal and the freakish and living and dead. As a literature of borderlands, the Gothic is naturally suited to a country that has seen the frontier (a shifting geographical, cultural, linguistic and racial boundary) as its defining characteristic” (*History* 2).

the grotesque, the macabre and, very often, the violent” (Amador 165), covering numerous topics which range from atavism, disease, fear, and guilt to religion and sexuality as well as “madness, decay and despair, and the continuing pressures of the past upon the present, particularly with respect to the lost ideals of a dispossessed Southern aristocracy and to the continuance of racial hostilities” (Punter and Byron 116-17). A region with a very distinct vegetation and climate, the Southern landscape itself was ambiguous enough to lend itself perfectly for the Gothic genre. Long fields of cotton, tobacco or other crops as well as the mysteriously beautiful and dangerous swamps would become the perfect locale for the discussion of guilt over and fear of, among others, suppressed sexualities or genealogies for example.

Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbott agree with Teresa A. Goddu who states that the Southern Gothic “serves as the nation’s ‘other,’ becoming the repository for everything from which the nation wants to dissociate itself” (*Gothic America* 3-4). The particular Southern Gothic atmosphere, especially in literature, was oftentimes achieved, as Matthew Sivils explains, by descriptions of “the region’s potential for inspiring ever-verdant myrioramas of beauty and dread” (83). He elaborates that

[t]his atmosphere is further enhanced by the common spectacle of abandoned, rusting, or otherwise disintegrating shacks, trucks, tractors, and other artefacts of a not-too-distant past, that, in their weed-wrapped embrace, seem emblematic of humanity’s legacy in the South. These scenes render a well-known brand of Southern sublime, a lushness flecked with decay. Yet these landscapes are also aligned with a pervasive sense of the grotesque, swallowing, and at times spitting back, the virulence of humanity’s ills. (83)

While ominous and unexplainable occurrences¹² were part of the Gothic tradition from the very beginning, it did not take long, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, for supernatural creatures¹³ to enter the genre. Relating Sivils’ description of the Southern Gothic landscape to the Gothic appropriation of supernatural elements, what creature could better unite

¹² See, *The Castle of Otranto* (1794), where an enormous helmet falls on and kills the prince.

¹³ See, John William Polidori’s “The Vampyre” (1819).

above-mentioned characteristics than the figure of the vampire? From its early beginnings as a “feared creature of Eastern European folklore and legend, rising from the grave at night to consume its living loved ones and neighbors” (Brodman and Doan ix), to its depiction as a rather withdrawn aristocratic individual (e.g. Dracula) living on the outskirts of society, the vampire has always embodied a connection of the sublime and grotesque. A human-like individual, arguably “flecked with decay” (Sivils 83) as it ultimately represents an animated corpse, the vampire is a combination of the past and present, what used to be and what still is albeit possibly hidden away or lurking in the shadows, dead and/or buried when the sun is up. Although Freud’s quoting of Ernst Jentsch refers to wax figures and robots, their explanation of how the sense of the uncanny may be evoked almost appears to be a storybook definition of a vampire. Freud’s use of Jentsch’s definition – “doubt as to whether an apparently animate object really is alive and, conversely, whether a lifeless object might not perhaps be animate” (qtd. in *Uncanny* 135) – effectively makes the vampire, who is dead during the day and alive at night, the perfect monster to conjure up said feelings.

Judith Jack Halberstam argues that before the nineteenth century monsters were everything a human was not (*Skin* 22), while ensuing Gothic monsters have been depicted as “monsters of modernity” (23) “characterized by their proximity to humans” (23). Carrying Halberstam’s description forward, Mark Neocleous states, “[l]ike the monster in general, the vampire is the ‘harbinger of category crisis,’ resisting easy categorization in the ‘order of things.’ As a form of monster, the vampire disrupts the usual rules of interaction, occupying an essentially fluid site where despite its otherness it cannot be entirely separated from nature and man” (673).¹⁴ This assessment, I argue, holds especially

¹⁴ Calling into question what it means to be ‘human,’ the figure of the vampire causes sentiments, which resemble humanities’ reaction to new technologies as analyzed via posthumanist approaches. Referring to technological innovations, Elaine L. Graham explains, “[n]ote . . . how a particular response to technological innovation articulates a very specific model of what it means to be human: technologies not

true for the contemporary vampire. Originally, there used to be a common tradition in vampire folklore as well as fiction that these animated corpses would return to their former home and family out of different but equally dangerous reasons. In these cases, they either sought out their loved ones to drink the blood of and/or kill a family member, possibly also turning them into a vampire, or, in later depictions, to see their family one last time and/or to say their goodbye, endangering family members and neighbors in the process due to their yet unmastered self-control and bloodlust. This tradition, I contend, has been crucially altered since Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, but even more so with post-2000 television representations of these creatures. As Aviva Briefel and Sam J. Miller establish in their introduction to *Horror after 9/11*, "We have come to expect that a monster is never just a monster, but rather a metaphor that translates real anxieties into more or less palatable forms" (4), cutting the criticism on current events and social interactions into smaller pieces which are easier to swallow for the contemporary readers and viewers. Richard Davenport-Hines states that the American and Southern Gothic are known for their depiction of family histories¹⁵ as "vampiric, destructive, implacable" (296). Helen Wheatley complements Davenport-Hines' assertion saying, "the family is constantly depicted as the site of past transgressions and a traumatic revisitation of history" (Wheatley 187). In the twenty-first century, the formerly rather clear-cut categories of monster and human, as well as the question of victimization, are blurred and it is almost as if audiences do not want vampires to be spine-chilling monsters. Instead, many contemporary vampire figures are rather calling into question whether humans are, perhaps, just as evil and

only represent protection from that which threatens physical survival, but are a means of 'transcending' those physical limitations altogether" (9). Graham continues, explaining, "Stephen Clark (1995) argues that much science fiction is imbued with transhumanist sentiment, driven by a desire for the subjugation, even the effacement, of vulnerability, contingency and specificity. Yet, transhumanism betrays a doctrine of humanity informed fundamentally by a distrust of the body, death and finitude, . . . which . . . have ethical, political and theological implications" (9), which, for a long time, have also been given expression through the figure of the vampire.

¹⁵ See, e.g. Charles L. Crow's claim that "[u]ltimately, all Gothic stories are family stories" (*History* 15).

monstrous as vampires, a realization that makes readers and viewers cringe.¹⁶ These assertions are particularly true for the television series *True Blood* and *The Originals*, as both situate themselves in the American and Southern Gothic tradition through their strong focus on the discourses of family and home, as well as the inherent horror in both concepts.

Both set in the state of Louisiana, hence the Deep South of the United States, the series depict two different sides of this region: Located in the fictitious small-town Bon Temps, in the backcountry of Louisiana, *True Blood* discusses the region's inherent and persistent racism and bigotry in a world where vampires are openly living among the human population. In comparison, *The Originals*, set in Louisiana's largest and most vibrant city of New Orleans, focuses on the war between different supernatural factions to stake a claim to their home while keeping their existence hidden from the human world, indicative, as I argue, of the continuing issue of spatial segregation in contemporary America. Referring to the role of New Orleans in *Interview with the Vampire*, Ken Gelder asserts that "[t]his Southern American city becomes a powerful, occult site for events – a place in the New World which is nevertheless somehow older and more decadent than Europe, simultaneously 'primitive' and sophisticated, a 'mixture' of all kinds of peoples" (83). This characterization holds true for the city's depiction in *The Originals* while it also resonates with the general image of the American South, as depicted in *True Blood*.

Being passed from one country's rule to another, Louisiana early on represented a harsh territory for its northern European settlers from numerous different cultural backgrounds, which was exacerbated by their struggle to "tame both the semi-tropical wilderness and their enslaved African workforce from the late seventeenth century through

¹⁶ In the introduction to her work *Representations of the Post/Human – Monsters, Aliens and Others in Popular Culture*, Elaine L. Grahams states, "One of the ways in particular in which the boundaries between humans and almost-humans have been asserted is through the discourse of 'monstrosity.' Monsters serve both to mark the fault-lines but also, subversively, to signal the fragility of such boundaries. They are truly 'monstrous' – as in things shown and displayed – in their simultaneous demonstration and destabilization of the demarcations by which cultures have separated nature from artifice, human from non-human, normal from pathological" (12).

to the mid-nineteenth century civil war and beyond” (Amador 163). Struggles between the multinational people as well as the threat of rebellion of the slave population combined with the unfamiliar environmental conditions gave rise to Louisiana’s reputation of an atmosphere of macabre tonality, which made this state “a popular setting for American Gothic literature” (164).

In the tradition of vampire fiction, the bloodsucking undead – to which Judith Jack Halberstam refers as “meaning machines” (*Skin* 21) – have, as she argues, served as a screen on which humanity projected its deepest secrets, darkest fantasies as well as guilt and shame over past and present events and actions (21-22). Arguably, with Anne Rice’s storytelling from the vampire’s point of view in *Interview with the Vampire*, the reception and understanding of this figure had been turned on its head. Also depicted in Louisiana, which Amador explains to be “a complex site of contradictions” (163), Anne Rice’s novel popularized the so-called sympathetic vampire.¹⁷ No longer only a vicious predator lacking empathy towards its victims, the human race, this type of vampire proved to be a rather multifaceted individual who revealed its soul to readers and viewers alike. Suddenly audiences were plunged into the inner workings of the vampire Louis de Pointe du Lac, who hates being the monster he has become and who shows true emotions for other individuals.

In the years to follow Rice’s influential work, many authors would successfully employ this new type of vampire, continuously humanizing the figure. In this process, I assert, the Gothic has moved away from the human horror. Until Rice, humans were the ones who needed to fear vampires, who would not only threaten their own lives but also those of their loved ones. Suddenly, however, the roles appear to be reversed and twenty-

¹⁷ However, Anne Rice’s Louis de Pointe du Lac was not the first vampire to cause sympathy in its audience. John Edgar Browning, for instance, states, “Barnabas Collins, the Dracula-type vampire in Dan Curtis’s television series *Dark Shadows* (1966-1971), firmly planted into the American consciousness the prospect of an incredibly sad, flawed, yet redeemable vampire with whom audiences could at last sympathize” (162).

first century depictions set their focus on the vampires' fears and concerns. Turning our eyes towards Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*¹⁸ series, for instance, readers of the novels as well as viewers of the subsequent film adaptations saw vampires such as James, Victoria or the Volturi, although mostly targeting the human main character Bella Swan, ultimately, threatened the vampire family, the Cullens and their way of life. Although the lives of human civilians were in danger, the focus of the *Twilight* plots was set on the Cullens' attempts to keep their family, including Bella, and their hometown safe.

While the extent to which the different vampiric main characters display self-loathing or empathy varies between the numerous television, literature and cinema representations, the vampires' tendency towards a stronger sense of family and belonging, however, is clearly discernible. The novel series turned television series *The Vampire Diaries*¹⁹ by L.J. Smith, for example, is mainly occupied with numerous (entangled) love stories, which are consistently interrupted and complicated by sudden supernatural appearances and occurrences, resulting in the main human and vampire characters' necessity to save their family, friends and home while simultaneously repairing the Salvatore brothers' problematic relationship.

As these examples show, the figure of the vampire, especially on television, has become increasingly more concerned with interpersonal relationships in the twenty-first century than ever before. Suddenly, vampires are not only dangerous, but they also experience danger and threats to themselves, as well as compassion towards their kind. Although they are still considered predators, it appears that the contemporary vampire experiences what it is like to worry about and fear for other individuals. In the television series *True Blood*, however, viewers experience a shift in the Gothic imaginary of

¹⁸ The novel series by Stephenie Meyer consists of four books consecutively published from 2005 to 2008. The film series *The Twilight Saga* hit theaters in the years 2008 to 2012.

¹⁹ The original novel series by L.J. Smith consists of seven novels published between 1991 and 2011. The eponymous television series consisted of eight seasons airing between 2009 and 2017 on The CW.

American society, which, as I argue, once more stresses the subversive potential of vampire fiction. Vampires in *True Blood*, although now mainstreaming²⁰ and openly living among the human population, remain dangerous. After all, their romantic potential paired with their threatening nature comprises a large part of fans' fascination with vampires. In *True Blood*, vampires do not need to threaten American families.²¹ Humans do well to achieve their disruption and destruction on their own. The American tradition of setting the Gothic focus in the common American family as a target of psychological or supernatural menaces (e.g. *The Shining*²²) no longer applies to *True Blood* (see Chapter 2.1), but instead appears to turn families into sites of constant subversion and social disruption. Vampires now cultivate family-like relationships of their own, while human families destroy their chances at happiness through horribly destructive and heinous acts, such as emotional and physical violence as well as betrayal, abuse or even murder.

Unlike *True Blood*, the *The Vampire Diaries* spin-off series *The Originals* largely refrains from the discussion of the human population of New Orleans all together. Focusing on the struggles between the supernatural communities of the city, *The Originals* only presents its viewers with a few select human character, ultimately ignoring the fact that "ordinary"²³ humans still represent the largest part of New Orleans' society in the series. Especially marked by a distinct minimalism of recurring human characters, Season One mostly shows humans to be mere commodities. Easily disposed of after fulfilling their purpose of being food or background noise, Jules Zanger's statement in reference to

²⁰ In *True Blood*, vampires are "mainstreaming," which denotes the fact that they openly coexist with humans and partake in all matters of human society and have gained legal citizenship.

²¹ In the twentieth century, vampire films still regularly portrayed their vampires as threats to the American family. Reminding of *Near Dark* and *The Lost Boys*, J. M. Tyree asserts, "both films model their vampire clans as a kind of alternative tribal unit that must either colonize the American family or be destroyed attempting to do so. Both films end their narratives with order restored" (31).

²² See, e.g. the 1980s adaptation of the Stephen King novel *The Shining*, published in 1977, which depicts the mental decline of Jack Torrance who, after several encounters with ghosts, attempts to murder his wife and son.

²³ "Ordinary" denoting humans without the knowledge of the existence of supernatural creatures as opposed to humans with supernatural powers, such as witches, for instance.

humans in the *Vampire Chronicles*, “as indistinguishable from each other as McDonald’s hamburgers” (21), is also an accurate and fitting description of humans in *The Originals*. Both series, *True Blood* and *The Originals*, in no way depict their vampires as model citizens. However, although their vampires do, in fact, still attack or even kill humans on more than one occasion, and with that do not cease to pose a threat, their surrounding populations (either human and/or supernatural) are represented to be equally dangerous to their societies as this blood-drinking minority. In her analysis of *True Blood* as posthuman Gothic utopia, Erica McCrystal states, “a Gothic utopia would be a place that draws upon Gothic traditions but also pushes towards a new version of the Gothic in which a posthuman balance may exist between human and monster and where excess and transgression are necessary components for the survival of all beings” (94). Largely removing humans from the plot or gentrifying and normalizing vampires and other supernatural creatures, both, *The Originals* and *True Blood*, achieve the result that their audiences lose their ability to detach themselves from the story. Instead, the viewers of both series need to discover their own inadequacies and face the series’ social criticism. Suddenly this social criticism does not seem as covert anymore as it used to when the ills and anxieties of society and humanity were projected on the monsters. Instead it reveals the cultural work both series’ perform, namely to ultimately call into question the persistently used divisive categories of us versus them, here, humans versus monsters.

1.1 *True Blood* and *The Originals* – A Dichotomy of American / Southern Gothic

As I have stated at an earlier point, American authors of the Gothic genre had an obvious interest in psychological horror and the exploration of the self as influenced by these horrors from the very beginning. In *TV Horror: Investigating the Dark Side of the Small Screen*, Jowett and Abbott assert that “[t]he Gothic may be rewritten from different angles but each show is about who we are” (111). *True Blood* and *The Originals* follow this tradition, although in somewhat alternating and modified forms. Using the Gothic trope of *doubling*, both series reflect contemporary society’s anxieties, fears and desires on the examples of human versus vampire/supernatural versions of *family* and *home*, which will be the main research focus of this dissertation.

In the following analyses, I will map out that both television series are marked by numerous production- as well as content-related differences, but still manage to project similar social criticism, especially in respect to the discourses of family and home. While *True Blood* and *The Originals* do not share any commonalities in their production, both of their plots originate in novels written by female authors. As previously mentioned, *True Blood* is based on *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* series by Charlaine Harris while the Mikaelson family originally appeared in L. J. Smith’s novels and subsequent television series *The Vampire Diaries* until they earned their own spin-off series *The Originals*, which eventually entailed its own novel trilogy. The series have been adapted by different producers, appear(ed) on different channels, yes, even addressed a different target group. However, I assert that both shows should, and in fact do, merit a joint examination, as representing two sides of the same coin.

In their analysis of TV horror, Jowett and Abbott state, “[o]n television, horror takes approaches to revising the gothic that logically develop national traditions” (108). Continuing that “rewriting the gothic for television engages with dichotomies of

past/present, rural/urban and expressionist/realist as part of gothic's preoccupation with exterior/interior" (108), Jowett and Abbott stress the adaptability and ubiquity of the Gothic. Similar to this genre, which "is a gradually evolving art form that mirrors the concerns of a given era and society" (Boyd 312), the figure of the vampire also has a reputation to change according to the demands and desires of the culture it inhabits at any given time.²⁴

I will refrain from giving an in-depth and detailed analysis of how *True Blood* and *The Originals* are rooted in the American Gothic and Southern Gothic tradition as there already exists a large body of work on the topic of Southern Gothic in *True Blood*.²⁵ Aware of the fact that this topic in itself would deserve more attention than is possible and necessary for this dissertation, I will, however, offer a brief explanation of how a joint examination of these series' Gothic tropes and settings serves as the basis of my larger aim. I will reveal how both series separately as well as together offer a critique of contemporary American society and U.S. identity concerning the notions of family and home, and the predominant and continuous contemporary attitude to assign people membership to certain categories (e.g. race, sexuality, gender, etc.), which maintains the longstanding us versus them mindset in much of U.S. American society.

For the same reasons as previously mentioned, I only want to briefly address a few production details and will abstain from giving an in-depth description of genre characteristics. However, it is important to note that while *True Blood*, shown on HBO,²⁶ addressed an adult audience, *The Originals*, appearing on The CW,²⁷ has targeted a teenage/young adult viewership. The fact that the former can arguably be considered a paranormal romance while the latter can be said to fall into the category of urban fantasy

²⁴ See, e.g. Auerbach, Nina. *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (1996).

²⁵ See, e.g. Cherry, Brigid. *True Blood: Investigating Vampires and Southern Gothic* (2012).

²⁶ Short for Home Box Office, a U.S. premium cable and satellite television network.

²⁷ Short for The CW Television Network, a U.S. broadcast television network.

should also not be ignored and clearly stresses that, taken together, both series have managed to reach a large audience across the American landscapes of TV viewers and novel readers and with that U.S. society at large.

Rural and Urban Settings

Coming back to Jowett and Abbott's Gothic dichotomies as rewritten by television horror, I want to draw the attention to the series' settings. Located in a rural area (Bon Temps in *True Blood*) versus an urban landscape (New Orleans in *The Originals*), both shows once more manage to mirror two different sides of U.S. identity. Hence, while *True Blood* addresses supposed fears as well as hidden desires of its blue-collar community, *The Originals* discusses difficulties faced by the most powerful creatures on Earth, the original vampires, the Mikaelson siblings, in one of the most culturally diverse cities of the United States of America, New Orleans. In the series, the original siblings are essentially considered royalty who, due to their cruel and ruthless attitudes, have had long-lasting effects on both the supernatural as well as human communities of the city, the latter of whom act as representations of different social strata of US society. Although the series do not share a mutual Gothic setting besides their location in the same state, they do, however, share the underlying discussion of the traditional American Gothic setting, the frontier, depicted in the distinctions between nature/wilderness and inhabited spaces such as the city of New Orleans, Louisiana (*The Originals*) or the town of Shreveport, Louisiana (*True Blood*), which, among others, are surrounded by Louisiana wetlands, forests, swamps and bayous.

Set in a parallel universe to contemporary society, *True Blood*'s extensive marketing strategy created a setting which confronted viewers of the series as well as non-*True Blood*-enthusiastic HBO viewers, yes, even the general public, with the supposed existence of vampires. Billboards, for instance on Sunset Strip in Los Angeles, California, as well as

fake commercials for the blood substitute Tru Blood, broadcast between real commercials on television, made it almost impossible for American citizens to completely escape the series. While *True Blood* was, therefore, firmly entrenched in the present time, its setting in the backwoods of the Deep South helped to create a somewhat Gothic locale. Removed from a larger, buzzing, progressive city, most of the main characters live chiefly alone in older, run-down, or simply poorly maintained residences. These detached houses, such as Bill's plantation home, Sookie's family dwelling, Lafayette's small abode or Sam's trailer, are located miles away from neighbors or in the case of Sookie's and Bill's homes are set apart from one another by the town cemetery.

The fact that the above-mentioned homes, as representative of most homes in the series, are surrounded by typical Southern vegetation such as bushes, wetlands, oaks and other distinctly Southern trees overgrown with Spanish Moss contributes to the rather eerie atmosphere which Allan Lloyd Smith – referring to Faulkner's use of Gothic houses – describes as follows: “nothing less than the Gothic mode is fully able to express the reality of the South” (*A.G.F.* 61). As Caroline Ruddell and Brigid Cherry interpret *True Blood*'s setting, “[i]t is in vegetation (not shadows) that monsters hide” (42). Pointing out that the series' landscape creates a “closed (and claustrophobic) sense of space” (41), where “the lush woodlands, swamplands and bayous clothe and conceal the contours of the land beneath” (41), Ruddell and Cherry draw attention to how the setting itself already creates a sense of “othering.” As I will argue at a later point, both series' discussion of home and hospitality as represented on vampire and human residences, depict different aspects of post-2000 U.S. society and identity, indicated by the fact that, even more than the vampires in the series, humans themselves pose a threat to their own happiness or even existence.

Just like many of the homes in *True Blood* are located on the verge of nature, or the wilderness, reminiscent of depictions of early American Gothic settings (see Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* siblings, who live at the brink of the Pennsylvania wilderness),

the series also employs numerous Gothic aesthetics which, paired with Gothic settings, are then subverted or parodied to carve out human insufficiencies or dominance over the supernatural. One such example is Sookie's repeated visual presentation as a traditional virginal Gothic heroine. Season One especially portrays the, until then, sexually inexperienced Sookie regularly in virginally white clothing. On several nightly occasions, however, instead of feeling dread or unease, Sookie plunges herself into the darkness and wilderness surrounding her home as indicative of her determination to take her destiny into her own hands²⁸ and prove that the petite woman herself is a force to be reckoned with, not a victim.

Similar to how Sookie represents an enhanced version of the figure of the traditional Gothic heroine, the pilot episode of *The Originals* ("Always and Forever") sets up its own re-imagining of the Gothic. Opening with a nightly scene of a canopied boat on moving water in a gloomy mist, the darkness as well as the uncertainty of what is about to happen create a Gothic atmosphere, which is further enhanced by a voiceover. While the camera moves over the boat and viewers can slowly discern a ship in the far distance through the mist, the voice states that the bond of family can be a strength or a regret which "has haunted me for as long as I can recall" (S01/E01, "Always and Forever"). Here, the narrator linguistically expresses and echoes the gloomy feeling which is conveyed by the empty boat rocking on the water at night, which indeed creates a haunting atmosphere and simultaneously links the notion of family to emotions of dread and unease.

Informed by subtitles that the action is taking place on the "Mississippi River, 300 years ago" ("Always and Forever"), the scene, shortly thereafter, transitions to the inside of the ship, where a few young men attempt to inspect the seemingly abandoned vessel.

²⁸ See, S01/E01, "Strange Love," when Sookie wears the white T-shirt (and shorts) of her Merlotte's uniform when she saves Bill from two rednecks who try to drain him off his blood; S01/E06, "Cold Ground," when Sookie, wearing a long flimsy white dress, runs across the cemetery to Bill's house where they have sex for the first time; S01/E08, "The Fourth Man in the Fire," when Sookie, wearing a white and yellow summer dress, walks across the cemetery at night to take flowers to Bill's grave whom she believes to be dead, only to be surprised when he grabs her rising from the ground and the two have sex in the cemetery.

Finding two coffins in the belly of the ship, the men are confused when they open one casket and discover a body with a dagger²⁹ stuck in its chest. Suddenly, one after the other, all men but one are taken as if by a ghost hand until a beautiful blond woman appears. Wearing a white contemporary gown and pinned-up hairdo, her eyes are surrounded by protruding veins, which slowly recede while she is wiping blood off her lips with a handkerchief. Although she addresses the man politely, saying “Lovely to see such a handsome face after a long journey,” her beautiful and delicate (though blood-stained) appearance strongly clashes with her imminent attitude when she asks, in the same breath, “Can I eat him, brother?” Unlike *True Blood*, where Sookie only occasionally appears like the outward epitome of a Gothic heroine, preferably in traditionally Gothic settings such as the cemetery or in Bill’s rundown plantation home, *The Originals* opens with a Gothic atmosphere, which is quickly somewhat parodied by Rebekah Mikaelson’s almost schizophrenic behavior and her brother Elijah’s sudden appearance, who mockingly replies “I’d rather you didn’t” (“Always and Forever”).

With the Mikaelsons’ arrival on the shores of the Mississippi in what would have been the early eighteen hundreds, viewers enter Louisiana in its colonial stages, shortly before the founding of New Orleans in 1718. Opening the show in times when “the frontier” had not yet become a Gothic trope but very much was a present concern of the settlers, *The Originals*, from its very beginning, clearly stresses its embeddedness in the Gothic tradition and its use of Gothic settings. However, where *True Blood* will focus on its rural setting, *The Originals* will direct its attention to New Orleans as the urban center where the commingling races carry out their fights for dominance in urban Gothic settings such as abandoned churches, dusty attics or back allies.

²⁹ As viewers are informed in the series, Klaus Mikaelson is in the possession of mystical daggers, which, when stabbed into a vampire’s heart, put them into a magical sleep until said dagger is removed.

Throughout Seasons One to Three, the series will continuously employ the distinction between the wilderness, as represented by the bayou, and the civilization, through the example of the city of New Orleans. While the bayou will represent a place of safety for those in need of hiding, it is the city with its back alleys, secret attics or walled-up rooms which represents true danger. As will be analyzed at a later point in this dissertation, the distinction between the wilderness and the city plays a crucial role in the discussion of home and U.S. identity in the series.

Past and Present

As previously mentioned, HBO's marketing strategy for *True Blood* strongly connected the series' fictitious Southern setting with the real world. Even creating the transmedial "True Blood: Baby Vamp Jessica Blog," the show makers established a universe where the series' characters could interact with their audience. On this blog, Jessica, for instance, informed her followers about what bloodlust can do to a vampire, while her vampire mentor Bill, for example, used the platform to record a secret message for Jessica. Telling his progeny about the day when his first human child Sarah was born, he, aware of his imminent death, explains to Jessica, and, therefore, her followers that "havin' you as my progeny, my daughter, has been equally joyous."³⁰ Mary Hallab claims, "[a]s living dead, they [the vampires] stand for both the loss of all that is past and its paradoxical aliveness in the present" (43). Supporting Hallab's assessment, Bill's reminiscence of his human as well as his vampire life connects the past and the present in his video message to Jessica. Just as this blog was an additional feature to further anchor the show in the present time, regular references and flashbacks to the vampires' past lives within the series created a sentimental nostalgia for both the characters' sense and understanding of family and home as well as the South with its traditions and customs in general. Showing the vampires'

³⁰ "True Blood Season 7: Jessica's Blog - A Father's Love."

ability to appreciate and cherish past experiences from his human life and his capability to experience supposedly human emotions such as compassion, the series makes it hard to distinguish the vampires' behavior from that of humans.

Referring to the first American Gothic soap opera, *Dark Shadows* (1966-71), Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbott state that the series' opening voice-over in the form of a direct reader address is typical of the narrative of a Gothic tale "intimately communicating with the viewer" (108). While the novels on which the seven *True Blood* seasons are based are first-person narrations of the main-character Sookie Stackhouse, the series refrains from a voice-over narration, instead infusing the plot with flashbacks to all kinds of characters' (human and other) pasts. Memories of humans and supernatural beings alike are, however, rarely good or happy. Mostly thinking back to saddening or tormenting events, Sookie's human best friend Tara, for instance, presents the audience with her mother's drunken escapades resulting in the aggressive, violent and emotionally scarring treatment of her daughter. While Sam Merlotte remembers his abandonment by his foster-parents, who were unable to cope with his shapeshifter existence, the vampires Bill and Eric share the memories of their violent turnings with the audience. Following the Gothic interest in the inner workings of its characters' minds and psyches,³¹ most of the series' flashbacks, hence, arguably serve to anchor the plot in the Southern Gothic tradition which, according to Jowett and Abbott, "presents the South, in literature, film and television, as backward, brutal, corrupt, in-bred, grotesque, hysteric and governed by its own rules and traditions" (109). In his definition of Southern Gothic, Allan Lloyd-Smith states that "in the South there was a sense of history turning in upon itself as writers evoked a string of distorted figures trapped in structures that had lost their authority but not their power" (*A.G.F.* 121), which also translates to the figure of the vampire in *True Blood*. Making these creatures

³¹ See, for example, Charles Brockden Brown, Edgar Allan Poe and Charlotte Perkins Gilman, as previously mentioned.

part of contemporary society, they, however, continue to be restricted in their mobility as they are forced to remain indoors during the day. Hence, having lost some of the authority they had with the reputation of being bloodthirsty fiends, they have not lost their power, which they continue to exert in the backwoods of the Deep South. A region whose history has been shaped by race concerns and religious dissonances, just to name two of many issues, a backward small-town such as Bon Temps is the perfect place to oppose the vampires' abilities with the humans' conservatism and zealotry. Ultimately showing humans to be equally dangerous and destructive as vampires, the series further blurs the lines between the supposed moral superiority of humans over vampires as depicted in traditional vampire narratives.

Similarly to *True Blood*'s representation of the South's historical (e.g. Civil War) but also current troubles (e.g. religious bigotry and political fanaticism), *The Originals* also employs the tool of flashbacks and the visualization of its characters' memories to bridge the gap between the series' current events and developments in the main characters' past with their rootedness in the history of the city of New Orleans. While *True Blood* refrains from the use of voice-overs, *The Originals* does employ this traditional tool of Gothic narration as every episode opens with a short voice-over monologue by one of its main characters, a member of the Mikaelson family. Instead of the Gothic heroine, we now have the Gothic vampire narrating. Episode after episode, throughout the three seasons the analysis of this dissertation encompasses, the series always opens with introductory remarks by a supernatural character rather than a human: mostly one of the original siblings, as well as other main characters such as Hayley Marshall (a werewolf, later hybrid) or Marcel Gerard (a vampire) who already are or will be an extension to the Mikaelson family. Reminding viewers that *The Originals* chronicles the life story of the Mikaelsons as well as their involvement in the history of New Orleans, most of these

monologues either comprise remarks about the complicated relationships amongst the original family or the city where they “found a home” (S01/E15, “Le Grand Guignol”).

As previously mentioned, the very first episode, “Always and Forever,” opens with a scene subtitled “Mississippi River, 300 years ago.” Plunging viewers back in time and situating the Mikaelson siblings’ arrival in what would become known as New Orleans, the series’ beginning already hints at the continuous entanglement between the characters and the setting. Throughout the series, viewers see memories of historical events or their recapitulation by and connection to the characters such as Klaus and Elijah’s attempt to unite the supernatural communities of New Orleans to oppose Prohibition, or Marcel’s enlistment in the Army during World War I and his ensuing deployment to France. Although *The Originals* ever so often conveys scenes of happiness in said flashbacks, usually, these joyful snapshots are quickly destroyed by supernatural forces or the many incidents of feuding amongst the members of the Mikaelson family. Similar to *True Blood*, also *The Originals* employs memories and flashbacks to further humanize its main vampire characters. The events and hardships which led the Mikaelsons to become vampires, for example, offer an explanation, not an excuse, for Klaus’s violent and cruel tendencies. *The Originals* shows that even vampires are not immune to physical and emotional abuse or distress and that they can suffer long-term consequences just as humans do.³²

In using flashbacks to connect the past with their contemporary settings and vampires’ experiences with those of humans, both, *True Blood* and *The Originals*, create worlds which are indicative of the Gothic tradition of the “eternal battle between good and evil” (Jowett and Abbott 109). Jowett and Abbott assert, “The legacy of violence is enhanced within representations of Southern gothic” (109), which is connected to the South’s continuous characterization as “America’s repellent yet all too compelling Other”

³² See, e.g. Lorna Jowett’s article “Horrible Histories? Vampire Television, Period Drama and Spectacle” (2017), in which she talks extensively about vampires and flashback narratives.

(A. Graham 335). While this is one function of the performance of memory, these instances, at the same time, also show that vampires or supernaturals are not so different from humans. In “A New Biological Citizenship: Posthumanism in Octavia Butler’s *Fledgling*,” Pramod K. Nayar, quoting Michael Rothberg and Yasemin Yildiz, asserts that “[p]erformances of memory . . . emerge from the people, regardless of their formal citizenship status” (804), which ultimately creates “memory citizenship” (804). The South as well as the figure of the vampire with their troubled and troublesome pasts, hence, function as a fertile ground for the discussion of contemporary issues and problems of Western civilization and the revelation that good and evil are not fixed categories but are continuously (re)defined and carried out by society, ultimately affecting the discourses of family and home in the process.

Exterior and Interior

Given *True Blood* and *The Originals*’ setting in Louisiana, the South’s continuous representation and self-image, as being distinct and detached from the rest of the nation, allow for a discussion of the underlying question of what it means to be ‘the other.’ This is also reflected in the series’ use and vampires’ occupation of urban and rural spaces, as well as their experience of past and present events. In her discussion of homemaking myths of Swedish immigrants in the United States of America, Agnieszka Stasiewicz-Bieńkowska asserts that these stories were used “to liberate immigrants from the stigma of foreignness, respond to the exclusion they experienced and compensate their inferior status in relation to Anglo-Americans” (89) so that they were able to create a sense of belonging. Just like these homemaking myths created a “sense of safety, comfort and a pattern brought about by the reassuring notion of historical continuity” (90), the vampires and supernatural creatures in *True Blood* and *The Originals* experience what it means to search one’s place in society. This is a discourse which the figure of the vampire, with its longstanding

tradition in literature and other media, has embodied perfectly for a long time. Just as I have shown how the Gothic dichotomies of rural/urban and past/present bring vampires and humans closer to one another through the assimilation of their experiences, the Gothic's preoccupation with exterior/interior (Jowett and Abbott 108), I argue, functions as a connecting link between *True Blood's* and *The Originals'* characters and its all too human viewers. For viewers and fans of both shows, the medium of the television itself already creates a simultaneous, almost schizophrenic, sense of separation and belonging. While we bring vampires into our home via our TV sets, hence inviting the uncanny, we still manage to dissociate ourselves from these creatures as we assume they cannot escape these technological devices. However, no matter how far removed vampires and supernaturals appear to be, fans seem to be unable to escape their thrall completely, loyally tuning into the programs every week and (maybe subconsciously) absorbing the messages and critique these creatures transmit through the television.

In *True Blood*, the television set plays a crucial role. Still allowing viewers of the series to dissociate themselves spatially from the supernatural world with the help of their television screen – marking the boundary between the real and the fantastic – the humans within the show do not enjoy the same luxury. Sigmund Freud explains that “an uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred, when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary, when a symbol takes on the full function and significance of what it symbolizes” (*Uncanny* 150). Hence, the categories of exterior and interior can no longer be clearly discerned. The facts that vampires on screen are shown to be less monstrous than the humans and gradually adopt more and more human values and morals shows how “these monsters break the conventions we hold to steady order and control by being both inside and outside ourselves” (Ní Fhlainn 4). In the series, vampires are out in the open, “mainstreaming” as they say (S01/E04, “Escape from Dragon House”), even interacting with humans in their

daily or rather nightly lives and more or less directly addressing the human population via their appearances on news shows or political debates, which are broadcast on television. Pateman states, “TV screens are the banners and barriers wherein the images move, and the domestic space becomes the virtual agora” (vii). Vampires in *True Blood* definitely use this technology as the center stage for their public relations. Engaging in live television debates or discussions with the vampire hate-group The Fellowship of the Sun, for instance, vampires, ultimately, represent themselves as a minority group fighting for equal rights by means of “the most political of media” (vii). With the help of the television, vampires achieve to represent themselves to the humans in the series as disadvantaged and vulnerable, in need of the humans’ help and support to become fully accepted members of society. The viewers of *True Blood*, however, are able to detect the vampires’ use of America’s history of racism and disenfranchisement as a perfect stage upon which they can project the injustices they supposedly experience. While most humans within the series only see the public image vampires convey of themselves, the TV audience watching *True Blood* is able to recognize the bigger picture as they are removed from this representation through yet another television screen. When Bill, for example, confides in Sookie that vampires live either alone, with their progeny or in so-called nests with other vampires, he explains that his kind tends to occupy dwellings away from human homes, keeping their daytime resting places as well as vampire abilities and vulnerabilities a secret. Informing Sookie that “we don’t like for our weaknesses to be made public knowledge” (S01/E01, “Strange Love”), Bill reminds his love interest that humans can be just as dangerous as vampires. While the humans within the show remain ignorant to this fact, the show’s viewers gain more information by being privy to secret conversations and flashbacks to bygone events and times.

In comparison to the HBO series, where vampires have become part of society, *The Originals* paints a picture wherein vampires and other supernatural creatures live among

humans without the humans' knowledge. Hiding in plain sight, vampires, werewolves and witches partake in the social and political life of New Orleans while simultaneously fighting about who gets to live where in the city and who will be exiled to certain sectors of the city or the surrounding bayou. While the questions of space and segregation are notorious concerns of the American South in particular, their discussion on the examples of communities hidden from humans (aside from a select few) is indicative of the South's stereotypical good-natured image. To the untrained eye, New Orleans seems to be a buzzing city, with great entertainment for tourists and cheerful, multicultural locals, the notorious exterior of New Orleans. Yet, this façade hides that in reality, "the interior truth" (Jowett and Abbott 113) is one of corruption and infighting, where tourists every so often are used as snacks for the local vampires, a fact viewers of the series in front of their televisions are aware of while the humans in the show remain ignorant. Eventually healing the humans' wounds with their blood after snacking on them, the vampires erase the humans' memories and send them on their way, "no mess, no fuss," as Marcel explains (S01/E02, "House of the Rising Son"). Ní Fhlainn explains that the "postmodern collection of boundary fractures – situating the monster simultaneously both inside and outside all cultural constructs – reminds us that we are always vulnerable, because we are surrounded by them" (4), by the monsters. In *True Blood*, vampires are at least temporarily restricted from the human world as they can only participate in human society after nightfall. In *The Originals*, however, vampires who wear a daylight ring are able to fully impersonate humans, hence crossing, for example, spatial, temporal and emotional boundaries all at the same time.

Both series, *True Blood* and *The Originals*, create Southern settings, which, unless disturbed or closely examined, appear to be marked by friendliness and a strong adherence to customs and traditions, e.g. the celebration of New Orleans-specific festivities (*The Originals*) or bringing Southern comfort food to the relatives of a deceased person (*True*

Blood). In reference to the television series *American Gothic*,³³ but equally applicable to the series I scrutinize in this dissertation, Jowett and Abbott state that “the show emphasizes the dichotomy between polite and formal exterior of the South versus the interior truth of corruption and social decay” (113). Just as it is characteristic for the genre of the American Gothic, what is most important does not superficially meet the eye. Echoing Tara McPherson’s assertion that Southern hospitality, one of the pillars of Southern identity, is “a carefully manipulated stage set of moonlight, magnolias, and manners” (150), both series reveal that the horror of American and Southern Gothic is not what can be seen with the naked eye, but exists beneath the surface, hidden behind closed doors, in people’s minds and psyches. Typical Gothic icons such as *family* and *home* are contested in the twenty-first century once again. They continue to be the setting for Gothic horror, which points at how similar societal issues remain over the centuries. Just as vampires and humans on television fight for their rights to belong, so do many people in the real world continuously struggle to become equally accepted members of society. *True Blood* and *The Originals* express the categories of *external* and *internal* in several different ways. TV viewers experience this binary first-hand but retain a slight (TV-screen-thin) chance to dissociate themselves from the critical scrutiny within the series through the barrier of the television. The characters within the series (although maybe unaware) live the confrontation with vampires and the societal issues which arise, ultimately making the “us” versus “them” distinction a problematic one. Ní Fhlainn states, “for most of us” (3) humans, “the monster is a cathartic construct – it embodies what we cannot face, purge, fight, accept or acknowledge; in effect, it is the very core of the ‘other’/’Not I’ – acting out our worst imaginings so we may safely divorce monstrosity from ourselves” (3). *True Blood* and *The Originals*, however, raise the question what this “other” really signifies and

³³ A U.S. American television series which first aired on the channel CBS on 22 September 1995 but was canceled after only a single season in July 1996.

whether it even exists in that they use the gothic dichotomies of rural/urban, past/present and external/internal to reveal that vampires are similar to us humans in more ways than they distinguish themselves from us.

Stasiewicz-Bieńkowska claims that humans are tempted to interpret the Other “as estranged from the Self” (85), and that the above-mentioned Swedish myths “offer a new understanding of Selfness and Strangeness as intimate, dependent on one another and finally – inseparable” where the Other is included in the Self (85). *True Blood* and *The Originals*, however, use the Gothic and its tropes family and home to explore the self. Relying on the dichotomies of rural/urban, past/present and exterior/interior, both series reveal similarities between vampire and human experiences, ultimately revealing that

our monstrous companions are also uncomfortably familiar: Lying beneath the surface of our skin(s) – the skin of the nation, of desire, the self, the mind, the screen, the body, the signifying feature that encloses the vulnerable inside from the treacherous outside – nothing is more terrifying, more abject, more destructive, than seeing the monster within the self working its way out (Ní Fhlainn 3).

I argue that just like the Gothic genre, the image and perception of the South as well as the medium of television create ways for contemporary societies to avoid, if not escape, the acknowledgment of our personal participation and involvement in many societal and political issues of our times. Bringing these issues closer to home and the family by making both out to be no longer solely human concerns and experiences, post-2000 vampire fiction with its use of Gothic tropes calls attention to societal and political injustices of our contemporary times. Veronica Hollinger’s assertion that “there is no room for an inhuman other, nor any need for one, in a world that can provide its own apocalypse” (209) reverberates Stasiewicz-Bieńkowska’s joint existence of the understanding of Self and Other which post-2000 vampires represent in perfect unison. Ní Fhlainn uses the term “skin slippage” (4), meaning the “disruption of clean and necessary borders – to maintain control and reaffirm boundaries” (4), which then “becomes a

postmodern site of bricolage, interweaving abjection and the gothic into what once seemed familiar” (4). Just like the vampires have lost their capes and abhorrent looks over time, these creatures have ceased to solely symbolize humanity’s anxieties. Instead, vampires, now more human-like than ever, challenge whether the categories of “monster” versus “human” continue to exist or have begun to recede or even merge parallel to the shift away from the vampire’s traditional image as soulless fiend and the victimization of the human race.

1.2 Vampire Humanity or Human Monstrosity?

*Not all of us can say, with any degree of certainty, that we have always been
human, or that we are only that.*
(Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 1)

. . . the monsters of modernity are characterized by their proximity to humans.
(Judith Jack Halberstam, *Skin Shows* 23)

While it has been mentioned that the American South has a reputation of concealing social concerns behind a curtain of customs and traditions, Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock states that the Gothic lends itself perfectly for the exposure of injustices. Explaining that “the Gothic is always about inequities in distributions of power and contests for control, the specific permutations it takes depend on the configuration of the society that births it and which it reflects” (3), Weinstock echoes Molly Boyd’s contention that “Gothic novels . . . highlight or criticize the failures or distortions in the mores and customs of society” (313). The discussion of power and control is what drives both TV series, *True Blood* and *The Originals*. Whether it is the question if vampires need to be controlled or even exterminated (*True Blood*), or whether vampires, or the original family in particular, should be the ruling race in New Orleans above all other supernatural and human communities (*The Originals*), what it all boils down to is who has the most power, who will gain it and who will be able to retain it.

When one thinks of indelible moments and events in the recent history of the United States, one is involuntarily reminded of the attacks of September 11, 2001. The day when militants of the Islamic extremist group Al-Qaeda hijacked four airplanes and carried out suicide attacks into the twin towers of the World Trade Center (NYC), and the Pentagon (Washington, DC), the American populace were harshly reminded of the existence of forces hateful of the American way of life and, in particular, of America's political involvement in the Middle East. Reminiscent of this tragic day in American history, *True Blood's* "Great Revelation,"³⁴ when vampires made their existence known, met an American society on screen as well as behind the television set which just seven years before had been shaken to its very core. It is unsurprising that the series' human characters would be depicted as being wary of the newcomers, especially since the vampires' ability to glamor humans as well as their superhuman strength and speed seemingly put them in a more powerful position than the mere mortals, albeit only at night. Suddenly, humans in the series as well as in front of the small-screen were reminded again that one might be unaware of the danger that is hiding in plain sight, maybe even in the house next door. The existence and availability of guns in almost every household in *True Blood* and the readiness with which humans protect what is theirs (be it their family and/or their home), are reminiscent of a paranoia which could be traced back to the country's 9/11-trauma. Clive Bloom's assertion that "[n]o longer does the external world threaten as much as the internal" (3) refers to Poe's contribution to the American Gothic. Yet his statement, I argue, can also be applied to the American citizens' realization that terrorists had been hiding and training for these atrocities on U.S. soil.

In comparison to *True Blood*, which depicts an attempted coexistence of vampires and humans, *The Originals* largely ignores the existence of humans in New Orleans,

³⁴ See S01/E01, "Strange Love," when Sookie mentions that vampires "came out of the coffin two years ago."

Louisiana, altogether. While Season One would still show the regular death of humans as a result of the vampire populace's desire for blood, subsequent seasons only rarely show such incidents, as when Klaus Mikaelson, for instance, consumes blood from a crystal wine glass rather than, like he did before, straight from a victim's wrist or neck. In terms of *power*, humans do not seem to play a crucial role in the series. Instead, it is the supernatural communities which battle for control over the city, and the French Quarter in particular. Unbeknownst to the locals and tourists, the different factions fight each other under the protection of a few humans who value the financial gain over the potential danger. While the city's Mayor and Chief of the NOLA³⁵ Police Department, for example, are both aware of the existence of vampires and werewolves, they have a "So a few tourists go missing. Okay. We can spin it. No problem"-attitude (S01/E06, "Fruit of the Poisoned Tree") as long as New Orleans maintains its mystic flair and supernatural thrill for which tourists seem to visit and which has the cash tills ringing.

The continuous discussion of who is the ruling race or ruling family in New Orleans brings strongly to mind the history of racial segregation and Jim Crow Laws in the American South. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock states that "the Gothic takes as its focus transgressions of cultural boundaries [which] is to say that the central topic thematized by the Gothic is inevitably *power*: who is allowed to do what based upon their subject position within a particular society at a specific moment in time" (2). This is particularly true for *The Originals*. While Klaus, Elijah and Rebecca³⁶ arrived at the shores of the Mississippi in the early seventeen hundreds and helped build what would become the city of New Orleans, they would remain the ruling family until they had to flee the city, continuously using all other factions (human, werewolf, witch) for their personal gain, like figures on a chessboard. When they return to the city after a one-hundred-year-long absence, they find

³⁵ Acronym for New Orleans, Louisiana.

³⁶ Their older brother Finn and younger brother Kol were being transported in coffins with a magical dagger through their hearts.

that much has changed and the factions have been put under control more than ever. While the siblings used the witches and werewolves, forcing them to do their bidding under the threat of violence, Marcel, Klaus's protégé and progeny, had managed to ban the werewolves to the bayou and the witches to The Cauldron,³⁷ successfully spatially separating the superhuman groups in New Orleans. However, while the question of who is in power remains to be settled, the question of who truly belongs to which group or family and whose home the French Quarter really is arise simultaneously.

Unlike *True Blood*, which unmask human insufficiencies and suppressed desires with the help of supernatural creatures and their contrast to humans, *The Originals*, I argue, purposefully lacks a large number of human characters and mirrors contemporary society on the agglomerate of the supernatural communities in New Orleans. Nina Auerbach asserts that vampires "promise escape from our dull lives and the pressure of our time, but they matter because when properly understood, they make us see that our lives are implicated in theirs and our times are inescapable" (9). By infusing American Gothic and Southern Gothic features into *True Blood* and *The Originals*, these vampire narratives do important cultural work, revealing, on the example of the United States, the inequities minorities still experience today and how spatial segregation and the compartmentalization of individuals is a continuous process in twenty-first century society.

As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, vampire fiction has experienced several resurgences since its beginnings in Europe. Just as the Gothic was tailored to its new circumstances upon reaching the New World, it has continued to adjust to and represent issues of its audience's respective generations. Charles L. Crow, quoting critic Elaine Showalter (1986), explains "that the popularity of vampire fiction in the late nineteenth century correlate[d] closely with the epidemic of then-incurable syphilis" (qtd. in "Fear" 143), while its revival at the end of the twentieth century could be linked to "HIV-AIDS

³⁷ In *The Originals*, The Cauldron is a residential and commercial area neighboring the French Quarter.

replacing syphilis as the menace by which a stranger, or a trusted partner, might work a terrifying transformation on his or her victim” (“Fear” 143). Just like both of these comebacks of vampire fiction, its popularity in the beginning of the twenty-first century can also arguably be related to events, not diseases, which had strong impacts on the American people, and the world at large.

The attacks of 11 September 2001 as well as the natural disaster Hurricane Katrina both brought out fears and the awareness of continuous injustices concerning U.S. American society. Quoting the cultural historian Lewis P. Simpson, Boyd writes, “The modern southern writer, Simpson claims, utilizes gothic forms to create a ‘vision of the south illustrative of the bizarre terrors of existence under the conditions of modern history’ by focusing on ‘the terror and pathos of the self’s difficult, maybe impossible, attempt to achieve a meaningful identity’” (315). While 9/11 reminded the U.S. and the world that no country is untouchable and, ultimately, truly safe, Hurricane Katrina drove home the message that spatial segregation based on income and/or skin-color remains a harsh reality in present time. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen states that monsters, such as vampires, “ask us how we perceive the world, and how we have misinterpreted what we have attempted to place. They ask us to reevaluate our cultural assumptions. . . . They ask us why we have created them” (“Monster Culture” 20). Expressing fears and concerns of post-9/11 America through the examples of their discussion of the discourses of *family* and *home* as markers of American identity, *True Blood* and *The Originals* represent the cultural anxieties, which result from the renegotiation of these concepts and constructs as well as the dangers human society causes itself.

With the removal of humans and/or the recognition of vampires attempting to become equal members of society, post-2000 vampire series such as *True Blood* and *The Originals* have created narratives which allow for a more outspoken social criticism of contemporary society. As their audiences are no longer able to explicitly identify with the

series' human characters, their victimization has come to an end. Employing features of American and Southern Gothic, post-2000 vampire fiction transfers its inherent psychological horror from the homes and families within the stories to the audience's homes and families behind the television set, ultimately creating an awareness that the line between monsters and humans is indeed a fine one, if not questioning the validity of such a distinction all together.

2. Post-2000 Vampires and Family – Eternal Blessing or Eternal Curse?

Who are my kin in this odd world of promising monsters, vampires, surrogates, living tools, and aliens? . . . 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?
(Donna J. Haraway, *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium* 52)

From the creatures' earliest depictions until the late twentieth century, vampires were regularly portrayed as ruthless creatures who largely roamed the earth in solitude, incapable of forming deeper bonds with other individuals. If not soulless altogether, they ran the risk of losing their soul (e.g. Angel in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) and were driven by the urge to prey on human victims to quench their thirst for blood. Unsurprising for predators who traditionally kept to the shadows due to their folkloric idiosyncrasies, such as severe vulnerability to sunlight, conspicuously pale complexion and pointy canines, vampires used to be lone hunters in order to remain hidden from the society amongst which they resided and humanity at large.

Among the first to change the vampires' predilection for solitude, Bram Stoker's influential 1897 novel *Dracula*, in which the vampire-lord Count Dracula shares his castle with three vampire brides, gave rise to the creatures' later tendency to gather. As Lorna Piatti-Farnell notes in *The Vampire in Contemporary Popular Literature* (2014), the congregation of vampires into groups or "nests" became a recurring phenomenon in the twentieth century with examples such as the family-like vampire commune in *The Lost Boys* (1987) or "the chilling, wolf-like packs of Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles*"¹ (134). In fact, Candace R. Benefiel in her essay "Blood Relations: The Gothic Perversion of the Nuclear Family in Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*" even goes so far as to say that this story (1976, 1994)² "turned the vampire paradigm on its head" (261) in that Rice's

¹ *The Vampire Chronicles* consist of twelve novels published from 1976-2016.

² Anne Rice, *Interview with the Vampire* (Random House Digital, Inc., 1976); *Interview with the Vampire*, directed by Neil Jordan (Warner Bros., 1994).

vampires were the first to successfully achieve and maintain the audience's sympathy. Rice's dysfunctional and grotesque *vampire family* still contributed to the *othering* of her characters and their continuous, although lessened, reception as monstrous, for instance when Lestat de Lioncourt turns the innocent five-year old Claudia into a vampire for the selfish purpose of convincing Louis to remain with him by creating the illusion of a family. However, the figure of the sympathetic vampire was then established and continued to thrive in subsequent depictions, progressively generating vampires who do not only appear to have a conscience but who also form different kinds of social or interpersonal unions with their own kind as well as humans.

The connection between vampires and the concept of family has been precarious since the creation of this figure. As vampires have needed human blood to sustain themselves, for most of their undead existence³ they have posed a threat to all humans and could potentially mean the true death or undeath for any family member, be that mother, father, child, or other relatives. However, vampires' living arrangements or sexuality have also been considered threats to the traditional Western idea of family as seen in discussions of lesbianism in Le Fanu's 1872 novel *Carmilla*. Traditionally representing what Western culture was unable to understand or unwilling to accept, representations of the undead adapted to the conditions, ideals and ideas of the society which hosted them in order to portray the deviant antagonist to what was considered to be the norm. Similarly, the relationship between Stoker's Dracula and his three female vampire companions has been cause for discussions about family. Having been interpreted as his vampire wives/daughters, their "figuratively incestuous family of vampires" (Benefiel 263) has hence been read as a polygamous relationship, deviating from the traditional model of what George Peter Murdock, in 1949, termed the "nuclear family" (1), hence, the cohabitation of a father, a mother and their children.

³ Nowadays there are also vampires who survive on animal or synthetic blood, see *Twilight* and *True Blood*.

While these early European examples of vampire fiction rather implicitly threatened the traditional idea of family, the American Gothic (see Chapter 1), with its transformation from its European predecessor, early on displayed a strong tendency to center its plots “around images of the family and familial trauma” (Wheatley 123), which eventually also transcended into its storytelling of vampire narratives.

The understanding of the term *family* is versatile and carries different meanings in various cultures, making the discussion of vampire families an intriguing and complex one. As Irene Levin states, the most basic and general definition of family may designate some form of biological, legal and emotional connectedness between family members (94). However, some people may also include friends and pets into their family, thus further blurring the lines of this definition, and even completely averting the idea of consanguinity. Noting that “[m]onsters are our children” (“Monster Culture” 20), Cohen creates a familial relationship between monstrous fiction and its audience. Ultimately the product of human imagination, the figure of the vampire qualifies as one of “our children” (20), which brings the vampire closer to the concept of family. Similar to family or familial ties who can be broken but not erased, monsters such as vampires can never be fully repressed once they have been acknowledged and will always come back and continue to exist for centuries.

Just as monsters, and vampires correspondingly, change according to time and place of their creation, so has the concept of family undergone and continues to undergo changes resulting “from the interplay of shifting social conditions, contested ideals, and people’s attempts to build their lives amid the constraints of their time and place” (Gerson and Torres 3). Due to growing industrialization, modernization and globalization, among other factors, the mid-twentieth-century ideal of the nuclear family has seen the development of

a number of alternative lifestyles, which do not aim to replace the traditional concept but rather adjust it to the contemporary and more versatile realities.⁴

As one would expect, vampire fiction also reflects these developments. Thinking back to the 1960s and 70s, for example, Auerbach contests that vampire fiction portrayed “a soaring alternative to patriarchal families” (167), while the eighties brought about movies such as “*The Lost Boys*[, which] admits no world beyond the family” (167) or *Near Dark* (1987), where a clan/family of vampires threatens to kill or turn two siblings (Caleb and Sarah) who, together with their father, destroy the vampires and even manage to discover a cure for vampirism in the process. As these examples show, the idea and importance of familial ties and blood relations once more gained prominence in the last two decades of the twentieth century. While Piatti-Farnell states that the vampires’ newly-found interest in group-formation was mostly due to safety concerns and to facilitate the hunt, she points out that – although twenty-first century literature continues this trend – one important aspect has changed. It seems as if, with the turn of the century, vampire congregations have begun to shift from “simple groups of like-minded and like-bodied creatures” (134) to “the emergence and establishment of vampire families” (134). Here, the vampire’s evolution from monster to romantic interest – where *Interview with the Vampire* marked a pivotal point – has, as I argue, mostly been accompanied by the introduction of

⁴ In the early twentieth century, the fields of anthropology and kinship studies began to undergo critical scrutiny. One of the key figures in this development was W. H. R. Rivers. Dwight W. Read makes reference to Rivers and asserts “that blood relationship (consanguinity) is inadequate for a definition of kinship as it would not account for the practice of adoption and other practices which make it evident that ‘fatherhood and motherhood depend, not on procreation and parturition, but on social convention’ (Rivers 1924 [1968]: 52)” (Read 78). In her influential work *Family We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (1991), Kath Weston states, “In the United States, race, class, gender, ethnicity, regional origin and context, all inform differences in household organization, as well as differences in notions of family and what it means to call someone kin” (28). Following Weston’s critique of the heteronormative concept of family, Nancy Levine contests “assumptions that families must be defined on the basis of genetics and procreative sexuality and have created an alternative kinship paradigm and a distinctive family type, that is, chosen families, which are based on friendship, love, and individual choice and a variety of sexual, social, and economic relationships” (Levine 379).

parental figures,⁵ who either helped guide this more considerate version of a vampire or functioned as deterrence from possible relapses into the old, more monstrous habits of vampiric existence.

Following up on Piatti-Farnell's claim, I argue that one needs to distinguish between two different categories of vampiric "families" aside from the above-mentioned customary pack-like assemblies. On the one hand, literary as well as visual media in the twenty-first century have presented their audiences with the formation of family-like groupings and clans depicting relationships between sires, also known as masters, and their progenies, meaning the humans they turned, their offspring so to speak, or "non-related" empathetic parental vampire figures. On the other hand, especially in recent U.S. vampire-themed television series, as I assert, there has been a noticeable emergence and continuous growth of depictions of vampires who share actual human consanguineous ties, hence human blood relations.

Vampires turning other family members, however, is not an unheard-of phenomenon. Taking, for example, Lestat de Lioncourt in Rice's novel *The Vampire Lestat* (1985) and Spike in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (S07/E17, "Lies My Parents Told Me", 2003), we find that both of these famous twentieth century vampire representatives also turned their mothers into one of the undead. While Lestat's mother, however, leaves him so she can travel the world, Spike's mother rejects him once she is a vampire, and he kills her after she attempts to seduce and even stake her own son. In comparison to such rather failed attempts at an eternal family connection, it is evident that "vampire families" in the post-2000 era – consisting of either sire/progeny or actual formerly human family blood ties – tend to follow two possible pathways at opposite ends of the emotional and interpersonal spectrum. These unions are either understood as an extremely important and intimate bond

⁵ Although Louis de Pointe du Lac himself lacked a guiding parental figure in the positive sense – Lestat the Lioncourt could only be considered a negative role model – he made great efforts to be just that for the child vampire Claudia.

into which two individuals can enter,⁶ in which case their chances at success appear to be more optimistic, or such blood relations are understood to be mostly insignificant and their pre-eminence is considered backwards or even threatening to the vampire race.⁷

Towards the end of the twentieth century, the semantics of the term ‘family’ appeared to experience *de novo* contestation in the United States and much of the Western world. Changing family and household arrangements, high divorce rates and the continuous struggle of same-sex couples to receive equal rights to their heterosexual counterparts, to name a few concerns, persisted to influence the discussion of how to define the concept of family. Although the New York Court, in 1989, ruled that gay couples would be included in the legal definition of a family,⁸ disparate factions in the U.S., for instance, continued to draw varying lines between who should be counted as a family member and who should not. In their 1992 essay “Family Diversity: Implications for Policy and Practice,” for example, Marci J. Hanson and Eleanor W. Lynch already established the notion of family as “any unit that defines itself as a family, including individuals who are related by blood or marriage as well as those who have made a commitment to share their lives” (285). While Hanson and Lynch hence put inclusivity and the commitment to “caring for one another” (285) at the heart of their definition, the U.S. Census Bureau, in its 2010 Census Briefs, almost twenty years after Hanson and Lynch, continued to limit family in more rigid legal decrees as “a householder and one or more other people living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption” (Lofquist et al. 4).

One may assume that this restrictive acknowledgment of family membership was linked to circumstances such as previously mentioned high divorce rates at the end of the

⁶ See *True Blood*, S02/E06, “Hard-Hearted Hannah,” where Eric Northman is ready to die alongside his sire Godric when he intends to “meet the sun,” essentially committing the vampire version of suicide.

⁷ See *The Originals*, where Klaus is prepared to kill everyone who threatens his family throughout the series, or when entire sirelines turn against one another to ensure their survival (Season 3).

⁸ The 4-to-2 decision by the Court of Appeals in New York “was the first by a state’s top court to examine a long-term gay relationship and find that it qualified as a family” (Gutis n.pag.).

twentieth century and still resonated with what Gill Jagger and Caroline Wright in their introduction to *Changing Family Values: Difference, Diversity and the Decline of Male Order* referred to as the “contemporary *fin-de-siècle* angst” (1), where “contemporary changes in the family and gender relations [were] viewed negatively” (1). Just as negative societal developments were reflected in vampire fiction, the subsequent decline of divorce rates in the 1990s (cf. Olsen 2015), and the resulting more optimistic outlook on family, also appeared to be mirrored in stories about the undead. Tapping into the zeitgeist of its time, the figure of the vampire, as Benefiel states, “became a liminal, transgressive figure, a stage upon whom the fears and secret desires of society could be acted” (262).

Seemingly in the process of recovering from obstacles to the achievement and maintenance of a happy traditional family life, as well as gradual recognition of alternative lifestyles and living arrangements, the perception of the renewed rise of the American family met with yet another, unanticipated and urgent threat at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 not only shook the United States of America as a country, but also devastated numerous families who lost relatives either during the attacks or in their aftermath, when many male and female U.S. soldiers died during their service in the “war on terrorism” (George W. Bush, “Remarks by the President Upon Arrival” n.pag.). Resulting in the highest numbers of U.S. casualties since the Vietnam War,⁹ the experience of either losing one’s own family members or seeing friends, neighbors or acquaintances grieve their losses, as well as the fear of further attacks, I assert, could be one of many reasons why post-2000 vampire television series have once more picked up the nowadays regularly recurring theme of family or family-like ties making them, if not paramount, at least highly influential and essential to the story arc.

Echoing Auerbach’s famous assertion that “what vampires are in any given generation is a part of what I am and what my times have become” (1), Piatti-Farnell

⁹ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, “America’s Wars” 1.

quotes “Botting’s persuasive contention that ‘vampires are mirrors of contemporary identity,’ providing ‘the normative image’ of the twenty-first century consumer, with all the anxieties and preoccupations that image entails” (7). Arguably the most influential post-2000 body of vampire fiction, Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* series – consisting of four annually published novels (2005-08) and its subsequent film series *The Twilight Saga* (2008-12) – needs to be mentioned as one example of contemporary storylines/plots which emphasize the idea of a vampire family and the importance of family in the fight for survival against outside threats. Although the Cullen family is not based on actual human blood ties, it still depicts the traditional image of a rather normative “nuclear family” (Murdock 1), composed of the father figure, Carlisle, and his progeny-wife Esme, as well as their “children” Edward, Rosalie, Emmett, Alice and Jasper. The Cullens’ sense of belonging and loyalty can be seen as the token of these vampires’ perpetuation of traditional family values. In this nuclear family¹⁰ everyone looks up to the parental figure Carlisle, who has taught and helps each of them to retain their humanity by means of the vampire version of a vegetarian diet, hence only drinking animal blood. In the *Twilight* vampire family universe, the lack of human kinship ties appears to be compensated by the family members’ vampiric blood ties and its members’ faithfulness, loyalty and commitment. The Cullens are shown to be a fully functioning and intact family, one in which its members look out for one another and are prepared to go to great lengths to ensure the others’ safety and wellbeing. It is important to note that this devotion is set in sharp relief to other more purpose-driven vampire aggregations who are apt to aggressive and violent behaviors and, who only combine forces in times of threat. Similarly, the Cullen clan contrasts with the female protagonist Bella Swan’s family. The single child of divorced parents, her mother seems to enjoy her time spent traveling with her new husband

¹⁰ Carlisle turned Edward, Esme, Rosalie and Emmett to save their lives, while he accepted Alice and Jasper into the family as they also wished to lead the Cullen’s alternative human-friendly lifestyle by surviving on animal blood.

instead of taking care of her child, while Bella's father is uncomfortably overwhelmed, although happy, to take in his teenage daughter, but is ultimately unable to protect her from harm.

Although *The Twilight Saga* does not constitute a crucial part of my argumentation, the novels and films, I assert, represent a point of departure for subsequent representations of vampire families on U.S. television. Within the framework of human kinship as well as vampiric blood ties, I claim that Stephenie Meyer's Cullen clan is the last vampire family in the post-2000 era (up until 2017) of U.S. vampire-themed film and television series which adheres to a traditional setup and traditionally assigned roles of its members. Resulting in an almost fairytale-like representation of what a nuclear family is expected to be, there, however, also exists some subversive potential.¹¹ In this scenario, the father figure Carlisle is portrayed as rather traditional head of the family, characterized by his reasonableness and function as a parental role model, while the mother Esme almost exclusively provides emotional support and tender care. Although this nearly infallible nuclear family thrives through its adherence to traditional human values and role allocation, it also distinguishes itself through its disposition of inclusivity. Thinking back to Hanson and Lynch's definition, the (vampire-)blood-related family members (Carlisle, Esme, Edward, Rosalie and Emmett) fully accept Alice and Jasper and later Bella when they prove their "commitment to share their lives" (Hanson and Lynch 285), albeit inevitably obliged to follow Carlisle's prescription of how this life essentially needs to be led.

While *Twilight* paints a more accepting although not necessarily unconditionally tolerant picture (e.g. members of the Cullen family have to abdicate human blood) of the mid-nineteenth century traditional ideal of the nuclear family, the following chapter seeks

¹¹ Rosalie and Emmett's love relationship could be considered incestuous as they were both turned into vampires by Carlisle and hence, share the same vampiric blood.

to shed light on the different and more critical – but also partially more modern – representations of the concept of family. Reminiscent of the American Gothic Drama of the 1960s, which, as Wheatley points out on the examples of *The Munsters*, *The Addams Family* and *Dark Shadows*, exposed “prevalent anxieties in the 1960s around the instability of the familial unit” (122), I will use examples of the contemporary television series *True Blood* and *The Originals* to reveal how both series advocate a more tolerant and liberal understanding of the concept of family. By examining vampire family structures and ties and contrasting them with non-vampiric families in both popular shows, I will map out the series’ attempts at a nuanced depiction of this contentious twenty-first century notion, particularly their demonstration of flaws and failures of traditional views on, and concepts of, family while simultaneously stressing the need for a more open-minded attitude towards alternative life-styles as well as the necessity of gender equality in families.

2.1 Non-Vampire Families in *True Blood* and *The Originals*: Traditional Values and Happiness Be Gone

Different groups may, and often do, define the family in different ways. What shapes these definitions is the way the society or societal subgroup is structured, that is, how it has chosen to accomplish necessary tasks for survival and how power is distributed in the group. Thus, to some degree the definitions reflect adaptations to environmental circumstances and previous societal conditions, but they are also the product of cultural innovations and a process by which those in positions of power and privilege promote definitions that serve their own interests and values.
(J. Ross Eshleman and Richard A. Bulcroft, *The Family* 5)

It can be argued that with Alfred Hitchcock’s horror-film *Psycho* (1960), “the Hollywood cinema has implicitly recognized horror as both American and familial” (R. Wood, 78). Subsequent works of the genre regularly continued to place horror in the family sphere, where families were oftentimes destroyed from within, for instance, by parents (i.e. *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), where murderous tendencies are passed on from one generation to the next) or even children (i.e. *The Omen* (1976), where a child kills his

parents among other victims).¹² It has been argued that although vampire fiction clearly occupies a subgenre of horror, the horror of twenty-first century U.S. vampire television series appears to have abandoned the family realm as the concept of family or a happy one at that, at least for non-vampires, seems to have become more like a distant dream than possible reality.

In her essay “Mothers, Killers and Vampires: The Post-Familial Society in *True Blood*,” for instance, Kathrin Rein argues that although *True Blood* is interspersed with elements of the horror genre, the series “is remarkably void of families” (n.pag.), even going so far as to say that viewers of *True Blood* are denied any traditional family until the end. Disagreeing with Rein, I assert that, rather than dismissing the concept of family, recent vampire series propose the view of family as a phenomenon which is not human-culture specific. Rather crucially, however, in supernatural societies, these creatures, here vampires – which for a long time have been considered to be soulless, monstrous lone hunters of their human prey – are depicted as being more loyal and socially competent than humans. Although the vampires’ social competence often only succeeds among their own kind, their ability to form longer-lasting and more loyal relationship than the humans challenges the validity of the categories of monster and human once more.

Acknowledging Rein’s argument, I will mainly refer to *True Blood* and *The Originals* as case studies to prove that non-vampire families are depicted as being dysfunctional or are disrupted because family members – either of their own volition or through some outside force – have ceased to adhere to traditional values. By exploring how the appreciation of “family” differs between vampires and humans or other non-vampire members of society, I will map out how this contrast questions or even negates the still prevailing western view of idealization of a heteronormative nuclear family. Using

¹² For a more detailed account of horror in the family sphere, see Wood, Robin. “An Introduction to the American Horror Film.”

Twilight as a point of departure for my analysis, I will show how *True Blood* and *The Originals* stray from the persisting assumption that a heteronormative nuclear family, more so than any other familial setup, is the most reliable means of loyal protection and a necessity for the achievement of true happiness, crowned by parenthood and marriage.

As previously mentioned, vampire narratives such as *True Blood* and *The Originals* continue to maintain their place within the horror genre. Vampires have a long tradition of disrupting families by also bringing horror into the family realm. For a long time, vampires achieved this by killing family members or turning them into the undead, thus functioning as a threat from the outside, or by creating a threat on the inside when turned family members return to their loved ones without being able to control their thirst for human blood. This traditional and disruptive relationship between vampires and the concept of family can be interpreted as an example for how, according to Elaine Graham, Michel Foucault “debunked the ontology of humanism” (13), where he employed “the pathological, the outcast, the abject and the almost-human [to] consistently feature as indicators of the limits of the normatively human” (13). However, I assert that vampire fiction on U.S. television in the first two decades of the twenty-first century tends to render family horror as no longer being a salient family-internal phenomenon. Instead, post-2000 vampire fantasy horror alludes to family in that this concept is almost treated as an aside, a notion no longer relevant in human U.S. society. Flawed, failed or abusive familial relationships appear to be the norm and the question of whether a happy family can even exist in the twenty-first century seemingly never arises.

Referring to “examples of twenty-first century Gothic” (1), Piatti-Farnell explains that the figure of the vampire is no longer used to lead discussions of “‘alienation and transformation’” (Baudrillard 2008; qtd. in Piatti-Farnell 1) but rather “hold[s] the key to unravelling the ‘fascination’ and ‘transparency’ of the contemporary world” (1). In similar

terms, William Patrick Day states that “the vampire has become an ambiguous figure in a story about the nature of humanity at a time when we are no longer sure we know what human nature is” (2). Day continues that “[e]ven the most apparently transgressive, subversive, or revolutionary vampire is part of our attempt to define and affirm our humanity” (2), which Mary Hallab confirms, stating that “[a]s living dead, vampires and stories about them often inculcate important social lessons, reinforcing social solidarity and responsibility within the family and the community” (33). I argue, that, in that sense, vampires no longer function as a stage upon which human flaws are being projected, but instead operate as guides to future human interaction, criticizing apathetic identities and the lack of commitment in twenty-first century society, which faces more frightening threats than to hurt old-fashioned sensibilities of outdated ideologies.

As a positive development in contemporary Western society, the predominant importance of blood relations in the understanding of family has declined. With the rise of blended families, the possibilities of adoption for same-sex couples (since 2012 in several U.S. states), artificial insemination, seed banks and (single-)parenthood with the help of surrogate mothers, for example, the familial setups have changed, which is also reflected on television. Thinking of one of the most popular non-vampire themed U.S. television series, *Grey’s Anatomy* (2005-), for instance, the show presents its viewers with the main characters Meredith Grey and Derek Shepherd’s successful adoption of a baby-girl from Malawi, Africa, as well as the “love-triangle” of Callie Torres, who carries and gives birth to a daughter with her friend-with-benefits Mark Sloan, with whom she raises their child as a blended family together with her eventual wife Arizona Robbins. Both of these examples present followers of the series with happy as well as dramatic moments within these families and unions, confirming Vivien Burr and Christine Jarvis’s claim that “popular culture . . . explores both the advantages and the dangers of non-normative family forms, specifically the non-genetic or ‘chosen’ family” (263). Unlike the happiness of the families

in *Grey's Anatomy*, which lasts at least over the span of several seasons, the television series *True Blood* and *The Originals* do not even attempt to give its non-vampire families an outlook at a happy family life. Before I go on to analyze the ways in which the depictions of vampire “families” stress the need for a more open-minded and progressive understanding of family and the imperative recognition and accomplishment of gender equality, however, it is crucial to take a closer look at how human and other non-vampire families in *True Blood* and *The Originals* are shown to fail. In *True Blood*, especially were-animal- and shapeshifter-families are shown to be problematic rather than happy. While the were-panthers, for instance, suffer from genetic deficiencies due to inbreeding, the few shapeshifters in the series suffer from the lack of pack mentality that werewolves, for example, exercise.

In his book *Archetype Revisited: An Updated Natural History of the Self* (2015), Anthony Stevens writes that “[a]nthropology demonstrates that family formation is a universal characteristic of humankind” (93) and that although “[d]ifferent cultures favour different kinds of family . . . all societies support family ties of one sort or another” (93). With that in mind, it is not surprising that, at the end of the twentieth century, Jagger and Wright, for example, state that “[a]t the core of contemporary concerns about the family are changes in family living and household composition” (1). As factors causing these concerns they name “the growth of domestic partnerships and decline in the popularity of marriage, as well as growth in the number of divorces, remarriage (serial monogamy), re-formed or step-families, single parenthood, joint custody, abortions, and two-career households” (1). As already mentioned, *The Twilight Saga* still advertised the 1950s ideal of a nuclear family, or a vampire version thereof, contrasting it with the somewhat flawed human family of the protagonist Bella. Albeit a family of vampires, the Cullens are represented as solvers of all problems and as a rescuing haven against all evil. In contrast to *Twilight*, *True Blood* and *The Originals* refrain from the depiction of any intact

traditional family, especially a happy human/non-vampire one. While the nonexistence of this concept is not openly emphasized, disrupted (e.g. orphaned children, failed marriage, single-parenthood) and dysfunctional families (e.g. abusive and violent parents), as well as failed and flawed marriages, are portrayed in such a manner that they appear to be nothing out of the ordinary but rather examples of normalcy in these twenty-first century television versions of U.S. American society.

Orphaned Children

Taking a look at *True Blood*'s main character Sookie Stackhouse, for instance, viewers are presented with a naïve waitress who works at the local diner, Merlotte's Bar and Grill. Together with her older brother Jason, Sookie was raised by her grandmother Adele after their parents had purportedly died in a flash flood. Early on, viewers find out that both Sookie and Jason are prone to disaster and tend to entangle themselves in all kinds of drama. Jason is promiscuous, shallow and impressionable, which, already in Season One, leads him to take "V," the highly addictive and illegal drug that is vampire blood,¹³ while Sookie has great problems with interpersonal relations due to her telepathic abilities resulting in the fact that she can hear everything everyone around her is thinking. Although, at first glance, the three remaining Stackhouses (including grandmother Adele) appear to be a happy and (aside from Sookie's telepathic abilities) rather normal family, it soon becomes clear that there is more to them than meets the eye. Throughout the series' seven seasons, we learn that the Stackhouse family is descended from Niall Brigant, King of the original tribe of Fae, which is how Sookie received her mind-reading abilities. Furthermore, flashbacks and memories show Sookie's childhood being far from carefree. Scared of her "otherness," her parents took her to see several mental health professionals

¹³ See S01/E08, "The Fourth Man in the Fire," when Jason's girlfriend Amy convinces him to help her kidnap the vampire Eddie in order to drain him of his blood.

until they felt they could not take it anymore. When the faerie-vampire hybrid Warlow then appears on their doorstep and wants to make the young Sookie his immortal bride/companion, her parents, devoted Christians, decide to save Sookie's soul by drowning her in a lake. This is when Warlow kills Sookie's parents in order to save her, concealing his actions by a flash flood.¹⁴ As if dealing with her telepathy and losing her parents had not been enough for young Sookie, she reveals to her vampire-lover Bill that she was sexually molested by her grand-uncle, until her grandmother took action and broke off any contact with him.¹⁵ While it is clear that Sookie and her brother Jason care for each other, the eventual murder of their grandmother Adele exposes their relationship as being highly complicated and somewhat fragile. Instead of comforting his sister, who had lived with their grandmother and enjoyed a close relationship with her, Jason yells at Sookie and slaps her in the face when he finds out about Adele's death, even inviting Uncle Bartlett to the funeral, ignorant and uncaring of why his presence might upset his sister.

As the example of Sookie Stackhouse in *True Blood* shows, the young woman has never been able to truly rely on her human family. Not only do many of her blood relatives try to harm her in one way or another, but in many cases they eventually end up being killed, leaving her for good, although, with the exception of her grandmother, she seems to be better off without them. In similar ways to Sookie, Hayley Marshall in *The Originals* is orphaned and grows up under rather complicated circumstances. Hayley, who is known from earlier appearances on *The Vampire Diaries*, is a young werewolf in her early twenties who becomes one of the main characters in *The Originals*. Pregnant with and eventually giving birth to the original Klaus Mikaelson's child, it is gradually revealed throughout Seasons One to Three that Hayley was born in New Orleans as Andrea

¹⁴ Warlow reveals the truth about Sookie's parents in episode 5 "Fuck the Pain Away" of season 6. In the following episode, "Don't You Feel Me?" Sookie's father possesses Lafayette in the attempt to finish what he started so many years ago by once again trying to drown her in a lake. Eventually Bill sends Warlow who frees Lafayette of Sookie's father's possession, and saves her life.

¹⁵ Bill kills Bartlett Hale in S01/E07, "Burning House of Love."

Labonair, the daughter of the alphas of the Crescent Wolf Clan, one of the two ruling royal werewolf families in New Orleans. When her parents were killed when Hayley/Andrea was still a baby, she was rescued by Marcel Gerard, the most powerful vampire in New Orleans and leader of the city's vampire community at that time. After being adopted she grew up with human parents until she accidentally killed someone in a drunken stupor on a boat trip at the age of thirteen, triggering her werewolf gene. At the next full moon, she turns into a werewolf for the first time, and her adoptive parents cast her out, leading to her growing up in several different foster families. After that Hayley travels, spending time with different werewolf packs, never staying anywhere for a longer period of time until she discovers her heritage and decides to go to, and remain in, New Orleans¹⁶ to uncover her past.

Although Hayley is not molested by a family member and her parents do not try to murder her, she, just like Sookie, is let down by her family, in Hayley's case, her adoptive parents and subsequent foster families. In a situation when Hayley would have needed her parents to be strong and comforting, they abandoned her. For a girl at the age of thirteen who accidentally killed someone and only finds out that she is a werewolf when she first turns furry, her parents' inability to accept her for what she is mirrors Sookie's parents' resignation at attempting to cure their daughter of her telepathy. Referring to vampires, Hallab suggests that "because of its unique bipolarity – both human and supernatural, alive and dead – the vampire leads us to a larger consideration of the nature of the individuals and his search for significance in a vast and terrifying universe" (1). Just like the undead, also both women, Hayley and Sookie, represent characters of a dual nature (half wolf, half human and part human, part faerie) who experience strong disappointments and the loss of

¹⁶ It is important to note that her wish to understand her heritage is not the only reason for her to stay in New Orleans. Once the Mikaelson family finds out about Hayley's pregnancy, they make it very clear that Hayley is to remain with them so that they can keep the baby safe.

trust towards those who are supposed to represent a child's safe haven.¹⁷ In both cases, the series use the characters' supernatural hybridity to position them as 'other' – something that their parents cannot understand – which is an effective metaphor for how many parents respond to children who are different. Hence, challenging the validity and benefits of a traditional heteronormative family setup, *True Blood* and *The Originals* show family to be a problematic construct and react to cultural and societal developments of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

Abused and Sacrificed Children

Just like Sookie and Hayley, the respective female main characters of *True Blood* and *The Originals*, many other characters in each television series are also not safe from enduring the effects of the failures of family. For example, Tara Thornton, Jessica Hamby and Tommy Mickens in *True Blood*, experiencing what it means to be let down by their families, are being physically and mentally abused by their parents.

As a young child, for instance, Tara already had to witness how her controlling father abused her mother, Lettie Mae. When he eventually left the family, this loss of her husband, in addition to the psychological aftereffects of her physical abuse, led Tara's mother to become an alcoholic. From then on – presented through flashbacks to Tara's childhood throughout the series – young Tara had to regularly flee to her friend Sookie's house when Lettie Mae was either too inebriated to take care of her daughter or exerted physical violence over her. As an adult, Tara still suffers from her religious as well as superstitious¹⁸ mother's drunken rages including verbal insults and physical attacks, like

¹⁷ Supporting my argument, Elaine L. Graham, referring to Michel Foucault, explains that “[h]e debunked the ontology of humanism” (13) as “[i]n his work – just like teratology – the pathological, the outcast, the abject and the almost-human consistently feature as indicators of the limits of the normatively human” (13).

¹⁸ See, e.g. S01/E07, “Burning House of Love,” when Lettie Mae asks Tara to pay for her exorcism, as she believes that a demon is the true cause of alcoholism. Although it will be revealed later that the woman

when, for instance, on entering their home, Tara is greeted by Lettie Mae hitting her over the head with a big, heavy book, possibly a bible, yelling “Where the hell have you been, you dirty whore?” (S01/E03, “Mine”). Throughout the series, their relationship is shown to be a complicated one, as Tara loves her mother despite all her seemingly never-ending disappointments, which is consistent with the witnessed behavior of many victims of domestic abuse.

While Tara never really stops trying to find a way to reconcile with or help Lettie Mae, the teenager Jessica Hamby and the shapeshifter Tommy Mickens feel differently about their birthparents. Raised in a devout Christian family in Shreveport, Louisiana, seventeen-year-old Jessica’s reaction – after having been forcibly turned into a vampire by Bill as punishment for killing another vampire – reveals her relief at escaping her father’s grasp and parochialism: “No more Mama and Daddy? No more little sister? . . . No more belts. No more clarinets. No more home school. No more rules. I’m a vampire. Wow!” (S01/E11, “To Love Is to Bury”). Adjusting rather quickly to her new existence, she eventually visits her family and attempts to kill her father, only to be stopped by Bill, who, as her maker, is able to command her to leave her family alone. Realizing that she no longer can be nor wants to be a part of her human family, Jessica does not attempt to contact them again and, after a rather rough start with her maker Bill, eventually respects him, even going so far as to see and love him like a father.

Tommy Mickens is the brother of Sam Merlotte, owner of Merlotte’s Bar and Grill. As is revealed in passing, Sam was given up for adoption after birth since his mother Melinda Mickens was only sixteen years old at the time of his birth and she considered herself incapable of raising a child while her then boyfriend, now husband, Joe Lee Mickens was in prison. When Sam eventually tracks down his birthparents and finds out

who performs the exorcism, Miss Jeanette, is only a con artist, Lettie Mae is cured of the disease for the remainder of the series.

that the teenager Tommy is his younger brother, he quickly discovers that their parents abuse Tommy like a commodity. As he, just like Sam, inherited the shapeshifter gene¹⁹ through their mother, his father uses Tommy to make money with illegal dog fights. Tommy has been fighting in his shifted form, a Pitbull, ever since he hit puberty and gained the ability to shapeshift, hence replacing his mother in the ring when she was not fit enough to win any more fights. In this scenario, Tommy is considered to be nothing more than his parents' property, which, as his father Joe Lee states, they own "from head to tail" (S03/E05, "Trouble") and can use at their convenience. Shortly after Sam takes his brother in, trying to help him lead a better life, Tommy is attacked by his parents, who cannot accept losing their sole source of income, and he kills them in self-defense. Never having learned what it means to have a loving and caring family, Tommy is unable to trust Sam and constantly disappoints his brother with his obnoxious behavior and objectionable actions. Eventually, and misguidedly, attempting to do the right thing for once, Tommy tries to stand up for Sam and uses his newly gained power to skinwalk.²⁰ Pretending to be Sam, Tommy fights Marcus Bozeman, packmaster of the Shreveport werewolves, who wants to scare Sam off of dating the werewolf Luna Garza, Bozeman's ex-girlfriend and mother of their daughter Emma. Tommy dies since his body is weakened from skinwalking and cannot recover from the injuries he suffered through the fight.

In similar fashion to the above-mentioned examples, many characters in *The Originals* are also denied a happy family with two loving parents. The teenage witch Davina Claire and the vampire Marcel Gerard when he was still human, for instance, both experienced how children are understood to be objects, which can be used at one's

¹⁹ Here, it should be noted that shapeshifters are capable of turning into any animal they see before they induce a "shift." Wereanimals, on the other hand, only have one form into which they can transform themselves (e.g. werewolves, werpanthers, etc.), and this form is passed on by their parents.

²⁰ In *True Blood* shapeshifters can, on rare occasions, gain the power to skin-walk when they kill their birthparents. This means that they cannot only transform into animal shapes but can also take on the appearance of another human being although this is extremely exhausting for their body and always results in extreme exhaustion, vomiting or even the loss of consciousness.

convenience, or to gain power. Just like Tommy Mickens, whom his parents used as a source of income, Davina's parents happily and proudly offer her up to serve as a sacrifice at The Harvest Ritual of their New Orleans witch community, practitioners of ancestral magic.²¹ Not knowing what will happen to her, Davina feels honored to serve her coven in such an important ritual and it is only when the ceremony is already in progress that she fully understands how this ritual will be executed. Seeing how the Elder Bastianna slits the other three chosen girls' throats, Davina tries to get away and pleads with her parents to save her. Ignoring her daughter's cries of despair, pretending not to hear her, Davina's mother simply turns away. At the last moment, however, before the Elder can complete the ritual by killing Davina, she is saved by Marcel and his vampires, who kill Bastianna and other witches who try to stand against them. As the leader of the New Orleans vampire community, Marcel is not one to be squeamish when it comes to killing humans. Offering, as he refers to it, "the occasional all-you-can-eat-buffet"²² (S01/E02, "House of the Rising Son") to his nightwalkers, he only has two rules when it comes to humans. One of these rules states that vampires in New Orleans are not allowed to kill locals as in New Orleans, which is also referred to as "The City that Care Forgot" (Ingersoll n.pag.), with its reputation as a place of little restraint and inhibition, the disappearance of locals would cause more attention than when tourists disappear every so often. More importantly however, Marcel forbids anyone, regardless of to which race or group they belong, to hurt or harm children. Although he manages to save Davina and hide her away in the attic of an

²¹ In *The Originals* "ancestral magic" denotes that the members of the New Orleans witch community receive their magic through the connection with their ancestors "on the other side." In order to keep this power flowing, the witches are required to sacrifice four young witch girls every three-hundred years. After this offering, meaning the murder of these girls, they remain in a state of limbo until the Harvest is complete and they are resurrected, once more reinforcing their ancestors' magical connection with the living members of their coven.

²² Marcel provides his followers regularly with fresh human blood: "The City of New Orleans. People of all stripes and flavors from all over the country come here to party on our streets. Some are just looking for fun. Some are looking for something a little darker. More dangerous. So we invite them into my home and we give it to them. Then. At the stroke of midnight, everything changes. It's time to feed. This is how I keep my guys happy. The occasional all-you-can-eat-buffet. My nightwalkers love it."

old church, her parents make no effort to find and save her and there is no mention that they attempt to stop their witch coven from trying to complete the ritual which would ultimately end their daughter's life.

Just like the previously mentioned characters from *True Blood*, Davina is also forced to acknowledge early in life that she cannot trust her parents to protect and care for her. When she would have needed them the most, with her life on the line, it was not her parents who came to her rescue. Instead, it is the leader of the vampires, whom the French Quarter witches had been trying to drive out of the city for a while, who comes to Davina's rescue. Of course, Marcel's attitude towards children does not come from an innate tenderness, but originates in his own upbringing. Born in New Orleans in 1810, he was the illegitimate son of the Governor of Louisiana and a slave woman from the Governor's plantation. As the second son of the Governor, the "bastard child,"²³ his father repudiated him and treated Marcel like any other slave, including being punished by means of lashing or similar physical abuses. From a modern-day European perspective, one can only imagine how psychologically scarring life as a slave must have been, but Marcel also had to watch his half-brother Emil's privileged upbringing while he was treated more like a tool than a human being. Having lost his mother to the yellow fever before he was ten years old, the young boy continued his existence as a nameless²⁴ slave until he met the hybrid Klaus Mikaelson in 1820. Similar to Tommy Mickens in *True Blood*, Marcel is seen as a mere commodity by his father, who, when visited by Klaus Mikaelson accompanying the young Marcel, initially says: "Well, I see you've come to return some stolen property" (S01/E20, "A Closer Walk with Thee"). However, when Klaus threatens the Governor and explains that he expects him to grant the boy his freedom without any compensation, he

²³ See e.g. *The Originals*, S01/E02, "House of the Rising Son," when Rebekah tries to explain the relationship between Klaus and Marcel to Hayley she reveals that Marcel, just like Klaus was the "bastard child of a man who saw him as nothing but a beast."

²⁴ See S01/E20, "A Closer Walk with Thee," when Marcel explains in an interjected flashback that his mother had planned to name him when he turned ten fearing he would die of the disease. However, his mother dies before Marcel turned ten, leaving him behind without a name.

yells “Fine! Take him. He wasn’t worth a damn to me anyway!” (“A Closer Walk with Thee”).

Summarizing the depiction of the relationships between parents and children in *The Originals* and *True Blood*, it can be said that both television series portray the disillusionment concerning the understanding and discourse of family, and parents in particular, as a safe haven. As the examples have shown, both series present a normative conception of family as dysfunctional and at times abusive and violent, where the vampires might offer an alternative to this normative image. Although just like humans the vampires in both series are not infallible, their “families” and communities function as models for a more tolerant coexistence, disregarding contemporary human points of contention, such as skin color or sexuality. It needs to be mentioned that the above noted examples comprise only a small selection of the many instances when parents fail their children in both series, while further examples exist and will be noted at later points throughout this chapter. Hence, breaking with the societal expectation that children are the apple of their parents’ eyes and that parents would do anything to keep their children safe, *True Blood* especially sets the stage early on and continues to maintain a perfect backdrop for inconspicuously bringing out the many ways in which vampire families appear to be much more closely-knit and reliable than their non-vampire complements. As will be shown throughout this chapter, both series suggest that it is time to reconsider and modify traditional modes of family and to reflect on post-2000 cultural assumptions about this construct. *True Blood* and *The Originals* criticize the fact that, still in the twenty-first century, members of our contemporary society are not granted the same rights and opportunities like those who adhere to long-standing, in the past arbitrarily-chosen rules of conduct. With the help of examples of the vampires’ more tolerant and loyal understanding of and behavior within the construct of family (*True Blood*) or their working towards more open-mindedness and gender equality (*The Originals*) will show, both series invite their viewers to reflect on

their own attitudes and opinions. In a post-2000 America, where the concept of marriage and the construct of family have come under attack once more (e.g. due to the debates on same-sex marriage, the higher occurrence of blended families, etc.), *True Blood* and *The Originals* suggest that “chosen families”²⁵ offer a more reliable alternative than the adherence to 1950s ideal of a nuclear family, to which many people are still attached.

Failed and Flawed Marriages

While relationships between parents and children are depicted as both difficult and failing, the notion of marriage, the institutionalized union between two adults, is also put under closer scrutiny in *True Blood* and *The Originals*. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, it is noticeable that vampire fiction in the twenty-first century, and especially post-*Twilight*, has moved away from the glorification of traditional views on family and family life. In her examination of vampires in contemporary popular literature, Lorna Piatti-Farnell, however, notices that while the concept of vampire families can be represented in many different ways and with different levels of commitment and loyalty, the notion of marriage, and, in particular, “weddings remain a newly-established presence impossible to miss” across contemporary vampire narratives (127). Comparable to how *Twilight* portrayed a rather traditional, almost old-fashioned nuclear family, albeit a vampire one, at the center of its narrative, marriage in its entire sentimental splendor was also given great significance in the novels as well as in their movie adaptations. While the human Bella was outspoken to Edward about her desire to be intimate with him, the old-fashioned vampire refrained from consummating their love and sexual desires before they had exchanged their vows in an official ceremony, corresponding to the novels’ traditional Mormon undertones.

²⁵ See, e.g. Battis, Jes. *Blood Relations: Chosen Families in Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Angel*.

While I have already established that a healthy relationship between parents and their children is characterized as being problematic, if not impossible to achieve in *True Blood* and *The Originals*, the institution of marriage, as well as premarital relationships between two adults, are also shown to have a tendency to fail in both television series. Once more using *Twilight* as a point of departure, the novels as well as the films paint an almost idolized portrait of the vampire family of the Cullens. In comparison to this loving, respectful, loyal and above all intact family, the main human character Bella Swan's parents are divorced and appear to be somehow clumsy in their parental capabilities. Although both of her parents clearly love Bella, her mother Renée puts her own happiness before her daughter's when she decides to travel with her new husband, while Bella's father Charlie is awkward in his displays of affection and ignorant of the teenager's needs or troubles. While not much is mentioned about Bella's parents' marriage and why they separated, other marriages between humans are simply ignored, and although her mother Renée remarried, her father Charlie, for years, appears to have no interest in forming a new relationship until he meets a woman named Sue at the end of the final movie *Breaking Dawn – Part 2* (2012). Aside from the Cullen parents and Bella's parents, these movies do not depict any other recurring parental pairs, whether intact or divorced. The question arises as to whether such pairs even exist in the *Twilight* universe. The parents of Bella's human friends are only mentioned in passing, if at all, and even among the werewolves, it appears impossible to portray an intact parental relationship.²⁶

Just as *True Blood* set itself apart from the *Twilight* portrayal of a happy nuclear family, the series also appears to distance itself from the topic of a successful marriage. As already mentioned, Tara Thornton's father left his family when Tara was still a child, and Tommy Mickens' parents appear to spend their lives together out of necessity and mutual

²⁶ Even Bella's best friend, the werewolf Jacob Black only lives with his father after the loss of his mother which, however, happened before the storyline begins.

dependence, including abusive behavior, rather than as a result of true love and commitment.

While Tara's father eventually walked out on his family, Hoyt Fortenberry's father committed suicide, leaving Hoyt's mother, Maxine, behind as a single-parent when their son was only ten years old. While Maxine is depicted as a caring and (over-)protective, albeit sometimes overbearing mother in season one, the following seasons reveal her to be racist, prejudiced, manipulative and deceitful. For seventeen years Maxine had maneuvered her son into staying with her because she was supposedly afraid to be alone after her husband was murdered when their house was robbed. Not only cheating the insurance company for money, Maxine also lied to her son about their marriage and Hoyt's father's death, portraying him as a hero. When Maxine, however, is under the influence of the Maenad Marianna, she tells Hoyt that his father really was a "secret drinker" (S02/E11, "Frenzy") and "a closet homosexual" ("Frenzy), as she assumes, because "that man just liked to dance more than a normal man should" ("Frenzy). Explaining that "Daddy put a bullet in his own head, cuz he was too weak to handle his responsibilities" ("Frenzy"), Maxine reveals that their marriage was not a happy one, hence contributing to the series' depiction of marriage as a flawed and failing concept.

While the topic of marriage does not come up very often throughout the series, it seems as if most of Bon Temps' human citizens are either not interested in the concept of marriage²⁷ or feel like it is beyond their reach.²⁸ The only person who is seemingly incapable of giving up on marriage or simply unwilling to accept its problematic nature is the human waitress Arlene Fowler. Although she has already gone through four unsuccessful attempts at this institutionalized bonding before the plot of *True Blood*

²⁷ E.g. Jason cannot imagine spending his life with only one woman.

²⁸ E.g. Sookie can read every potential boyfriend's mind and is thus privy to every dirty thought, which does not make for a relaxed relationship, and Tara is too scared to trust anyone not to hurt or leave her due to her childhood and upbringing in an abusive family.

actually begins, she is ecstatic when her partner René Lenier (aka Drew Marshall) proposes to her, only to eventually find out that he is the serial killer who is responsible for the deaths of, among others, her coworker Dawn Green and Sookie's grandmother Adele. However, even after this fifth failed attempt at marriage, Arlene does not give up hope and eventually gets married to Terry Bellefleur in season four, only to lose him when he commits suicide in season six, which one can only assume might have been her last effort at an institutionalized "happily ever after" as she eventually dates a vampire.

As the previous examples of *True Blood* have shown, marriage among humans does not make for a happy ending and even those who seemingly do not lose hope will, nevertheless, be disappointed time and again, just like Arlene. As Piatti-Farnell states, "[in] the twenty-first century, the prognostic outlook for marriage does not seem to have improved [and] [a]lthough divorce rates have levelled off, they have by no means receded" (132). Mirroring this rather pessimistic vision of marriage, *True Blood* does not portray a single happy human marriage, just like it does not present its viewers with a happy, unencumbered family or parent-child relationship amongst its human characters. David Shumway states "that fewer people are getting married" (26), which Pew Research Center attests explaining, "[t]oday, fully 62% of children live with two married parents – an all-time low" ("Parenting in America" n.pag.). In line with both observations, the series also replicates these facts in the depiction of its human character's relationships, yet again distancing itself from the fairytale representation of family and marriage as represented in *Twilight*.

Surpassing this long-lasting lack of happily married couples in *True Blood* and contrary to the exaltation of Bella and Edward's wedding in *Twilight*, *The Originals* almost entirely ignores the topic of marriage and married life. Here, *The Originals* does not only refrain from discussing this topic in relation to its human, witch and vampire characters, but almost lets it disappear from the series' entire universe. In her analysis of the "wedding

rituals in the fiction” (131), Piatti-Farnell explains that the return of wedding rituals “could be interpreted as a response to ‘marriage’ as a disputed entity in the post-2000 era” (131). She continues that “scholars have associated the twenty-first century with what has become known as the ‘marriage crisis’” (132), which “puts marriage at the centre of complex and contested areas of discussion [taking] the role of the union between human beings into social, cultural, and political discourses” (132). Contrary to the reappearance of this union in contemporary popular literature, twenty-first century visual media representations of vampire fiction, as shown on the human examples of *True Blood*, paint a rather different picture. *The Originals* does not even give this institutionalized bond a chance at working out and instead seemingly tries to ignore its existence altogether. The almost complete removal of the topic of marriage as a possible form of family creation, I assert, questions the continued validity of this institution in contemporary Western societies.

While *True Blood* depicts its human families and marriages as mere distorted reflections of these seemingly antiquated concepts, *The Originals* goes so far as to completely remove the series’ focus from its human characters and their human experiences, almost solely concentrating on the supernatural societies of New Orleans. Only a few select characters such as the fully human Camille O’Connell and her paternal uncle and priest Kieran O’Connell – both of whom, however, eventually die within the first three seasons – are given long-term appearances. Not only did Camille lose both her parents before the series began, leaving both her and her twin brother Sean orphans (just like Sookie and Jason in *True Blood*), later Sean was also hexed by a witch, resulting in him murdering his fellow seminary students, before eventually committing suicide. Neither Camille nor her uncle, a priest, ever verbalize considering marriage throughout the series, which mirrors the series’ displacement of this topic. Of course, unlike *Twilight* and, to a large extent, also *True Blood*, this might be due to the fact that the storyline of *The Originals* does not revolve around a love story complete with ups and downs and the rocky

path towards a happy ending or denouement. Instead, as mentioned earlier, the series charts the past and present life of the original siblings, or family, albeit replete with a number of sincere attempts at happy relationships as well as numerous fleeting affairs with dismal outcomes.

As Piatti-Farnell establishes, weddings in post-2000 vampire literature tend to be less sentimental in character, but rather “[c]ontemporary vampires . . . have made a virtue of ritualizing marriage as part of the socio-cultural organization of their societies” (127). While *The Originals* does not allude to any interest in marriage amongst its vampires for the sake of socio-cultural gain, only one, Rebekah Mikaelson, ever openly expresses that she wants a family of her own, implying marriage when she responds to Klaus’s question “What is it you want, Rebekah?” (S01/E16, “Farewell to Storyville”) by saying “Same things that I’ve wanted since I was a child. I want a home. I want a family. I want someone to love me, and I want to live” (“Farewell to Storyville”). Whereas the humans, vampires and witches of New Orleans do not address the topic of marriage beyond this example, it is the werewolves whose destiny ultimately depends on a ritualized marriage in *The Originals*.

Although the werewolves Hayley Marshall and Jackson Kenner meet for the first time during a full moon in Season One – full moon being the only time when Jackson and his cursed pack can change back to human form – it is not until the middle of Season Two that they get married. This is, however, not a union formed out of love for one another. Although Jackson explains to Hayley that they had been betrothed to each other upon birth in order to connect the two royal werewolf bloodlines (S01/E13, “Crescent City”), it is their mutual wish to free their fellow werewolves from the powerful witch Esther Mikaelson’s control which leads them to get married, thereby breaking Esther’s hold over the pack. After Hayley gives birth to her daughter Hope, she turns into a hybrid, meaning she has the ability to control when she shifts into a werewolf, which would pass on to their

pack after the wedding ceremony is completed. However, as Jackson explains, “It ain’t just a party. If the vows ain’t honored, it doesn’t work. It’s gotta be a real marriage, in every way, for the rest of our lives” (S02/E08, “The Brothers That Care Forgot”). As Piatti-Farnell states, “it is possible to say that narratives tend to include weddings at times of high conflict in the vampires’ world, where war, struggle, and civil disputes are threatening the safety of groups and individuals” (133). True to this observation, the union between Hayley and Jackson – albeit a werewolf union – is one formed out of necessity, which both parties only enter – at least at that point in time – so they can save their people. While Hayley only later develops true feelings for Jackson (although not nearly as strong as the feelings she holds for Elijah), Jackson pronounces before he dies in season three, “When I first saw you, I broke. You broke me, and nothing has ever been the same since. I just want you to know that it was all real. Every moment, every touch, every word” (S03/E10, “A Ghost Along the Mississippi”). Abruptly ending the only marriage in the series, *The Originals* follows along the same lines as *True Blood* where marriages appear to be a lost cause.

Although Hayley and Jackson’s marriage, similar to those in *True Blood*, does not last, it displays and honors traditional values associated with this concept as shown in the exchange of Hayley and Jackson’s vows:

JACKSON. I pledge to honor you and defend you and yours above all others.
HAYLEY. To share in blessings and burdens. To be your advocate, your champion.
JACKSON. To be your comfort, your sanctuary, and for as long as we both shall live.
HAYLEY. To be your family.
JACKSON. To be your family.

(S02/E14, “I Love You, Goodbye”)

In *True Blood* marriages have a strong tendency to fall apart because the spouses fail to be each other’s comfort and sanctuary (e.g. Lettie Mae is abused by her husband before he simply leaves the family) or advocate and champion (e.g. Maxine’s husband rather kills

himself than to confess his true sexual orientation and hence, unhappiness in their relationship). In contrast, the marriage between Hayley and Jackson in *The Originals* – at least for a little while – manages to create what Piatti-Farnell explains as the “re-evaluation of unions in the human world, where closeness and attachment are promoted as the result of balance between the psychological, the passionate, and the anthropological” (133). The fact that the union between the couple is constantly evolving and fraught with challenges mirrors the reality of human relationships, even though the obstacles Hayley and Jackson are facing are exceptional, to say the least.

By ending this marriage with Jackson’s death, *The Originals* remains on its path of not focusing on love stories but rather working out and highlighting the importance and the dangers of family and the discussion of the necessity of gender equality in order to persist as a family. Unfortunately, Jackson’s death as a casualty of war between the original family and The Strix²⁹ echoes real experiences of many families in the United States and across the world who, especially in the past two decades, have lost family members and friends due to political and religious conflicts and wars. Mary Hallab argues that the contemporary Western society, and our youth particularly, treat death as something that can be prevented and cured “if we just know how” (6). Relying on Elisabeth Kübler-Ross’s book *On Death and Dying* (1969), Hallab reproduces Kübler-Ross’s claim that “the denial of death, the refusal to acknowledge its inevitability and even its actual occurrence in family and friends, is a commonplace of modern living” (qtd. in Hallab 6).

As the above-mentioned examples of *True Blood* and *The Originals* have shown, the death of an individual can and most often does have a strong effect on a family and the institution of marriage, and neither holds the key to happiness for the series’ non-vampire characters. I disagree with Hallab and Kübler-Ross’s assessment that modern living is

²⁹ The Strix is the oldest vampire society in existence, consisting exclusively of vampires from Elijah Mikaelson’s sireline. In the Middle Ages, Elijah founded the Strix by turning great minds who – as he hoped – would be capable of positively influencing and changing the world.

characterized by the tendency to deny the reality of death and its inevitability (Hallab 6). Instead, I assert that contemporary U.S. American society has been forced to once more acknowledge the reality of death due to events such as terrorist attacks or natural catastrophes (e.g. Hurricane Katrina) in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Especially the younger population of the U.S., who, until then, had mostly seen death on TV and in movies, had to realize that it has become a very real part of life in the Western world. This is a fact that generations prior to the (young) adult audiences of both series had been more aware of due to the Korean War (1950-53) and the Vietnam War (1955-75), for instance.

The recognition and illustration that the constructs of family and marriage are threatened by external (e.g. accidents, illness) and internal factors (e.g. domestic violence, suicide), *True Blood* and *The Originals* refrain from celebrating sensibilities of outdated ideologies of both discourses. Instead, both series advocate the reassessment and modernization of the understanding and realization of family and marriage for them to persist successfully in the twenty-first century. In a time when it has (once more) become almost normalcy that events and actions threaten, disrupt or even destroy our happiness from one moment to the next, *True Blood* and *The Originals* offer alternative kinship models, which have the power to redefine traditional notions of love and marriage. In the following chapter, I will show how the vampires' alternative models of kinship and their more open-minded understanding of family challenge the audience to critically question their own (maybe somewhat monstrous) attitudes and opinions.

2.2 Vampire Families – Loyalty Beyond the Grave?

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the notion of family has been especially contested ever since the progressive achievement of gender equality, occurring near the end of the twentieth century, as well as the gradual recognition of alternative lifestyles beginning to weaken and “corrupt” the iconic ideal of the nuclear family of the 1950s, as some see it.³⁰ The figure of the vampire’s mutability has long been employed to reflect traits and characteristics deemed by many to be negative or undesirable. Hence, it is not surprising that these fantastic creatures should also be used to address the increasing diversity of family setups in the twenty-first century. The numerous examples of failed and flawed non-vampire families in *True Blood* and *The Originals* clearly demonstrate that the old-fashioned model of a family, consisting of a happily married heterosexual couple cohabiting with their children, does not reflect a realistic image of American society anymore. Instead, as Catherina Anne Gildae explains, Americans have “lived through rapid social change around the structure of the family unit and witnessed increasing legal recognition of diverse family forms” (9) at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century. My intention is to focus on how the vampiric versions of family in *True Blood* and *The Originals* work out contemporary fears and desires of non-traditional families, paving the way to the establishment of a more open-minded understanding of alternative lifestyles as well as the promotion of gender equality in order to smooth the path towards a more progressive and tolerant society.³¹

³⁰ In her dissertation *Good, Old-Fashioned, Traditional Family Values? – The Meaning of Marriage Availability for Female Same-Sex Couples and Their Families* (2008), Catherine Anne Gildae states, “As a result of and in response to this rapid social change, a number of voices called for protection of the so-called traditional American family. Critics of these changes raise concerns around the stability and potential demise of marriage as an institution, child-bearing within and outside of marriage, and question what the extension of marriage-like protections to same-sex couples might mean for social taboos such as polygamy and incest have been central in the discourse” (10).

³¹ In their progressiveness and higher tolerance, the vampires of *True Blood* and *The Originals* almost enact Rosi Braidotti’s “belief in new generations of ‘knowing subjects’ who affirm a constructive type of pan-humanity by working hard to free us from the provincialism of the mind, the sectarianism of ideologies, the dishonesty of grandiose posturing and the grip of fear” (11).

In their work *Changing Family Values: Difference, Diversity and the Decline of Male Order* (1999), Gill Jagger and Caroline Wright speak of contemporary concerns (1) at the end of the twentieth century, which saw “contemporary trends towards ‘selfish individualism’” (3) at the core of the decline of the nuclear family, which, as some argued, could only be counteracted by the return to traditional family values. Contrary to these views, Jagger and Wright then define family as “neither a pan-human universal nor a stable or essential entity” (3) and explain that “[t]he groupings that are called families are socially constructed rather than naturally or biologically given” (3). Their definition, I assert, fits the representation of vampire families in *True Blood* perfectly in that there is no clear-cut image of a family to which vampires would want to aspire. Continuing that “[f]amilies and family relations are, like the term itself, flexible, fluid and contingent” (3) and that “[t]hey encompass a whole variety of historically and culturally specific types of domestic arrangements and kinship systems” (3), Jagger and Wright stress that “[t]here simply is, as Barrett and MacIntosh put it, no such thing as *the* family” (3). Instead of following the outdated and rather rigid ideal of a nuclear family, “there is no longer one dominant family form in the U.S.” (“Parents in America” n.pag.) and “[p]arents today are raising their children against a backdrop of increasingly diverse and, for many, constantly evolving family forms” (“Parents in America” n.pag.). Focusing on the United States, the fact that, for example, women in the twenty-first century are mostly financially independent, leads to couples not feeling the urgency to get married anymore. Instead, a wedding oftentimes represents the celebration of the couple’s commitment to one another rather than a union out of the traditional obligation to ensure one partner’s financial security and social recognition anymore, which, next to love, used to play a tremendous role in entering into such a commitment. Also, alternative lifestyles such as cohabitation, civil partnership and child raising of heterosexual as well as couples of the LGBTQ community are finally on their way to becoming fully accepted family models, just as it is not uncommon anymore

for women or men to raise children as single parents or in patchwork families, where one or both partners enter the relationship with children from previous relationships or marriages. All these developments, I argue, are represented through and within the different forms of vampire families of *True Blood*, as will be demonstrated on the basis of selected examples.

Just as U.S.-American society, and Western society at large, has undergone many changes since the 1950s, so has the depiction of the vampire figure evolved and “vampires have become organised as a socially and economically independent group” by now (Piatti-Farnell 125). As Piatti-Farnell explains, “[t]his re-location of the vampire subject within operational systems unveils the inevitable presence of culture as an important and deeply re-discovered part of the twenty-first [century] condition” (125). While the contemporary vampire appears to either secretly³² or openly³³ blend into human society, they do, however, remain a separate species including different rules and customs from the human world although their post-2000 depiction appears to aim at transgressing the traditional boundaries that separate the monsters from us humans.³⁴ At an earlier point, I have confirmed Piatti-Farnell’s assertion that twenty-first century vampires display a stronger tendency to congregate than in previous depictions. Vampires, themselves “a metaphor for need, the kind of need that can never vanish” (93), as Mary Pharr states, display the urge to form closer bonds with one another and this group formation often takes the form of a number of different family-like unions. As vampires are known and culturally accepted

³² See, for example, *Twilight* or *The Vampire Diaries*, where the vampires live among humans and participate in, and contribute to, their respective societies by, for instance, attending high school (e.g. Edward Cullen, Stefan Salvatore) or working regular jobs (e.g. Carlisle Cullen is a doctor at the local hospital).

³³ See, for example, *True Blood*, where, in 2006, vampires announced their existence to the world on what is in the series referred to as “The Great Revelation” (True Blood Wiki. “Great Revelation”).

³⁴ See, e.g. Margaret L. Carter quoting Joan Gordon’s claim “that portrayals of the vampire as a separate species foreground ‘cross-species responsibility with its implications about ecology and human relations’ (‘Rehabilitating Revenants’ 231)” (32), where, as she states, “this motif also has connections ‘with ecology – the relationships among all the creatures on this planet – and by analogy, with human dynamics – the relationships between the sexes, among individuals, and among the many ethnic, racial, religious, and political groups of human beings’ (231)” (32).

metaphors for the discussion of societal and cultural concerns outside of heteronormative ideology, the vampire is able to offer diverse reflections of human nature, which conservatism and our society's narrow-mindedness have attempted to suppress for a long time. Bearing in mind posthumanist ideologies, which "challenge the ontological and ethical divide between humans and nonhumans" (Wolfe, *Posthumanism* 62), I will, henceforth, closely examine "vampire families" in *True Blood* as a reflection of contemporary alternative lifestyles, before going on to my analysis of the pursuit of the achievement of gender equality in *The Originals*.

2.2.1 Eternal Commitment: The (Adaptable) Relationship between Maker and Progeny in *True Blood*

*We have tamed our monster and now, as the gulf of separation has been bridged,
we imagine our society as integrated by using the Gothic to work through our
fears surrounding liberalized attitudes to gender relations, sexuality, class, race
and multiculturalism.*

(Deborah Mutch, "A Swarm of Chuffing Draculas" 17)

The first two decades of the twenty-first century can be recollected so far as a time of upheaval, especially in the Western world. The past eighteen years have been a time when the whole world has had to encounter and endure the dangers of global terrorism as examples of extremely negative and disheartening experiences. Yet, on a more positive note, we have experienced the beginning of the twenty-first century as a time when members of Western society have successfully managed to make their voices heard and, hence, have made progress in their fight for equal rights. The first two decades of this century will go into history as a time of transformation; a transformation of how Western society sees and wants to define itself as well and its interaction with the rest of the world. In many of these scenarios, be they the war on terrorism or the struggle for equal rights, the notion of family has played an important role and has been strongly affected. *True Blood* picks up on these developments. Offering a plethora of advantages and difficulties of

alternative lifestyles, the series blatantly creates a connection between its vampires' struggles for equal rights and the obstacles the LGBTQ+ community as well as African Americans have been facing for a long time.

While the figure of the vampire has often been employed as a stand-in for 'the other' in Western society concerning race and sexuality, it has nowadays expanded to also depict society's desires and hopes. Just as Jagger and Wright defined the concept of family at the close of the twentieth century as flexible and contingent, the contemporary television series *True Blood* contrasts the rather narrow-minded human inhabitants of the fictitious small town of Bon Temps with the seemingly more progressive and (especially sexually) more open-minded vampire citizens. Sketching the opposing worldviews and thus advocating for tolerance and equality, the series juxtaposes the locals' worldviews and opinions with those of the "newcomers" once they made their way into the backwoods of Louisiana, after "they came out of the coffin" (S01/E01, "Strange Love") in 2006 – as Sookie so eloquently puts it. As becomes apparent throughout the series, "vampire families" in *True Blood* usually consist of a maker³⁵ and its progeny or progenies. The relationship between maker and progeny, the so-called "maker-progeny bond," is a special one and one to be taken seriously, which is why most vampires only create a progeny after careful consideration. According to Eleanor W. Lynch, humans' "[i]ncreased life expectancy also has contributed to changes in family composition" (4) and "[b]ecause people are living longer but having fewer children, families span more generations but have smaller numbers in each generation" (4). Mirroring this contestation, "an honorable vampire[']s]" (S05/E03, "Whatever I Am, You Made Me") vampire line would resemble a contemporary family tree, which, according to Martha Farnsworth Riche, "is taller than it used to be but its branches are shorter" (26). Supporting this argument, Eric Northman, for instance,

³⁵ In *True Blood*, the vampire who turns a human into a vampire is referred to as a "maker" while in *The Originals* the term "sire" is employed.

Vampire Sheriff of Area 5 in Louisiana, only has two offspring within the millennium of his existence, similar to Russell Edgington, King of Mississippi, who had created only one progeny in more than three thousand years.

Of course, just like in every other society there are those who adhere to the respective community's standards, rules and regulations and those who do not. One such character who has not adhered to vampire protocol is Rosalyn Harris, who had created more than 200 progenies within her vampire existence of 212 years³⁶ before she "met the True Death."³⁷ The vampire community of *True Blood* appears to be composed of a vast array of characters, mirroring the diversity of humanity. Between the two extremes of those who supposedly try to mainstream such as William, aka Bill, Compton or Nan Flanagan (spokeswoman of the American Vampire League), and those who mourn the "old days" when humans were nothing but prey (e.g. Malcom, Diane and Liam),³⁸ various attitudes towards the "new" relationship between humans and vampires are depicted throughout the series. Two such examples are Eric Northman and his progeny and business partner Pamela Swynford de Beaufort, aka Pam, who recognize their race's outing as an opportunity to make money entertaining a vampire bar where human customers can get a thrill out of seeing vampires up close and personal.

While vampires and humans cross paths continuously, the relationship between both groups, however, remains strained throughout the entire series. Viewers are presented with love stories such as the one between Sookie and Bill or even Sookie and Eric, although the perpetuation of such "positive" attempts at relationships is usually quickly and harshly interrupted by vampire politics or the actions of fanatic groups of both parties, humans and

³⁶ See, *True Blood Wiki*, "Rosalyn Harris" for more details.

³⁷ See, *True Blood Wiki*, "True Death" for more details: "To meet the True Death" is a phrase used in *True Blood* which suggests the final destruction of a vampire. This can be achieved in a number of ways such as "meeting the sun," through fire or exsanguination, decapitation or staking as well as through the infection of a vampire with Hepatitis V.

³⁸ See S01/E03, "Mine": Malcolm, Diane and Liam live in a so-called vampire nest together, which, as Bill Compton explains, makes vampires more prone to losing their humanity as shown when they simply hang humans upside down in their house, slitting their throats to drain them to death.

vampires (e.g. *The Fellowship of the Sun*, or the *Sanguinistas*). Yet as complicated and seemingly impossible successful and emotionally-binding relationships between humans and vampires appear, relationships between vampires, and especially between makers and their progenies, prove to be more fortunate. Patrick Day denotes the vampire to be “an image of true humanity” (6). He explains, “the vampire story is a tale of our future, of who we will become as we leave behind the traditions and inheritance of the past and their forms of humanity” (6), which ultimately culminates in the realization that “we can no longer be sure about the line between the human and the monster” (6). The blurring of this line can be seen in a flashback, for instance, to the day when Eric turned Pam into a vampire. Trying to make her understand how close the relationship is between maker and progeny, he says, “becoming a maker is an eternal commitment, greater than any marriage, deeper than any human bond” (S05/E03, “Whatever I Am, You Made Me”). When Pam argues that he can just turn her and leave her as she is used to taking care of herself, Eric compares the making of a vampire to childbirth, asking “Would you toss a newborn baby in a gutter? Abandoning a new vampire is no different” (“Whatever I Am, You Made Me”). Thinking back to my discussion of human families and the treatment of human children by their parents, the vampire Eric’s analogy stands out in that it is reminiscent of stereotypical family values, which appear to have been forgotten by the human population of Bon Temps. This is just one of the many examples when *True Blood*’s vampires appear to adhere more closely to the ideal of human values and understand the seriousness of interpersonal relations. With this juxtaposition *True Blood* challenges how its viewers as representatives of contemporary Western society might narrate and define their identities and their understanding and realization of the construct of family in their own lives.

In fact, coming back to Eric’s statement, the creation of a vampire resembles the making of a human child in several ways, hence accentuating the difference of non-vampiric families and vampire families and furthering the humanization of the vampire.

The currently possible ways of “making” a baby always have one thing in common: in order for the paternal genes to be merged, the insertion of a phallic object is necessary. In the traditional bodily union of a man and a woman the man inserts the male sex organ into the female one, while an in-vitro insemination is done by inserting a needle into the ovum, hence infusing the sperm cell. Similar to these ways of merging the paternal genes in the human world, a vampire creates a progeny in the *True Blood* universe by inserting his or her fangs (thus, the phallic objects) into the human’s artery in order to drain the person of their blood. After this step is completed, the vampire replenishes the human body with his or her own vampiric blood, hence infusing the human with the vampire’s genetic material, thereby creating a blood relation. With the act of exchanging blood, vampires lay the basis for their later devoted relationship with their progeny. As Tom Pollard states in *Loving Vampires: Our Undead Obsession*, “[b]lood symbolizes close friendship” (16) as seen when “intimates sometimes refer to each other as ‘blood brothers’ and ‘blood sister’” (16), “evoking the expression ‘blood is thicker than water’” (16). The final step in completing the turn and creating the bond is that maker and progeny go to ground together until the new vampire rises at nightfall the following evening. The event of going to ground marks the point when the human dies, and his or her human existence ultimately ends. In *The Posthuman*, Rosi Braidotti explains the significance of death for humans, which, as I assert, can be equally allocated to vampires:

Because humans are mortal, death, or the transience of life, is written at our core: it is the event that structures our time-lines and frames our timezones, not as a limit, but as a porous threshold. In so far as it is ever-present in our psychic and somatic landscapes, as the event that has always already happened (Blanchot, 2000), death as a constitutive event is behind us; it has already taken place as a virtual potential that constructs everything we are. (132)

Although I do not want to spend too much time on the creation of vampires, the act of going to ground together can also, in the widest sense, be compared to a mother carrying her baby to term and its birthing when the new vampire breaks out of the earth, the security

of the womb so to speak. Ultimately, creating immortality out of natality, *True Blood*'s process of turning a human into a vampire can arguably explain the close relationship between makers and progenies as well as the enhanced humanity of the series' vampires compared to traditional representations. In *Representations of the Post/Human*, Elaine L. Graham, expanding on Grace Jantzen's argumentation in *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (1998), states that "humanity has a shared origin in birth which necessarily embeds us in common experiences, both biological and social, and commits all living beings to sociability, interdependence and embodiment" (81). Eric's comparison of a newborn vampire with a baby is therefore rather accurate, although a comparison to the more general category of mammals would probably be more fitting. Just like many mammals, a newborn vampire is not as helpless as a human baby, but rather depends on his parent/maker to provide guidance on how to survive (e.g. how to feed off humans) and how to master certain abilities (e.g. glamouring or mindreading).

Although the fact that the turning of a human into a vampire can be loosely linked to the process of becoming pregnant and birthing a baby might explain the close link between vampires and their offspring, this analogy does not necessarily imply that the relationship between maker and progeny will turn out to be one of paternal nature. As the examples of maker-progeny relationships in *True Blood* show, it is possible that a maker will take on the role of father/mother figure, lover, long-term companion, business partner or a number of other possible and sometimes alternating relationships. The only characteristic which appears to remain stable, unless a maker abandons his or her progeny, is that their connection is extremely close, as seen in the fact that there exists a mental, almost telepathic connection between the two. This telepathic link enables makers to feel when their progeny is in distress or danger, and to call their progenies at any given time. The progeny, in turn, has to answer that call unless the maker breaks that bond by formally

releasing his or her progeny,³⁹ although the link between maker and progeny can never be severed completely, just as human kin are unable to erase their genetic connection. In reflecting characteristics of human biology in the figure of the vampire and its “familial” relationships, *True Blood* takes one step forward towards closing the gap between monstrosity and humanity, reminding us that after all, vampires continue to be an alternative version of us humans, our dead, or rather undead version.

Father, Mother, Maker – The Paternal Bond between Maker and Progeny

Similar to how a child is unable to influence which family it will be born into, humans usually have no say in their turning or little knowledge of the vampires to whom they will be bound once they awake as the newly undead. The first creation of a vampire which viewers will see firsthand (not through flashbacks) is Bill Compton turning Jessica Hamby, which is also the most prominent example of an ensuing paternal relationship between a maker and his progeny in *True Blood*. As is the case with most turns, Jessica Hamby was not asked whether or not she wanted to be a vampire but was turned against her wishes. After Bill had killed the vampire Longshadow in order to protect Sookie, he is brought before the Magister at the ‘Tribunal’ in order to be punished. Killing another vampire is considered to be a serious offense and he is sentenced to turning a human in order to replace the vampire “life” he had destroyed. Before Bill bites and eventually drains Jessica of her lifeblood, his paternal nature already becomes apparent. As viewers know from recollections and flashbacks to his human life, Bill was married and had two children. Thus, when it is time for him to kill Jessica, he tries to calm her down, saying “Look at me, Jessica. You’re safe now. Look in my eyes. Everything will be fine” (S01/E10, “I Don’t Wanna Know”), attempting to glamour her, just like a parent would try to calm down a

³⁹ A maker can sever the link to his or her progeny by uttering the words “As your maker, I release you.” Even after this, the maker can, however, still “call” his or her progeny, but the progeny’s answering or reaction to this call is then only optional and no longer compulsory.

frightened child. When he is harshly reminded that glamouring is not permitted, he holds her in his arms, whispering “Forgive me” before he strikes.

After Pam (under the Magister’s orders) buries Bill and Jessica, Bill patiently awaits Jessica’s awakening the following evening, prepared to answer her questions and to give her comfort. However, much to Bill’s surprise, Jessica’s first night as a vampire can almost be seen as a time lapse from being newly born to becoming a young adult. When she breaks free of the ground, similar to when a baby comes out of the womb, she immediately begins to scream until Bill calms her down and explains to her what happened. Attempting to ignore this new reality, Jessica does not really listen but wants Bill to take her home to her family. In their ensuing dialogue, the stage of Jessica’s vampirism has seemingly evolved from a crying baby to that of a three- or four-year old in the “why phase”:

BILL. Jessica, stop.

JESSICA. No.

BILL. Stop.

JESSICA. Hey. Why?

BILL. Because we need to talk.

JESSICA. Why?

BILL. There are things you must learn.

JESSICA. Why?

BILL. Because you’re no longer human.

JESSICA. Why?

BILL. As I’ve been trying to explain to you at length, you have been made vampire.

JESSICA. Why?

BILL. Because you were unlucky. Because life and death are unfair. Because of me. You cannot go home. That part of your life is over.

(S01/E11, “To Love Is To Bury”)

As already mentioned at an earlier point in this dissertation, Jessica relatively quickly accepts the fact that she is now one of the undead and is happy to be free of her parents’ strict and Christian upbringing. However, as soon as Bill begins to explain that also her new existence is bound to certain rules, the time lapse of her development seems to speed forward only to be completed at her true age as an unruly stropky teenager who feels like she is unnecessarily and unfairly restrained by her parents.

I have argued that *True Blood* depicts alternative models to the nuclear family and Bill and Jessica's relationship can, after a rocky start, henceforth be interpreted as one between a young girl and her stepfather or foster-father. Of course, there are also numerous examples when the introduction of a parent's new partner to a child goes smoothly, it is not uncommon for such patchwork family setups to be cause for friction, at least at their beginning. Reflecting such difficulties, Jessica and Bill do not hit it off immediately, but Bill is rather overwhelmed by Jessica's stereotypical ideas of vampirism and her criticism of his "parenting" when she says, "I wanna kill people. And I'm so hungry. And all you do is talk and I'm starving and you're so mean. You're supposed to take care of me, that's what you said. You suck! That's funny because you do suck." (S01/E11, "To Love Is To Bury"). Reminiscent of and equivalent to what many parents hear at least once throughout their life as parents, Jessica eventually tells Bill, "You are the worst maker ever," and clarifies, "I don't obey anyone. Those days are over," clearly not yet fully grasping the true depth of the maker-progeny bond and the highly hierarchical and patriarchal structure of vampire society in *True Blood*. Although Bill will try to "raise" Jessica in a rather anti-authoritarian manner, he, as her maker, will always have the power to make her bend to his will unless he releases her.

As the example of Bill and Jessica clearly shows, the parent-child relationship between maker and progeny is not an easy one and requires patience and a lot of work on both sides, just like between human children and parents. Unlike the examples of human parent-child relationships in *True Blood*, however, where fathers had a tendency to abandon their families (e.g. Tara's father, Hoyt's father, the father of Arlene's children), vampires are supposedly extremely loyal towards their master or progeny, respectively. With few exceptions, it seems as if vampires truly honor and cherish this bond, caring a great deal for the members of their "family," which can be seen in Bill's quick and deep commitment towards Jessica. Although he is overwhelmed by this new experience of being

what comes down to a single parent in the beginning, even handing off Jessica to Eric for a little while, he almost instantaneously resumes his responsibilities and tries to do everything in his power to facilitate Jessica's transition into a respectable vampire. Growing with each challenge, just like any other parent would, Bill eventually (by season five) has won Jessica over and they form a harmonious and close connection, which culminates in Jessica proudly referring to herself as Bill's progeny. As the series draws to a close, Bill, thinking he will soon die of HepV, even attempts to prepare a will in which Jessica would be the sole beneficiary and, in all his paternal glory, moves heaven and earth in order to marry her off to her love Hoyt Fortenberry before dying.

While Bill Compton is portrayed early on as a vampire with paternal instincts – he was, after all, a loving father of two in his human life – Eric Northman is shown as always having been a *bon vivant*, a playboy if you will. While Bill enjoys spending an evening with Sookie babysitting Arlene's children and jokingly making fangs out of straws, Eric spends his nights at his vampire bar Fangtasia, where he basks in the attention of humans and vampires alike, who are drawn to the power, sexuality and arrogance he exudes. Although he presents himself as a high-handed trickster, the series reveals that, in his own way, he is very well capable of deep emotions and that he strongly cares for his progeny Pam. Eric, the son of a former Swedish Viking King, was turned in 930 AD by the back then already one thousand year-old Godric. Before giving him "eternal life" when he would have died from a battle wound while trying to find his family's murderer, Godric promises, "I'll be your father, your brother, your child" if Eric could be "a companion of Death" (S02/E05, "Never Let Me Go"). Not waiting for Eric to agree, he makes him his first progeny and the two are shown to have developed a close relationship for the thousand years to come until Godric decides to end his existence. Although they have not spent all these years in each other's company, the intensity of their maker-progeny bond becomes especially apparent when Eric tries everything in his might to change Godric's

mind and prevent him from meeting the sun. When Godric explains to Eric that two thousand years of existence are enough, he replies to his progeny's begging, "There are centuries of faith and love between us. . . . Father. Brother. Son. Let me go" ("Never Let Me Go"), echoing his original commitment to Eric. Until Eric is shown in the presence of his maker, he appears to be ruthless and calculating, always out for his personal gain. However, in light of his maker's impending death, Eric declares without hesitation, "I will not let you die alone" (S02/E09, "I Will Rise Up") and it is only his maker's response "Yes, you will. As your maker I command you" ("I Will Rise Up"), which forces him to leave his side instead of dying along with him.

Just like a child mourning the death of a parent, Eric mourns Godric's demise and it takes him a while to recover from this loss. Similarly, Jessica is devastated when she finds out about Bill's infection with HepV and she sets out to spend as much of his remaining time with him. Comparing the experiences of Eric and Jessica with the non-vampiric parent-child relationships in *True Blood*, it is obvious that the maker-progeny bond represents the imagined ideal of what family is supposed to be: a loving, caring and sacrificial relationship between parents and their children. Mirroring the increasing number of single-parents since the 1960s,⁴⁰ vampire families consist of one "father" or "mother" figure, the maker, and his or her progenies. This single-parenthood, one could argue, could also be cause for the closely-knit ties between makers and their progenies as they solely focus on one another and need to rely on each other's loyalty early on. While human family relations are shown to fail, as when Tara's mother abuses her daughter or Arlene's ex-husband abandons his wife and children, the bond between maker and progeny is strong and not easily broken, understood as an eternal commitment between the two individuals.

⁴⁰ According to numbers of the Pew Research Center, the number of single parents has tripled since the 1960s ("Parenting in America" n.pag.).

Makers and Progenies as (Eternal) Lovers

As mentioned at an earlier point, however, *True Blood* does not only portray the progressiveness of vampire relationships versus human ones, but the series also mockingly addresses twenty-first century concerns for the traditional concept of family. As Piatti-Farnell states, “[t]he vampire as a monster is a warning not only towards the enticement of possibilities, but also the unease and potential fear that those possibilities might ignite. It draws attention to the breaking of boundaries and the construction of new, much more flexible ones” (52). One such more flexible boundary can be seen in *True Blood*’s representation of an alternative “vampire family” relationship to the “parent-child relationship,” namely when maker and progeny are also lovers. Upon its publication at the end of the nineteenth century, Stoker’s novel *Dracula* raised the question of incest (c.f. e.g. Benefiel) with the depiction of the count and his vampire wives/daughters. While Stoker’s work dealt with this topic rather implicitly, *True Blood* openly portrays its vampires in somewhat incestuous relationships between makers and progenies, hence openly challenging traditional conceptions of the nuclear family.

In her analysis of vampire rituals in contemporary popular literature, Lorna Piatti-Farnell contests that “rituals in contemporary vampire literature [can be read] as a representational critique of identities and affiliations in Western human societies” (126). Continuing that the vampire hence functions “as a metaphorical agent channeling human anxieties and desires . . . the rituals and customs shaping the vampire’s social and cultural existence give us an insight into the structures regulating human life in the post-2000 era” (126-27). Agreeing with Piatti-Farnell and considering Deborah Mutch’s assertion that “a vampire remains a body of contradictions and oppositions encompassing the human condition” (“Swarm” 3-4), I assert that *True Blood* purposefully attempts to bemuse its viewers with arguably incestuous relationships in order to mock still prevailing attempts to

provide clear-cut and outdated definitions of what a family in the twenty-first century presumably needs to be.

Taking a closer look at the relationship between maker and progeny as lovers, Eric Northman stands out as a prominent example. Similar to his own maker Godric, who – after careful consideration and observation – turned Eric because of his courage and impressive fighting skills, Eric does not take the creation of a progeny lightly. In 1905, Eric meets Pam in San Francisco, where she is the Madam of a brothel. Saving her from an attack one night, Eric goes to see Pam the following night, which, after several events, ends with the two of them having sex. When Pam asks Eric to turn her, he refuses to enter such a, for humans, unimaginable “eternal commitment” (S05/E03, “Whatever I Am, You Made Me”). Stubbornly, Pam then cuts her wrists and gives Eric the choice to either make her a vampire or watch her die. After Eric makes up his mind and turns Pam, the two of them “traveled the world together. Killing, fucking and laughing” (S04/E06, “I Wish I Was The Moon”), as Pam reminds Eric at one point in the series. While this is an example of when maker and progeny begin and continue their relationship as lovers, their link eventually changes to a profound friendship and loyal partnership in which Pam becomes Eric’s enforcer, i.e. second in command of Area 5, and business partner at Fangtasia. The fact that they were once, and probably still occasionally are, lovers does not keep Eric from also having paternal feelings for Pam, which surface for instance when Pam is taken and tortured by the Magister. Referring to Pam when he says “I have a child of my own in the Magister’s bony hands” (S03/E05, “Trouble”), he begs the King of Mississippi, Russell Edgington, to help him save his progeny. After rescuing Pam and murdering Russell’s consort, Eric faces the possibility of True Death at the king’s hands. As her maker and similar to a parent, Eric wants to ensure that Pam will be well off even after his demise. Bequeathing all of his fortune and property to her (S03/E10, “I Smell a Rat”), he guarantees that Pam will have no financial worries.

Eric and Pam's relationship is rather unconventional. While both seem to have independent love lives, they still occasionally share a bed although Pam has an outspoken predilection for female sexual partners. Yet, there are also examples where vampire lovers seem to lead a more traditional and old-fashioned lifestyle. The Vampire King of Mississippi, Russell Edgington, for example, enjoys a domestic life with his progeny and "royal consort" (S03/E05, "Trouble") Talbot Angelis. While Russell needs to regularly travel and attend meetings outside of his home or even home state, Talbot remains in their mansion tending to the decoration of their home and the preservation of their antiques collection. Just like any other couple, Russell and Talbot are also shown to have the occasional lovers' quarrel as when Talbot complains "You never take me anywhere" (S03/E05, "Trouble"; S03/E06, "I Got a Right to Sing the Blues") when Russell asks Eric to accompany him on his visit to the Vampire Queen of Louisiana, Sophie-Anne Leclercq. While the king is seemingly annoyed by Talbot's tantrums and his exaggerated interest in decorating their home, he does everything to keep his lover happy, even if that means to turn a blind eye to the fact that he suspects Talbot of enjoying sex with his personnel when Russell is absent from their home. When Russell needs to take care of business again, Talbot flirtingly shows Eric around the mansion as well as Russell's treasure chamber. Examining Russell's vast collection of tribal crowns and paraphernalia the king has collected over the years, Eric comes across his father's crown. Finally having found his family's murderer, he plots his revenge. After yet another one of Talbot's complaints about being neglected by Russell, Eric offers to keep him company, which he gladly accepts. When Eric seduces Talbot, he pretends to want to have sex with him. Undressing, the two kiss and Eric eventually positions himself behind the eager Talbot. Raising a stake over Talbot's back, Eric announces, "Russell took my family. Now, I take his" (S03/E05, "Trouble;" S03/E08, "Night On The Sun"), before he plunges the stake through the man's heart. As Talbot's maker, Russell feels his death miles away and immediately returns home

to find his lover's bloody remains on the floor. Scraping them into a glass mason jar, he is unable to part with what is left of his lover and carries his bloody remains with him wherever he goes from that point on. Demonstrating the intensity of the bond between maker and progeny, Russell's loss plunges him into a depression and the regret to not have been at Talbot's side causes him to lose his mind, go on a rampage and kill everyone who crosses his path. When he finds a young man whose appearance resembles his former lover, he pays him to have sex with him, after which he hallucinates that the young man is Talbot. Apologizing for having failed him he says,

You're the strongest man I've ever known. You made us a home, you made us a family. . . . It was a home, a haven, a refuge from all that madness. . . . It's all my fault. I will never forgive myself that in the end you were so alone with no one holding your hand, your beautiful, beautiful hand. It was one thing to face eternity without you, but to have not been with you at the True Death. (S03/E10, "I Smell a Rat")

Staking the young man in the bed, hence reenacting Talbot's death, he concludes, "Talbot, you saved me from the world, from myself. . . . I am more sorry than I can ever say" ("I Smell a Rat"), kisses the dead body and says, "I'm so glad we had a chance to say our goodbye" ("I Smell a Rat").

As the two examples of maker and progeny as lovers show, this relationship is guided by strong emotions, such as love and devotion, and underlines the differentiation of contemporary vampire families "from simple congregation, as it implies the presence of highly organized and, to some extent, institutionalised principles that regulate them" (Piatti-Farnell 134). For maker and progeny, their bond is something exceptional, a bond which when broken seemingly destroys a part of the remaining vampire.

Compared to Russell and Talbot as well as other regularly appearing vampires in *True Blood*, Eric and Pam are likely to have the most flexible and versatile relationship. Having been lovers that became friends and partners, they do still occasionally kiss passionately although they appear to lead independent sex lives without one being jealous

of the other's sexual escapades with both men and women. Their loyalty towards each other is only questioned once throughout the series when Pam finds out about Eric's vampire sister Nora Gainesborough, the second progeny of Godric, whose existence Eric had kept a secret. Nora was made a vampire at Eric's request when she got infected with the Black Plague while helping the ill in a quarantined part of London in 1665. The sexual relationship between makers and progenies might cause a certain amount of unease, especially given the allusions to incest implied in the procreative nature of making a vampire and the ensuing blood relation between maker and progeny. However, sexual intercourse appears to be a rather common occurrence between maker and progeny.⁴¹ Contemplating Piatti-Farnell's assessment that "what is really being put under scrutiny [when investigating the vampire figure] is the human being" (127), viewers of the series find themselves in a position where they can safely evaluate such seemingly incestuous, but even more importantly fluid relationships. While it is the vampires in *True Blood* who can enter into different kinds of relationships with one another, for example, altering a paternal relationship into a sexual one or vice versa, it is not the vampires themselves viewers get to examine but rather vampire rituals which "allow discussions regarding the notion of normalcy and normality to come to the surface" (127). Enhancing the incestuous tendencies and allusions between vampires, Eric and Nora's unexpected reunion in season five (S05/E01, "Turn! Turn! Turn!") shows them falling into each other's arms kissing passionately. Although they refer to each other as "brother" and "sister," these terms only linguistically represent their genealogical connection as progenies of the same maker. By clandestinely saving Eric and Bill from certain death at the hands of the Vampire Authority, Nora, who is Chancellor of the Authority, is taking a huge risk, which, when asked by Bill, she logically justifies by saying "Because I'd do anything for Eric" ("Turn!

⁴¹ Aside from Eric and Pam, and Russell and Talbot, Bill and his maker Lorena, who spend the better part of about seventy years as lovers together, also come to mind, although Bill claims to have never loved her.

Turn! Turn!"). Aside from their loyalty to and progeny-bond between one another, the terms "brother" and "sister" do apparently not hold the same meaning for vampires than they do for contemporary Western society, where they clearly imply boundaries in terms of sexual relations. Shortly after Nora's rescue of Eric and Bill, the "siblings" are shown to enthusiastically have sex in a nearby container, being so vocal that Bill knocks on the container wall, saying "Might want to keep down the noise. New Orleans [the location of the Authority] is only 60 miles away" ("Turn! Turn! Turn!"). The fact that Nora and Eric have sexual intercourse although they refer to each other as brother and sister highlights the sexual open-mindedness of vampires in *True Blood*, who not once throughout the entire series comment on any sexual relationship as deviant or noteworthy. In the vampire community, any kind of intercourse is permissible, be that between maker and progeny, progeny and progeny, humans and vampires, LGBTQ vampires, or any other possible joining. Vampires act solely on their impulses and do not waste time contemplating societal concerns, implications or what kind of frictions their behavior might cause in the time and world in which they currently find themselves.

In portraying centuries- or millennia-old vampires to be inherently sexually fluid and more tolerant than the twenty-first century humans of *True Blood*, "vampire families" are shown to emphasize their disregard for heteronormative expectations of the notion of family. The fact that Ruby Jean Reynolds disowns her son Lafayette (Merlotte's flamboyant homosexual shorthand cook) because she is unable to come to terms with his sexual orientation is just one example of how the adherence to traditional views of family prove to be more destructive than conducive to a happy family life. Presenting the vampires as having come out of hiding all over the world, but situating them in the American South, a region famous for its conservatism, religious zealotry and even bigotry, *True Blood* creates an arena which challenges the famous and iconic line "land of the free, home of the brave" of the national anthem of the United States of America, *The Star-*

Spangled Banner. Considering the human characters' narrow-mindedness and adherence to traditional and conservative notions of family, which ultimately do not seem to be successful ones for the human population, one may wonder who "the free" and "the brave" mentioned in the anthem are. Will Americans be free once they are brave enough to embrace human nature with all its differences and all its diversity, or can Western society only be free when we adhere to the rules and regulations of times long gone, which are hardly applicable to current developments in and conditions of contemporary Western society?⁴²

Vampire Marriage as an Ambiguous Union

As mentioned at an earlier point in this chapter, the non-vampire characters of *True Blood* are shown to fail regularly at maintaining a marriage. While men tend to walk out on their families, others such as Sookie and Tara, for instance, are burdened with conditions (e.g. Sookie is a telepath and Tara has trust issues) which largely prevent them even from dating, hence placing marriage in the far, if not unattainable, distance. In comparison to these failed attempts, or Arlene's seemingly misguided wishful thinking when it comes to the institution of marriage, *True Blood*'s vampires display a more practical and disillusioned approach to this union. Although Bill Compton romantically proposes to Sookie in Season Two (S02/E12, "Beyond Here Lies Nothin'") with plane tickets to Vermont, one of the few states where vampires can legally get married,⁴³ this wedding never happens, making this yet another pathetic example. However, Bill's proposal to Sookie alludes to the fact that some vampires do in fact wish to get married, although the

⁴² Similarly, in *Representations of the Post/Human – Monsters, Aliens and Others in Popular Culture*, Elaine L. Graham calls "into question the immutability of boundaries between humans, animals and machines, artificial nature, 'born' and 'made'" (2-3). She continues stating, "[i]n challenging the fixity of 'human nature' in this way, the digital and biotechnological age engenders renewed scrutiny of the basic assumptions on which matters such as personal identity, the constitution of community, the grounds of human uniqueness and the relationships between body and mind are founded" (3).

⁴³ Reference to the "Marriage Equality Act" of Vermont in 2009, which made Vermont the fourth U.S. state to legalize marriage for homosexual couples.

topic of the legal union of two vampires or a vampire and a human is largely ignored throughout the series.

In fact, only two vampire weddings happen in the seven seasons of *True Blood*, one being the rather unceremonious union between the Vampire Queen of Louisiana Sophie-Anne Leclercq and the Vampire King of Mississippi Russell Edgington in Season Three. While Sophie-Anne does not wish to wed Russell, this wedding, or rather this political union, is carried out because Russell is much stronger than the Queen and could easily force her to agree and because he offers to pay off the large debt Sophie-Anne had acquired while trafficking vampire blood. The ceremony is administered, unworthily of a royal couple, in the basement of Fangtasia by the Magister, who only agrees to “conduct the rights of alignment” (S03/E07, “Hitting the Ground”) after being tortured. In curtly uttering the words “I hereby pronounce you husband and wife” (“Hitting the Ground”), he unites the two kingdoms under the rule of the 3000 year-old Russell Edgington, on which Sophie-Anne drily comments “I’m so happy I could bleed” (“Hitting the Ground”), clearly recognizing her henceforth solely representational role. As this example shows, the notion of marriage is clearly removed from a romantic context and only represents the unification of two kingdoms and the merging of powers under one dominant patriarchal rule.⁴⁴

Reminiscent of the ancient terminology of “King” and “Queen,” it is not surprising that this union should be one formed out of necessity, economic reasons or obligation, rather than out of true mutual feelings. As Sophie-Anne Leclercq has existed for over five hundred years and Russell Edgington is more than three millennia old, both of them have spent more time in hierarchical and feudal societies than in the modern world, where men

⁴⁴ The dissociation of love and marriage existed for a long time when weddings were carried out as a form of alliance between families, communities, kingdoms, etc. In *Love as Passion: The Codification of Intimacy*, Niklas Luhmann explains that this perception “only changes in the course of the eighteenth century, at which point people are now conceived of as being changeable, capable of development, as still unperfected, and love therefore came to be regarded as something that would be lasting, indeed in the final instance as a viable basis of marriage” (99).

and woman supposedly enjoy equal standing, which, I argue, might explain the implicitness with which both enter this union and accept the therein implied gender roles. Unlike the relationship between maker and progeny, this wedding does not make for a loyal and long-lasting “eternal commitment,”⁴⁵ but is only a formality, which will most likely be accompanied by schemes and scams from both parties attempting to outsmart one another.

The second vampire marriage taking place in the series is the wedding of Jessica Hamby and her human fiancé Hoyt Fortenberry (S07/E10, “Thank You”). Similar to when Eric faced his possible demise in Season Three, Bill wants to get his affairs in order before dying of HepV. As Jessica is his only progeny he wants to bequeath his estate to her, only to be direly disappointed when a lawyer explains that “unfortunately, the state doesn’t recognize progeny as a legal distinction. They’re not considered children and/or relatives under the law” (S07/E06, “Karma”). Just as Jessica cannot be the beneficiary of Bill’s inheritance, her union with Hoyt will not be officially recognized, as Louisiana does not legally acknowledge vampire weddings at this point in the series. Nevertheless, the couple exchanges vows in front of witnesses, and Andy Bellefleur performs a service functioning as emissary in Bill’s, Jessica’s maker’s home. In contrast to the “royal wedding” of Season Three, the final episode of Season Seven romantically culminates with Bill, as the father of the bride, giving Jessica away. Being the beginning to what appears to be a happy ending for the couple, Hoyt and Jessica’s marriage might indeed last “until death do us part” unless they decide for Hoyt to become a vampire, which would make their union truly eternal, hence signifying the only chance at a happy example of matrimony.

While *True Blood* portrays the concepts of non-vampiric family and marriage as flawed and undesirable throughout its seven seasons, the series’ final episode appears to

⁴⁵ See S05/E03, “Whatever I Am, You Made Me,” when Eric explains to the still human Pam that “[b]ecoming a maker is an eternal commitment, greater than any marriage, deeper than any human bond.”

utterly change the direction the show previously followed. Ending not only in Hoyt and Jessica's wedding but also alluding to several other marriages and childbirths which apparently took place during the time lapse of three years in the finale, *True Blood* ends with a much more positive outlook on family and marriage than it has begun with. While the series clearly makes an attempt to promote progressiveness and open-mindedness towards alternative lifestyles, it, at the same time, lays bare possible obstacles on this path to the redefinition of family and the reevaluation of the institution of marriage. Although the bond between maker and progeny is one formed by blood and is reminiscent of traditional blood kinship in the human world, the numerous forms this bond can take are extremely versatile and not restricted to a parental relationship. As these examples have shown, the connection between maker and progeny or among progenies can very well be parental but also and even simultaneously sexual or professional. More often than not, all of the above categories apply to one maker-progeny pair, although not necessarily at the same time. The most important aspect of the bond between makers and progenies, however, appears to be that it is characterized by an extent of loyalty which seems impossible to be achieved by the humans in the series.

While vampires are portrayed as leading a life-style that does not obey the dictates of heteronormativity, Bon Temps human society is still very much hung up on traditional gender roles and mourns, and attempts to achieve or maintain, the old-fashioned model of a nuclear family. By the end of the seven seasons, however, many of the most racist and most conservative characters have either been killed or learned to be more open-minded. Men and women who were outspokenly averse to the existence of vampires or other supernatural species and their lifestyles, such as René Lenier, Maxine Fortenberry or Bud Dearborne, have been brutally killed, while Arlene Fowler-Bellefleur or Andy Bellefleur have clearly experienced a change of heart, eventually falling in love with supernatural individuals. When they both attend Hoyt and Jessica's wedding, Andy even performs the

service and strongly supports their union, saying “. . . I just wanna say one thing. The state of Louisiana, or the United States of America, may not recognize this union, but for my money, there ain’t a doubt in my mind that God does. The love you two share is beautiful and love is love, plain and simple” (S07/E10, “Thank You”). Similarly, Arlene, who used to be overly distrustful or even hateful of vampires, is eventually even dating a vampire herself, which might just be the way for her to achieve her dream of eternal love with a partner who is theoretically immortal.

The vampire figure has arguably been interpreted as a proxy for the fight of the LGBTQ community for equal rights. The reference to Vermont as one of the few states to recognize vampire marriages is one obvious example, given the fact that Season Two aired in September 2009 and it was in April 2009 that Vermont passed and signed the Equal Marriage Act, going into effect on September 1 the same year. However, I argue that the figure of the vampire and the depth of the relationships this species exhibits are not limited to this interpretation. Instead, I contest, what *True Blood* openly promotes is the recognition of different types of lifestyles in general, such as single-parenthood, patchwork families, domestic partnerships, etc. By highlighting the shortcomings of traditional modes of family, the series invites its viewers to accept the fact that our contemporary society is not nor should it be limited to the 1950s ideal of the nuclear family. While the vampires in *True Blood* still create vampires through a blood exchange, it is the ensuing commitment between maker and progeny which is the most integral part of their relationship. Echoing Hanson and Lynch’s 1992 definition of family as “those who have made a commitment to share their lives” (285), vampires choose carefully whom they turn, aware of the fact that the bond they create is and should be honored as an eternal one.

Portraying the vampire race as being extremely hierarchical and patriarchal, viewers are reminded of the continuing difficulties in making society and humanity at large more tolerant. The fact that it is the oldest and thus most powerful vampires who fill the most

authoritative positions proves the vampire race to be hierarchical in character (e.g. Eric Northman, Russell Edgington, the Magister), which reminds the audience of the setup of human society. This might appear averse to the series' attempt to present its viewers with a reality check. Commenting on the vampire figure's ability to convey meanings relevant to current events and concerns, Deborah Mutch asserts, however, "The relationship between the living human and the undead vampire has always been one of positions on a continuum; the vampire is, after all, a former human" ("Swarm" 4), and with that the perfect medium to address societal issues of our time. The fact that even the oldest and rather entrenched vampiric characters honor the maker-progeny bond above everything else and do not pass any value judgment on sexual preferences or the diversity of relationships clearly stresses that there is hope that even the most old-fashioned and conventional members of society can eventually learn to accept different modes of life.

The finale of *True Blood* has faced much criticism from fans for its apparent undermining of the series' previous subversiveness. I agree with those voices that say that Bill's interference to see Jessica married before he sacrifices himself so that Sookie may lead a more "normal" life seems like a backlash by traditional family values. Bill lecturing Sookie about the greatness of parenthood and how he has to look out for her future (S07/E10, "Thank You") has been interpreted as Bill's transformation "into just another old-fashioned Southern patriarch" (Maerz n.pag.). However, although his interferences are supposedly the only way for the women he loves to find true happiness, this behavior, I argue, does not come as a surprise but rather signals the return to his former personality, before he had been turned into a vampire God (S05/E12, "Save Yourself"). A child of the Antebellum South, Bill was raised in a time when "southern families valued patriarchal dominance" and women were only given "limited agency" (Burkett Pittman 1255). Thinking back to the beginnings of *True Blood* when Bill distinguished himself because through his display of the manners of a true gentleman of the Antebellum South, Bill's

“relapse,” if you will, can be seen as signifier for the longevity of traditional value systems or worldviews.

While the series’ finale, including Bill’s “relapse” into old patterns, was criticized for its recidivism into mainstream representations and destruction of its former progressive and thought-provoking impulses, especially the series’ very last sequences have been most harshly criticized. Although I am able to retrace the fans’ resentment, I assert, however, that the closing shots when Sookie’s friends and family – now consisting of vampires, werewolves, shapeshifters and humans, etc. alike – get together for Thanksgiving is doing anything but undermining the series’ previous course of action. Instead of interpreting the finale as a closing scene where everyone lives happily ever after, I argue, it should be understood as a new beginning. By portraying this gathering of people of different races, different ages and different sexual orientations as one big family reunion, viewers are shown that by making a start with tolerance towards one’s own friends and family, regardless of their differences, there is hope that one day we will all be treated as equals. Hence, although choosing an overtly, maybe even exaggeratedly happy ending as the series’ closing scene, *True Blood* ends with the same objective it set out with. The series peaks by showing what family should be like and that kinship does not necessarily create family, but that it is people’s conscious choice to be part of this construct which creates family in the twenty-first century.

2.2.2 *The Originals*: From Monstrous Patriarchy to Unruly Modern Family⁴⁶

ELLIAH. Over the course of my long life I have come to believe that we are bound forever to those with whom we share blood. And while we may not choose our family that bond can be our greatest strength or our deepest regret.
(S01/E01, “Always and Forever”)

As has been stated earlier in this dissertation, the publication of Anne Rice’s 1976 novel *Interview with the Vampire*, and its movie adaptation in 1996, marked a distinct turning point in the depiction of the vampire figure which also generated a renewed rise in popularity. Following this success, Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* novel series and subsequent movies raised the celebration of the vampire to a new high in the twenty-first century which has not yet been exhausted, as can be seen in the extensive abundance of vampire-themed literature available in bookstores. As one vampire’s troubled existence extends to a whole family of vampires who attempt to blend in with human society, audiences have observed a number of changes to the genre of vampire fiction and the figure of the vampire itself. Increasingly domesticated, the contemporary vampire has undergone a considerable evolution from unsightly, terrifying monster to attractive romantic interest, while simultaneously increasing its interest in human values. Although not an entirely new topic to this genre, as was demonstrated by examples of different movies (e.g. *The Lost Boys*) and television series (i.e. *Angel*, *True Blood*), the concept of family has gained more importance since the appearance of the family-like union between Lestat, Louis and Claudia. While Rice’s dysfunctional and grotesque “vampire family” still contributed to the othering of her characters and their continuous reception as monstrous, I seek to illuminate how the concept of family also allows for a transformation from Byronic patriarchal monster to sympathetic vampire, or rather sympathetic hybrid. With reference to the example of the television series *The Originals*, it will be argued that in portraying

⁴⁶ Parts of this chapter will appear in the forthcoming edited volume *All around Monstrous: Monster Media in Their Historical Contexts*, edited by Verena Bernardi and Frank Jacob, Vernon Press.

the evolution of the main character Klaus Mikaelson, the series illustrates the progressive dismantling of traditionally patriarchal behavior by strong female characters.⁴⁷ Resulting in the modification of Klaus's understanding of family, *The Originals* exemplifies how twenty-first century vampires are received as less monstrous due to their longing for a family, and the progression of gender strength and equality with the introduction of strong female characters into the paradigm. Deborah Mutch asserts that the post-2000 vampire is no longer "the external predator, the threat from outside which will change us from within, make us ourselves and yet not ourselves" ("Swarm" 17). Instead, she argues, "the vampire lives among us, lives like us" (17), and, as I claim, in *The Originals* even more so than in *True Blood*, the vampire *is* us, holding a mirror in front of us which portrays our contemporary failures and issues, not our past mistakes.

As my previous analysis of *True Blood* has shown, post-2000 vampire narratives already reduce the undeads' othering by making them part of human society. While they still occupy or actively put themselves in the position of a disenfranchised minority group in *True Blood*, *The Originals* accelerates this humanization of the former monster through the replacement of the diverse cultural and ethnic groups which make up American society with a conglomeration of supernatural races. Reducing the importance and existence of human characters to a minimum, the series creates a parallel universe in New Orleans which functions as a mirror image of contemporary Western society.

Resonating Nina Auerbach's assertion that each generation produces its respective vampire (1), Jeffrey Jerome Cohen explains in his influential essay "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)" that "[t]he monster is born only at this metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment" (5). As one would expect from immortal creatures, these bloodsuckers – in order to persist – have learned to adapt to the times and

⁴⁷ I will use the characters of Hayley Marshall and Camille O'Connell's as female examples who influence Klaus's development throughout seasons one to three.

places they occupy, resulting in the simultaneous adjustment of their metaphorical significance. No longer restricted to a life in the shadows or an existence at night⁴⁸ for that matter, the twenty-first century vampire is now more attractive than ever.

Just as this upgraded version lures its victims in with its good looks and mind compulsion, readers and viewers of contemporary vampire fiction are enthralled by these creatures' inner thoughts and emotions. Beginning with Anne Rice's personal disclosure of Louis's tormenting autobiography, vampire stories have by now fully overcome the assumption that the loss of one's life inevitably coincides with the loss of one's soul. Instead of invoking disgust and fear, the recent vampire-model appeals to its audience due to its ability to exhibit multifaceted emotions and its attempt to form caring and loyal connections with its own kind (e.g. Louis and Claudia) as well as with humans (i.e. Mick St. John and Beth Turner in *Moonlight*).

Initiating the successful storytelling from the vampire point of view, Rice strongly contributed to the ever-growing appeal and social suitability of vampires. The creation of a scenario – the interview of Louis by a young reporter – where the vampire can communicate his emotions and actions to an impartial party, marked the origination of what is today referred to as the sympathetic vampire. In current television and cinema, the sympathetic vampires with their ability and willingness to feel has become an established figure to attract large and loyal fandoms as well as guarantee high ratings. This is not to say that twenty-first century vampire versions are no longer considered monstrous, but that their monstrosity has adopted a more comprehensible shape, leaving sympathy and compassion in its wake. Their evocation of sympathy in the viewers can, for instance, be seen on the formation of “Team Bill” versus “Team Eric” camps amongst *True Blood* fans who argue about which vampire would be a better suitor for Sookie, instead of wanting to

⁴⁸ In both, *The Vampire Diaries* as well as its spin-off series *The Originals*, vampires are able to walk around in broad daylight with the help of magical daylight rings, which can only be created by powerful witches.

protect her from the undead competitors. As these examples show, the monsters' progressive open-mindedness and human-like qualities, establish and foster the audience's inclination to comprehend these creatures' differences rather than to judge and condemn them, ultimately speaking for the vampire genre's cultural influence.⁴⁹

Following Cohen's argument that the "cultural fascination with the monster . . . is born of the twin desire to name that which is difficult to apprehend and to domesticate (and therefore disempower) that which threatens" ("Time" viii), the sympathetic vampire is the perfect medium to satisfy the human desire to tame the beast. On the one hand, the figure of the vampire is still othered and monstrous due to its varying superhuman and intimidating characteristics, such as the oftentimes still vital need for blood, extraordinary strength, speed and stealth, and the ability to control minds, also referred to as compelling (e.g. *The Vampire Diaries*, *The Originals*) or glamouring (e.g. *True Blood*). However, sympathetic vampires are distinguished from prior depictions in that they blend in with the human society among which they dwell. Here, it is not only the vampires' attractive – sometimes almost too perfect (see e.g. Edward in *Twilight*) – human appearance, but even more so their human-like behavior which functions as a perfect disguise for these "life-challenged individuals" (S01/E03, "Mine") as they, for example, like to refer to themselves in *True Blood*.

Characterized by a well-built physique and "a broad, heavy forehead" (Nazarian 124), the sympathetic vampires lack any sense of humor and their almost permanent and pathological guilt for or disgust by their appetite for human blood. Seeing themselves as a threat to human beings, the stereotypical sympathetic vampires are aloof or reserved when it comes to the interaction with humans. As vampires, hence, begin to increasingly value

⁴⁹ In *The Vampire in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Carol A. Senf, for instance, explains, "If changing notions of warfare and the possibility of mass annihilation in the twentieth century have been responsible for writers and readers taking a more sympathetic view of the vampire, changing attitudes toward authority and toward rebellion against that authority have also led to a more sympathetic treatment of the vampire" (150).

human life, they appear to simultaneously display a wider range of human emotions. No longer limited to rage, anger and despair, these not-so-monstrous-anymore monsters have learned to feel empathy and even love, which appears to be accompanied by these vampires' appreciation of and longing for a family or some semblance of this concept.

While *Twilight*, *True Blood*, *Being Human* and *The Vampire Diaries*, among the most popular twenty-first century works of vampire fiction, significantly adhere to the previously-mentioned characteristics in the depiction of their male main vampire character, the television series *The Originals*, as I argue, partially subverts this depiction. Beginning with the return of Klaus, Elijah and Rebekah Mikaelson to New Orleans, the series documents the siblings' tedious and oftentimes bloody struggle to reclaim their home and to protect Klaus's unborn child while at the same time chronicling their family's history through flashbacks to their pasts. As New Orleans is caught up in power conflicts between the human, werewolf, witch and vampire factions, the siblings, after a one-hundred-year absence from the city, face numerous obstacles to restore order, with the goal of reappointing the vampire/werewolf hybrid Klaus as the sole ruler and to make New Orleans a safe home for his child. As it quickly becomes clear, it is not the hybrid's twisted and restrictive notion of family and concomitant rules and limitations which will stand in the way of achieving his goal. Towards the second half of Season One, Klaus's sister Rebekah warns Hayley, the werewolf carrying Klaus's child, "About Nik, he is a monster. Do not *ever* cross him. But he does want more from life than to just be feared. He's too broken to find it himself, but I do believe there is hope for him in the baby that you carry. And speaking of your child, our family has no shortage of enemies. She will inherit *all* of them. Please, be careful" (S01/E16, "Farewell to Storyville").

Throughout previous appearances in *The Vampire Diaries*, the hybrid Klaus is known for his short temper and unparalleled acts of violence, which do not deter Elijah and Rebekah from hoping for their brother's redemption and a change of character for the

better. Referring to a twentieth-century tendency of Western societies, Suzy McKee Charnas claims, “Our century bears witness, documented and widely known from Dachau to Dahmer to . . . human monstrosity” (“Meditations” 59), which often results in the audience’s acceptance of the monster by reassuring “ourselves that the monster isn’t so bad when you get to know him, he’s misunderstood and in fact is often less horrible than we are” (“Meditations” 59). Mirroring this attitude, Rebekah’s warning to Hayley acknowledges Klaus’s self-righteous ruthlessness and tyranny and simultaneously foreshadows the series’ gradual exposure of the hybrid’s evolution, which will be closely linked to the slow, but progressive shift in his understanding of family and its extension as well as the eventual dismantling of his patriarchal rule when strong female characters enter the Mikaelson family.

Family and the Freedom of Choice

*KLAUS MIKAELSON. Family can be more than just those with whom we share
blood. We can choose.
(S03/E22, “The Bloody Crown”)*

As I already established, the connection between vampires and the concept of family has been precarious from early on. Ultimately representing the personification of death, vampires were traditionally prone to return to their families after their state of existence had changed from living to undead. Just like prior works of vampire fiction have already addressed the topic of family, I argue that post-2000 works of this genre have taken the discussion of the concept of family to a much more prominent level, analyzing it in depth instead of only mentioning it in passing as Count Dracula and his wives/daughters did. The understanding of the term family is versatile, as was demonstrated in my analysis of its discourse in *True Blood* and carries different meanings in various cultures. As Irene Levin states, the most basic and general definition of family may designate some form of biological, legal and emotional connectedness between family members (94). However, the

lines of the definition of family have been blurred over time and its boundaries obscured until the idea of actual kinship has been averted completely in the twenty-first century, when people, for instance, possibly consider pets more of a family member than their actual kin.

As one would expect, vampire fiction has also reflected these familial developments amidst numerous other issues it has come to represent. Having been cultivated into the number one signifier for social and cultural conflicts, these creatures – since their literary introduction in Polidori’s “The Vampyre” in 1819 – present their audiences with imaginations and urges which humanity is able to deal with when projected on a fantastic figure, but whose existence in the human psyche humans attempt to suppress. In an analysis of her own novel *The Vampire Tapestry* (1980), Suzy McKee Charnas writes, “the vampire as a concept reflects the discovery that the monstrous is and always has been located primarily not outside us, in mythical creatures, but in our human neighbors on this planet; and sometimes in ourselves” (“Meditations” 59). With the rise of the figure of the sympathetic vampire, the vampire has adopted a myriad of human characteristics, almost completely closing the gap between these monster and the supposedly more humane humans. In this process, the idea of familial ties and kinship has once more regained prominence over the past twenty-plus years as one of the most prominent markers of the vampires’ self-improvement. Here, the undeads’ evolution from monsters to romantic heroes has often been accompanied by the introduction of parental figures who either help guide these more considerate versions of vampires or functioned as deterrence from falling back into the old, more monstrous habits of vampiric existence.

Among the most famous examples of the sympathetic vampire, Edward Cullen in *The Twilight Saga*, for example, needs to learn how to accept his love-interest Bella Swan as an equal partner in their relationship, instead of constantly patronizing her, which ultimately puts her in harm’s way. While he eventually realizes the counterproductive

effects of his patriarchal behavior, he still relies on the father figure Carlisle to keep his urges, i.e. his craving for Bella's blood and over-protectiveness, in check. Carlisle has not only made Edward a vampire, but also taught him to sustain himself on the vampire version of a vegetarian diet – only drinking animal blood, which is one of the rules to which all of the Cullens have to oblige in order to belong to Carlisle's family. Similar to Edward, Stefan Salvatore in *The Vampire Diaries* also needs the help of the almost two hundred years older vampire Lexi, a strong female character who teaches him to retain his humanity by refraining from human blood. While Stefan and his older brother Damon were turned by the same sire, it appears much harder for Stefan to control his monstrous tendencies and thirst for blood than it is for his brother. Although their relationship regularly oscillates between love and hate, they every so often live together, which is when Damon attempts to convince his brother to accept and enjoy his gruesome vampiric side, which earned him the name "The Ripper." Thus, Damon operates as a negative example of a patriarchal figure in comparison to the maternal role model Lexi, who appears to be the only one Stefan listens to when he finds himself in one of his murderous states.

Just like Edward Cullen and Stefan Salvatore, who do not want to be monsters, Bill Compton in *True Blood* also attempts to be a better vampire. Solely drinking the Japanese-invented synthetic blood-substitute Tru Blood, Bill tries to "mainstream" after the "coming out of the coffin" by vampires in the series. Bill has a more than complicated relationship to his sire Lorena, and although he is not her only progeny, Bill does not appear to be in touch with other siblings from his sireline. Thus, not having a family, his real potential as a sympathetic vampire is only uncovered once he takes full responsibility for his own progeny Jessica. Forced to turn the teenager as punishment for putting a human's life before a vampire's, Bill eventually adopts the role of a substitute father for Jessica, whom he "raises" like a daughter in his home. Assuming a patriarchal role, Bill proves to be a

reliable and understanding “father”/maker whom Jessica, as well as other characters in the show, comes to respect.

When Cohen discusses the history of the vampire, he explains, “the undead returns in slightly different clothing . . . paternalistic in its embrace” (“Monster Culture” 5). As was shown in several contemporary examples, twenty-first century vampire fiction appears to have a strong, although not always immediately recognizable, tendency to discuss the positive, but also problematic nature of family with the help of very human-looking and humanely-behaving vampires. Falling in step with this tradition, the television series *The Originals* takes this notion even further, portraying the life of the original vampire family, meaning the first vampires to ever be created. Starting out as a rather traditional nuclear human family, composed of a father, a mother and six children, the death of the youngest son, Henrik, due to a werewolf attack leads the mother and powerful witch, Esther Mikaelson, to transform her husband, Mikael, and remaining children, Finn, Elijah, Kol, Klaus and Rebekah, into vampires by means of her magic. The enormous change in the family members’ nature and their resulting bloodlust quickly disrupts their, until then, relatively quiet lives. However, when Klaus in his first frenzy kills a human, this triggers his hitherto unknown werewolf gene and allows for the subsequent discovery that he is the product of his mother’s indiscretion with the alpha of the area’s werewolf pack, Ansel. This discovery is an offense for which Klaus will once more be the recipient of his beloved although easily agitated father’s wrath. After Klaus kills his mother in a fit of rage, he claims she had died at the hands of their father, and he and his siblings flee their home to escape Mikael’s attempts to kill his children, whose vampire existence he sees as an abomination of nature.

It has been argued that Anne Rice’s depiction of Louis, Lestat and Claudia as a nuclear family in *Interview with the Vampire* has been “the most extensively and carefully realized of fictional vampire families” (Benefiel 266), where Claudia’s fervent desire for a

mother leads her to create one to complete her idea of a nuclear family. However, the Mikaelson family in *The Originals*, as I assert, far surpasses the family-like grouping of Rice's vampires. Bonded by first human and eventually vampire blood, the original siblings have remained together for over a thousand years when the series begins. Elijah, Rebecca and Kol more voluntarily than their brother Finn, who spends nine hundred years daggered in a casket, they follow their hybrid brother Klaus's lead for most of this time. Mostly focusing on the original siblings, hence human-blood-related membership to the family, *The Originals* diverges from the depiction of family in *Twilight* or *True Blood* for instance. While Carlisle in *Twilight*, just like respectable vampires in *True Blood*, only turns a human after careful consideration, creating a strong emotional bond, vampires in *The Originals* create vampires haphazardly without feeling responsible for the newly turned. As stated at an earlier point, vampire lines in *True Blood* mirror contemporary family trees in that they are tall but have shorter branches (Farnsworth Riche 26). In contrast, there only exist five major sirelines in *The Originals*, with one going back to each of the original siblings respectively. As it is impossible – even for vampires – to build and maintain rapport with thousands of individuals, the creation of a vampire does not correlate with the entering into any kind of commitment in the series. Thus, the relationship between the original siblings, Klaus, Elijah and Rebekah, stands out due to their extreme loyalty towards one another, which for Elijah and Rebekah sometimes even borders on self-sacrifice.

At the beginning of Season One, the relationship between the three siblings Elijah, Klaus and Rebekah is complicated; Finn and Kol were killed in *The Vampire Diaries* before this spin-off series began and are mostly mentioned through flashbacks to the siblings' pasts. Although neither one of them finds true happiness in the company of the others, they do protect the oath they once swore to each other: "Family forever. Family

above all.”⁵⁰ Klaus, who is by far the most violent, emotionally unstable and disturbed family member, regularly professes his independence, but never manages to break away from his siblings, while Elijah and Rebecca mostly remain by his side, incessantly hoping for their brother’s transformation into a more philanthropist version. As Gerson and Torres state, “family is so closely linked to the desire for human happiness that it invites searches for an ideal form, even though one person’s utopian dream can easily become another’s nightmare” (2). Echoing this proclamation, Elijah and Rebekah’s continuous faith for Klaus’s salvation⁵¹ more than once leaves them daggered in a coffin⁵² after angering or disagreeing with him. Demonstrating Klaus’s almost pathological need for family and his control over its members, this process enables him to take his siblings with him wherever he goes, only to wake them from their involuntary slumber when he fancies their company once again.

The traditional binaries of good versus evil and monstrous versus human are blurred in the depiction of the original family. This hybridity,⁵³ where the characters cannot be clearly categorized, is most prominently exemplified in the main character of Klaus. Never has the term Alpha Male been more applicable. A werewolf-vampire-hybrid by his very nature, he (at the beginning) represents a monster, an animal of unrivaled strength,

⁵⁰ See, e.g. S01/E01, “Always and Forever,” “Family forever. Family above all” is also implied when the siblings say “Always and forever” throughout the series.

⁵¹ See e.g. S01/E08, “The River in Reverse,” where Elijah says: “I have all eternity to accomplish one little task: My brother’s salvation. If I surrender this, then, tell me, what value would I be to my family, to myself, to your child?”

⁵² See e.g. S01/E01, “Always and Forever,” where Rebekah explains: “Because if I cross my brother, there’s still a coffin downstairs with my name on it.”

⁵³ Hybridity, understood as boundary violations and breakdowns, has come to be a common topic in social and political discourses, such as feminist politics, for example, since the late twentieth century. In her essay “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” Donna J. Haraway, for instance, claims, “By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism—in short, cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centers structuring any possibility of historical transformation. In the traditions of ‘Western’ science and politics—the tradition of racist, male-dominant capitalism; the tradition of progress; the tradition of the appropriation of nature as resource for the productions of culture; the tradition of reproduction of the self from the reflections of the other—the relation between organism and machine has been a border war. The stakes in the border war have been the territories of production, reproduction, and imagination” (7).

brutality and power, but still retains certain human values, such as the strong love for his siblings. Although Elijah is the oldest of the three remaining Mikaelsons, he and Rebekah mostly follow Klaus's whims and orders. This, of course, is not only because they truly value their little family or because Klaus has power over his siblings being in possession of the mystical daggers – which, when stabbed in their hearts, put them to sleep until the dagger is removed – but also because Klaus's bite as a hybrid can put his siblings into agonizing pain, which only the hybrid's blood can cure, hence leaving them at their brother's mercy.

Being the first, and, for a long time, the only one of his kind, Klaus's unrivaled strength, speed and ruthlessness is feared by all superhuman factions. bell hooks⁵⁴ states that “[t]o those who support patriarchal thinking, maintaining power and control is acceptable by whatever means” (97). In line with hooks' assertion, it comes as no surprise that Klaus uses his unparalleled strength and powers to secure his role on top of the food chain and his family by whatever means. As his bite is lethal to regular vampires if they are not cured with Klaus's blood, there are only few who have attempted to stand against him – rarely does anyone live to tell the tale – and not even his siblings are safe from this form of torturous discipline if Klaus means to teach them a lesson.

Just as Mikael was of the opinion that “the boy needs to be made strong” (S01/E16, “Farewell to Storyville”) by regularly exerting physical abuse over his son, Klaus ensures his own authority through and revels in horrible acts of violence. bell hooks explains such phenomena, saying that “. . . anyone socialized to think this way would be more interested in and stimulated by scenes of domination and violence, rather than by scenes of love and care” (97). The fact that literally everyone, no matter of which race, lives at Klaus's goodwill and mercy, puts him in a position of unparalleled authority, which he expects to

⁵⁴ Following her example, “bell hooks” will not be capitalized.

exercise in every domain of life and which for the longest time appears to be the only means of creating a resemblance of happiness for the hybrid.

Byronic in character, Klaus is neither well liked nor socially accepted. Very much in sync with definitions of the Byronic hero, he is distinguished from all other characters in the series due to his “ambition, aspiration, [and] aggressive individualism” (Stein 1). Creating “his own rules and his own moral code” (Stein 1), Klaus, just like his ostensible literary predecessor, appears incapable of forming any kind of relationship with people other than by dominating them. While the self-absorbed egotist Klaus has turned hundreds of vampires throughout his existence, he is not on good terms with any of them. He is a patriarch par excellence who will not tolerate anyone or anything going against his wishes and orders. While Elijah early on accepts his fate to not ever find true happiness because Klaus tends to eventually kill the women with whom Elijah finds himself in love, Rebekah takes a little longer to accept the same destiny.⁵⁵

Although Klaus has also killed numerous of Rebekah’s lovers over the years, she still risks her brother’s ire once more when she falls in love with Marcel in the early nineteenth century. Still human, the young adult Marcel was Klaus’s ward, whom he had saved, as a little boy, from physical and emotional abuse as a slave on his biological father’s plantation. Able to identify with the boy, Klaus accepts him into his family, ultimately raising him like a son. When Rebekah and Marcel begin a clandestine relationship some twenty years later, as was mentioned at an earlier point, they know that Klaus will oppose their involvement. Nonetheless, they hope that he will eventually come to accept their love since Marcel is not like any other of Rebekah’s previous suitors, but a member of their

⁵⁵ See e.g. S01/E02, “House of the Rising Son,” where Rebecca explains: “Emil wasn't the only boyfriend of mine that Klaus killed. He did it again, and again, and every time I found someone to care about. He just kept doing it until, finally, I stopped falling in love. He said he was protecting me from my mistakes, that no one was ever good enough for his little sister. Until one day, someone was.”

family. Yet, Klaus again denies his sister “the freedom to love” (S01/E16, “Farewell to Storyville”), ending their relationship by daggering Rebekah.

When they discuss Klaus’s domineering behavior a hundred years later, Klaus’s continuous monstrous patriarchy becomes apparent yet again. Explaining to Rebekah, “I was trying to protect you from imbeciles and leeches, not to mention your own poor judgment”⁵⁶ (S01/E16, “Farewell to Storyville,”) Klaus shows that he sees himself as the highest authority and the only one able to make sound decisions. Unlike other twenty-first century vampire versions such as Edward Cullen and Stefan Salvatore, who claim that they do not want to be monsters, Klaus accepts and even revels in his monstrous behavior since that, in his eyes, is what keeps his family safe, although it simultaneously more often than not results in the disruption of their relationships.

Overwhelmed by the newly gained knowledge of his impending fatherhood, Klaus’s aggressive and impulsive behavior appears to be exacerbated even further. Not yet ready to accept the fact that becoming a father will also make him more vulnerable to his enemies, he reacts to the witches’ attempt to blackmail him by threatening the mother of his unborn child, saying, “How dare you command me? Threaten me with what you wrongfully perceive to be my weaknesses? This is a pathetic deception. I won’t hear any more lies. . . . Kill her [Hayley] and the baby. What do I care?” (S01/E01, “Always and Forever”). However, Klaus’s almost unhealthy desire for family will eventually begin to slowly outweigh his irrational need for control. An exchange between him and Elijah towards the end of episode one signals the beginning of Klaus’s development from patriarchal monster to sympathetic vampire/hybrid. When Elijah explains, “I think this child could offer you the one thing you’ve never believed you had” (“Always and Forever”), “the unconditional

⁵⁶ Klaus’s patronizing treatment of his sister mirrors Arturo J. Aldama’s assessment of patriarchal family systems, where “young women are taught to fear their desire and feel shame at their bodies while at the same time seeking the ‘validating’ gaze of ‘appropriate’ young men” (2).

love of family” (“Always and Forever”), he successfully creates an unparalleled incentive for his brother to do everything he can to keep Hayley and his child safe. Overcoming yet another hurdle on the path towards erasing the boundary between monstrosity and humanity, the fact that a vampire, or rather a hybrid, can reproduce and develop an emotional attachment like the one human parents are considered to feel towards their children creates a parallel hope for Klaus’s transformation in the viewers as is recurrently expressed by Rebekah and Elijah. Aviva Briefel and Sam J. Miller in their introduction to *Horror after 9/11* ask the following question: “How can American audiences, after tasting real horror, want to consume images of violence on-screen?” (1). To this question I would reply that this is exactly why vampire fiction has set a stronger focus on the notion of family after the attacks of 9/11. In making the monster less horrible and slowly enhancing its humanity, the American audience is reminded that not all is lost and that there continues to be hope for humanity even in its darkest of hours.

Eventually throughout the series, Klaus begins to recognize that although the patriarchy he exercises over his siblings as well as others grants him the power and authority he wants, it will not get him the respect and loyalty he truly desires. The possibility of this realization already hints at his possible transformation into a sympathetic vampire/hybrid at a later point. Almost concurrently with the gradual progression of Hayley’s pregnancy, Klaus’s behavior also slowly changes, taking on nearly philanthropic traits,⁵⁷ which Rebekah comments on, saying “Wow. You abandoned your quest for power to help out your family. Having an off-day?” (S01/E03, “Tangled Up In Blue”). Where Klaus used to be egotistical and self-righteous, he begins to exercise some small extent of self-reflection, for example, when admitting to Camille that he is worried about becoming

⁵⁷ See, e.g. S01/E11, “Après Moi, Le Déluge,” when Klaus helps werewolves to find shelter in St. Anne’s Church because as he explains to Hayley: “The blood that runs in their veins runs in mine. And in our child’s.”

like his father Mikael,⁵⁸ or when he assures Hayley that he is going to guarantee that his child will not experience the same “cycle of misery” he did.⁵⁹

Although small but continuous changes to Klaus’s personality become apparent, it seems more than problematic for him to accept that his unborn child already brings change to his monstrous patriarchal rule and his concept of family. As I argue in Chapter 2.2.2, Klaus initially only considers the other originals, and sometimes Marcel, to be his family. However, the addition of Hayley to the fold soon challenges and ultimately diminishes his dominance and sole authority. Just like everyone else, she is expected to submit to Klaus’s rules and prescriptions. As her pregnancy, however, protects her from Klaus’s exertion of dominance through physical violence, Hayley manages early on to stand against him and to emancipate herself. Doing the splits between her role as Queen of the Crescent werewolf pack and her obligations towards and feelings for the original siblings, Hayley attempts to achieve peace between vampires and werewolves in order to make New Orleans a safe home for her child.

Although her sudden rank as alpha female and her newly gained membership to the Mikaelson family make her a powerful figure in what seems like no time, Hayley early on displays qualities which Klaus is clearly lacking. When it comes to protecting her child and those who are dear to her, hence her family – be they members of her pack or the original siblings – Hayley proves herself to be as ferocious as Klaus is about Elijah and Rebekah. Yet, unlike the hybrid, Hayley manages to remain diplomatic and is guided by love and compassion in her endeavors. When Hayley and their unborn child are threatened time and again, Klaus eventually realizes that he will have to form allegiances in order to keep them safe. This, of course, is complicated given the fact that he does not trust anyone, barely

⁵⁸ See, S01/E20, “A Closer Walk with Thee,” when Klaus explains: “I’ve already got this one covered: my fears of fatherhood, of scarring my child as my father scarred me, are manifesting as nightmares.”

⁵⁹ See, S01/E20, “A Closer Walk with Thee,” where Klaus says: “Let me put this into perspective. My father lived to torment me. It is not my intention to become him. This cycle of misery ends with my child.”

even his siblings. Over and over finding himself in situations where a loyal community proves much more helpful and beneficial than actual blood relations, Klaus has to renegotiate what Nira Yuval-Davis calls the “‘dirty business of boundary maintenance’” (204), which make it inevitable to decide who stands “inside or outside the imaginary boundary line of the nation and/or the communities of belonging, whether they are ‘us’ or ‘them’” (204). Eventually realizing that his monstrous patriarchal behavior as well as his strict separation of supernatural groups in New Orleans will get him nowhere, Klaus tries to create a semblance of peace between his family, and the werewolves and vampires in New Orleans. However, as the hybrid turns out to be unable to shake off his paranoia and need for control, he regularly breaks the ties he tries to cultivate, reminiscent of political alliances and truths, which, especially in Louisiana’s settlement history, were oftentimes only maintained as long as they served the desired purpose.

When their baby-girl, Hope, is born and Hayley eventually turns into a hybrid (S01/E22, “From a Cradle to a Grave”) – after she dies with her daughter’s blood in her system – she becomes as close to an equal to Klaus as anyone will ever get. Where Hayley fought hard to earn Klaus’s trust and respect, her newly gained powers as a hybrid help her to free herself from Klaus’s traditional and outdated opinions regarding the allocation of gender roles, rather befitting of the early twentieth century. As Gerson and Torres state, these views include, for example, that “[h]usbands contribute to a family’s survival . . . and wives specialize in the ‘expressive’ functions associated with rearing children and meeting their family’s emotional needs” (6). Klaus, of course, is not nor will he be Hayley’s husband. However, for a long time, he still regularly tries to bend her to his will and does not trust her to be able to protect herself and their child. Although she proves her ability to do so more than once, it is only when she becomes a hybrid that he truly begins to believe in her abilities.

Now not only bonded by parenthood, but also by blood, Klaus and Hayley are eventually equally aggrieved when, in order to protect their daughter, they have to send Hope away, pretending she died shortly after birth. Although Klaus had exiled his sister Rebekah from New Orleans earlier in the season after the discovery of a treachery she committed one hundred years earlier, Klaus's longing for a happy family becomes once more apparent when he takes Hope to live with his sister, whom only weeks earlier he was tempted to murder. A highly dysfunctional family, the Mikaelson siblings have an almost routine-like tendency to separate for a short while, only to reconcile and repeat the same cycle of spending time in each other's company and feuding over and over again.

Despite all complications and Klaus's regular relapses into old patterns, his character's evolution in Season One of *The Originals* uncovers a different side to his character. In contrast to his prior appearances in *The Vampire Diaries*, Klaus becomes noticeably less cynical. Even though he still does not refrain from harming others – including his siblings – to achieve his goals, Klaus is less brooding and moody. Where his character used to be portrayed as a domineering, manipulative, ruthless tyrant, Klaus eventually displays the ability to be witty, charming, yes, even considerate. It can be argued that these incidents never last long because Klaus and his family time and again face almost insurmountable obstacles. However, it seems as if with every impediment they overcome, Hayley, as well as the Mikaelson siblings, gain more perspective and a greater respect for each other.⁶⁰ Although Klaus, Elijah and Rebekah will be repeatedly estranged for short periods of time, the development in Klaus's character and, thus, the continuously greater family bond is accentuated and accompanied by the siblings' more regular moments of teasing and banter.

⁶⁰ See, e.g. S02/E07, "Chasing the Devil's Tail," where Rebekah replies to Elijah's question why their family is always at war, saying: "I don't know. But, being away with her [Hope] made me see things differently. We're not so bad. We're not the monsters that our parents think we are."

From flashbacks to the siblings past, it is known that Klaus used to be “a sweet boy . . . [w]ho loved art and music” (S01/E16, “Farewell to Storyville”), as Rebekah recalls. Recollections of his human youth also show him as a considerate and sensitive young man who suffered at the hands of his father, “the monster monsters were afraid of” (S01/E15, “Le Grand Guignol”). As the transformation into a vampire and then a hybrid had strong and long-lasting effects on Klaus’s personality, the renewed exhibition of playful jabs between Klaus and Hayley as well as his siblings functions as one important stepping stone on Klaus’s way to becoming a more functional family member instead of the resistant lone wolf.

Campos et al. argue that teasing is “a social interaction that benefits relational bonds at the expense of the self” (3), while Benefiel asserts in similar fashion that familiar arguments and bickering – as for example between Louis and Claudia in *Interview with the Vampire* – contribute to the creation of “a domestic drama that closely resembles ordinary family life” (269-70). Campos et al. continue that in order to achieve “cooperative social living” (3), it is necessary to put others’ well-being above one’s own interests, and that “this may require foregoing the pleasure of positive self-differentiation” (3). Hence, although teasing provocatively points out other people’s inadequacies, it needs to be understood as a social interaction “that imperils positive self-differentiation to the benefit of relational bonds” (3).

Obviously Klaus will not go from individualist to philanthropist overnight, but his sporadically occurring playfulness can be interpreted as moving in the right direction. When Hayley, for example, returns from her short stay with Elijah and Hope at the Mikaelson Safe House in Arkansas, she feels bad about the fact that she slept with Elijah, although she is engaged to and will soon marry the werewolf Jackson. Klaus, who notices her uneasiness, jokingly asks, “Worried about your wolves? Or, perhaps the source of your anxiety is a little further from home? How is Elijah, by the way? I’m sure he found your

visit most curative” (S02/E10, “Gonna Set Your Flag on Fire”). When Hayley acts embarrassed, Klaus continues to look at her with a grin on his face until she finally awkwardly replies, “That obvious, huh?” (“Gonna Set Your Flag on Fire”). Not letting her off the hook that easily, he laughingly continues, “Well, you both had a certain glow about you all morning. Frankly, I’m glad the two of you dropped the pretenses and, uh, shall we say let the spirit move you?” When he laughs even harder at his own joke, Hayley playfully shoves him in the shoulder, clearly showing that she is not offended, but is able to see the humor in the situation herself.

While the old Klaus would most likely not have even given Hayley the time of day, he now even considers her feelings about her predicament of whether or not she should admit her time with Elijah to Jackson. Asking her if she is feeling guilty, he gives her the somewhat misguided advice that “it’s not love on which the strongest foundations are built. It’s the decency of merciful lies” (S02/E10, “Gonna Set Your Flag on Fire”). As this example shows, Klaus has by now fully accepted Hayley as a member of his family, which is a big step for the extremely wary hybrid. Although he indirectly tells Hayley what he would do were he in her place, he does not do so in his normal fashion of patriarchal and authoritative prescription, but rather in a mirthful manner among friends.

For most of his existence, Klaus has only categorized people by the triad of family, ally or enemy. However, the development of the series shows how he eventually begins to also understand that friends are equally, if not more reliable and important in life. While Hayley and Klaus will have many more intense and detrimental disputes⁶¹ than can be discussed here, Klaus does value her as the mother of his child, thus a family member, and also a friend. In fact, Klaus’s patriarchy and its slow dismantling appear to be caused and accompanied by the more or less concurrent appearance of several strong female characters

⁶¹ See, e.g. S02/E22, “Ashes to Ashes,” when Klaus sets out to raise his daughter with his siblings, not even attempting to find a spell that would reverse the one put on Hayley, which prevents her from retaining her human form aside from during a full moon.

in his life.⁶² Throughout the course of Hayley's long and winding journey to earn Klaus's respect and the many inherent and successful challenges to his authority, the "bartender with a grad degree in psychology" (S01/E01, "Always and Forever") Camille O'Connell also regularly confronts Klaus and eventually earns his trust, love and a place in his increasingly more modern and subversive family.

As Klaus originally compels Camille to spy on Marcel, whom he wants to dethrone from his position as ruler of New Orleans, their relationship starts out as a means to an end. It does not take long, however, before Klaus begins to appreciate Camille's intelligence, wit and psychoanalytical knowledge. After her spy mission is accomplished he compels her once more, using her free time to function as stenographer of his memoirs. It is during these "sessions" that Camille's strong personality as well as the beginning of Klaus's character's change become apparent. Even though Klaus could easily stop her from mouthing off to him by means of compulsion, he appears to actually enjoy her constant nagging and criticism, an offense for which many others before paid with their lives.

Resonating scenes between Louis and the young reporter in *Interview with the Vampire*, Klaus shares his past with Camille, which gives him the opportunity to justify, or at least somewhat explain, his former and current violent behavior and paranoia. Already in one of their first sessions, Camille suggests that Klaus is the architect of his own unhappiness by "repeating the same destructive cycles over and over again" (S01/E08, "The River in Reverse"). While he is less than pleased by her uncalled for critique, Klaus does not stop her tirade even when she points out:

So of all the people in New Orleans, you choose someone with a masters in psychology to record your life story. You're over a thousand years old. Pretty damn sure you know how to type. The truth is, you compelled me to come here because you have no one else to talk to, and you want to be understood. Then, you compel me to forget everything as soon as I leave your presence because you are too scared to trust. (S01/E08, "The River in Reverse")

⁶² This chapter will only focus on Hayley Marshall and Camille O'Connell while further analysis could also include the characters of Davina Claire and Freya Mikaelson.

As Leah McClimans and J. Jeremy Wisniewski explain, “A system that promotes male domination also encourages men to fear the ways in which their domination may be diminished. As a result, men attempt to control situations in which they feel most vulnerable” (165). Aside from his siblings, no one is allowed to talk to Klaus in such manner, especially not when questioning his authority and power by making him seem emotionally vulnerable. The fact that Klaus endures Camille’s snide treatment despite being able to stop it, hence, points at his ability to evolve into a more sympathetic and socially compatible version of himself and early on suggests that Camille will play a crucial role in this development.

With the progression of the series, the emotional intimacy between Camille and Klaus also grows. Although their relationship – just like any other of Klaus’s relationships (with Hayley, his siblings or Marcel) – will see its better and worse times, Klaus is strongly concerned with Camille’s safety early on, and – though at times annoyed by it – admires her courage to stand her ground. At the beginning of Season One and speaking of Marcel, Camille still claims, “The damaged ones, they’re not good. At least, not for me” (S01/E02, “House of the Rising Son”). Although Klaus is in the same league as Marcel, Camille realizes and professes her growing fondness for Klaus at the end of Season Two saying, “Because, against every ounce of my better judgment, my sanity, and my common sense, it turns out, I have complicated feelings for a monster” (S02/E22, “Ashes to Ashes”). As Camille’s disclosure shows, Klaus has undergone a development, which – although clearly still marked by relational failures and violent behavior – has made him gain her sympathy and affection and possibly simultaneously the viewers’.

The progression of Camille’s feelings for Klaus is not at last due to his high regard for family, which she repeatedly experiences when Klaus tries to move heaven and earth to

help Camille find some kind of closure with her family legacy.⁶³ However, deviating from other twenty-first century television or cinematic depictions of sympathetic vampires (e.g. *Twilight*, *True Blood*, *The Vampire Diaries*), *The Originals* does not focus on a love story, but is marked by the continuous main discussion of family membership, as well as the pleasures and hardships family brings with it. Elijah notes in the very beginning of the first episode that “[o]ver the course of my long life I have come to believe that we are bound forever to those with whom we share blood. And while we may not choose our family that bond can be our greatest strength or our deepest regret” (“Always and Forever”). Although Klaus, when accepting Marcel into the fold, explains to the young boy, “The truth is, Marcellus, family can be more than just those with whom we share blood. We can choose” (S01/E20, “A Closer Walk with Thee”), it seems as if he has never followed his own advice and rather lives according to Elijah’s understanding that a connection by blood is the only true, but also inescapable, form of family.

Whereas Klaus never allows others to exert their will over him, it is Hayley’s and Camille’s stubbornness and challenge to his authority⁶⁴ which he admires and which eventually bring him to slowly but surely alter his views. Camille’s persistence in questioning his perception of what makes/defines a family during their continuous sessions – which eventually turn into working on his “progress as a person striving for empathy” (S03/E01, “For the Next Millennium”) – lead Klaus to break with his belief in consanguinity and the acceptance of a patriarchal rule as mandatory prerequisites for family membership. Once he acknowledges that love, trust, loyalty and equal measures of authority form a sounder foundation, he puts himself on the path to experience true happiness.

⁶³ See, e.g. S01/E19, “An Unblinking Death,” when Klaus turns Camille’s uncle, Father Kieran, into a vampire, thus momentarily lifting his curse, to enable Camille to properly say goodbye – knowing full well that Father Kieran will not complete the turn.

⁶⁴ See, e.g. S01/E20, “A Closer Walk With Thee,” when Camille lectures Klaus about reconciling with Marcel before she storms off and Elijah says, “I like her spirit,” to which Klaus replies, “So do I.”

Whereas the evolution of Klaus's personality from "the most ruthless, wicked beast to ever live" (S03/E01, "For the Next Millennium") to functioning and solicitous family member is slow, the second half of Season Three eventually shows a huge surge in this development. After he saves Camille from a precarious situation with the help of his siblings and a number of other people, the formerly egoistic and patriarchal Klaus suddenly begins to commit almost heroic deeds out of the kindness of his heart, a trait unseen in his character since his becoming a vampire. Trying to overwrite the vampire Lucien's compulsion on Detective Kinney to the best of his ability, for example, he explains to Camille that he tried to help the detective "because you wished it. Because what's important to you is important to me. What makes you happy makes me want to keep you so. What scares you I want to tear apart" (S03/E09, "Savior"). As Klaus has finally realized that kind and selfless acts towards those you love, be they truly kin or not, can go a long way, the original siblings as well as Hayley, Jackson, Camille and Hope spend Christmas together like "one big happy Frankenstein family."⁶⁵ This event, highlighted by Klaus and Camille's acknowledgment of their attraction for one another – here goes the love story – marks a true turning point for the hybrid. Almost completely shrugging off his patriarchal and controlling mentality, he grasps the helpfulness of "constructing networks of real and fictive kin as strategies of survival" (Gerson and Torres 8) and admits the capabilities of those around him to fight side by side at eye level with him. Even though this realization brings down their latest and most threatening enemy Lucien, it does not save Camille from being killed in the end.

The true extent of the change in Klaus's character becomes apparent when, instead of lashing out, he admits that Marcel's anger about losing the young witch Davina in the course of the fight with Lucien is justified. When the attempt at reconciliation with his

⁶⁵ This phrase is borrowed from S01/E11, "Après Moi, Le Déluge," when Marcel asks Davina to make peace to which she replies, "Why? So we can be one big happy Frankenstein family?"

former ward and friend is unsuccessful and his family faces their biggest threat, Klaus commits the final act to complete his transformation and the dismantling of his patriarchy. Surrendering to Marcel, Klaus allows himself to be daggered and immured into a wall of the Mikaelson compound, ultimately clandestinely – with the end of Season Three – handing over the fate of the survival of his family to Hayley to protect them from those wanting to kill them.

As this chapter has shown, *The Originals* confirms that “the ‘familistic package’ is a multi-dimensional set of private experiences and public developments that leaves no one untouched” (Gerson and Torres 16). Proving that family is a flexible concept, the originals, and Klaus in particular, appear to somewhat redefine their concept of family in regular intervals throughout Seasons One to Three, depending on whether or not they get along with one another and who is “alive” to join in, dead for the moment, or daggered in a coffin. What has remained the same for over a thousand years, however, is that Klaus has always been the sole leader of their family. As the series points out through flashbacks and current events, this patriarchal rule has been cause for much unhappiness of as well as many disputes between and threats to the members of the Mikaelson family. It is only through the slow but progressive dismantling of Klaus’s patriarchal rule – especially by strong female characters like Hayley and Camille – and its replacement by democratic decision-making that their family can ultimately be saved. As James A. Holstein and Jay Gubrium argue, *family discourse* needs to be viewed “as a social process by which ‘family,’ as a social form, is brought into being as a matter of practice” (4). Hence, it is more important to evaluate people’s actions and behavior than actual kinship.

Unlike *True Blood*, where vampires – at least for the most part – carefully consider whether or not they want to enter the “eternal commitment” that comes with turning a human into one of the undead, vampires in *The Originals* tend to turn humans haphazardly,

following the example of the Mikaelson siblings, from whom all vampires ultimately descend.

Hayley notes early on in the series, “This family gets more complicated by the second” (S01/E11, “Après Moi, Le Déluge”). As the fact that she is in love with her baby-daddy’s brother Elijah – albeit for a while married to Jackson – as well as Camille’s emotional and sexual involvement with first Marcel and then Klaus show, *The Originals* stresses that “[t]he Nuclear Family’ does not exist except as a powerful image in the minds of most people” (Bernardes 23) and that the consideration of “family pathways” might help achieve a more accurate understanding of the twenty-first century notion of family (Gerson and Torres 6-7). Here, the rootedness of the series in the Gothic tradition as analyzed in Chapter 1 becomes apparent once again. In *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*, Judith Jack Halberstam explains that the Gothic “marks a peculiarly modern preoccupation with boundaries and their collapse” (107), which is oftentimes realized through the use of monsters as depictions of what threatens the society of its respective time and place. Halberstam argues that the “Gothic monster represents many answers to the question of who must be removed from the community at large” (*Skin* 3). In case of *The Originals*, this appears to be the – though improved and somewhat reformed – patriarch Klaus Mikaelson, who needs to be locked away so that a semblance of peace can be restored to the supernatural community of New Orleans. However, that his imprisonment, or rather self-sacrifice, is not on behalf of the community but for his family’s safety remains a secret only Hayley knows.

The finale of Season Three – leaving the single mother Hayley holding the destiny of those she loves in the palm of her hands – lets viewers hope that *The Originals* will continue to be more successful in its subversion of the traditional concept of a patriarchal family than other serial or cinematic twenty-first century vampire depictions. Considering the two post-2000 vampire representations, *Twilight* and *True Blood*, for example, both

finish with heteronormative happy-ever-after endings and role allocations not uncommon of the time. Supporting this tendency towards traditional representations of family, Melanie Waters claims that “the American response to 9/11 has been its conservative, retreatist movement back towards what we might think of as pre-second wave models of masculinity and femininity” (43). While Edward and Bella are happily married parents and help save all those they love, Bill Compton – after marrying off his daughter/progeny Jessica – forces his one true love Sookie to kill him so she can finally live a normal life. His actions show him to assume the stereotypical attitude of a Southern patriarch as further explained at an earlier point.

Deborah Mutch asserts that “[m]onsters of literature and film created what Judith Jack Halberstam described as ‘the perfect figure for negative identity’ (Halberstam 1995, 22) but they produce a normalizing reflection for the human reader/viewer as it projects back to us our inverse” (“Swarm” 8-9). Although it is unknown yet what Season Four might bring, the hope remains that *The Originals* will continue on with its path of dismantling patriarchal behavior, going against the post-9/11 trend of “‘the culture of the warrior’ (and his stay-at-home wife)” (Waters 44), and will successfully progress towards gender strength and equality in its depiction of the Mikaelson family through the slow denudation of its formerly rigid walls.

As this chapter has shown through the example of Klaus Mikaelson and the occasional mention of other examples of sympathetic vampires, the twenty-first century depictions of these “monsters” are shaped by their search and longing for family and belonging, or even only the reconciliation between family members. Never before has there been such a large number of almost simultaneous TV and movie representations of vampires with actual human-blood-related kin or family-like groupings than in the post-2000 years. Relating to Louis, Lestat and Claudia in *Interview with the Vampire*, Benefiel points out that the vampire figure, “aloof from human considerations[,] . . . stands in for

the reader” (270), and that vampire families allow “the reader to explore issues of alternative family structures and incestuous attraction within the family, and to play out the consequences for good or ill of these imagined scenarios” (270). *The Originals* clearly scrutinizes a patriarchal family makeup, hence echoing the growing number of alternative contemporary family lifestyles in its representation of complicated relationship structures.

While the series started out based on a traditional, almost archaic understanding of family, this notion is slowly modernized through progressing measures towards gender equality and the increasing independence of women, inviting its twenty-first century Western audience to see strong female emancipations. The vampire’s background of successfully serving as a metaphor for societal issues therefore makes vampire fiction the perfect medium to discuss and reflect these changes. One should hope that *The Originals* will continue to show strong women standing their ground in a patriarchal supernatural world and will not revert back to depicting old-fashioned paternal forms of behavior, such as *Twilight*’s and *True Blood*’s still continuing (although reduced) representation of female characters’ guidance by domineering men.

2.3 Consanguinity: A Dichotomy of Life and Death, of Unity and Corruption

The discursive dimensions of blood, its meaning and significance, its association with identity formation and power are not determined a priori, but are constantly transformed through the changing status of blood as a matter, its materiality and its liminal position within and outside the body.
(Aspasia Stephanou, *Reading Vampire Gothic through Blood* 5)

As the previous analyses and comparisons of human and vampire families in *True Blood* and *The Originals*, as well as references to other television and movie representations of vampires, have shown, the concept of family has become a saliently recurring motif in vampire narratives in the twenty-first century. Although the composition of who or what constitutes a family and how important a role blood plays in this setup may vary, the involvement of some kind of exchange of this bodily fluid is ever present. This exchange can be in the form of an accidental blood exchange, as in the case of Hayley Marshall's turning (*The Originals*) into a werewolf-vampire hybrid after she dies with her daughter's, hence the hybrid/father Klaus's, blood in her blood stream.

Looking back at the interminable tradition of the vampire throughout myths and folklore, this figure has always been connected to the consumption of blood. Considering the historically documented interpretation of "blood as a symbol of life . . . manifested in classical, biblical and medieval thought" (Stephanou 6), and the fact that "[b]lood is the transformative element in both Christian and vampire mythologies" (Sutton and Benshoff 203), it comes as no surprise that it is necessary to ingest this red liquid to (re)animate a corpse, as which a vampire ultimately qualifies. Falling in line with this vampire custom, the vampires in the television series *True Blood* and *The Originals* need blood to sustain themselves, although the post-2000 representatives of this figure have seemingly, for the most part, conquered the necessity to drink it straight from the source. While the undead in *The Vampire Diaries*, for instance, and, to a lesser extent in its spin-off *The Originals* (they simply chose not to), are able, but not always willing, to survive on bagged blood from

donor banks or hospitals, the law-abiding members of vampire society in the *True Blood* universe drink the Japanese-invented synthetic blood substitute Tru Blood or feast on consenting donors. Judging from newly-turned Jessica Hamby's exclamation that Tru Blood "tastes like shit!" (S01/E11, "To Love Is To Bury") and Marcel's provision of an "occasional all-you-can-eat buffet" to make his "nightwalkers" happy (*The Originals*, S01/E02, "House of the Rising Son"), these substitutes might indeed quench their thirst but do not satisfy a vampire's more primal and predatory psychological needs like freshly hunted blood does, which Eric Northman comments on, saying: "There's just not much thrill left in feeding on the willing" (*True Blood*, S02/E06, "Hard-hearted Hannah").

Although the twenty-first century vampire, as seen in the examples of the above mentioned television series, still requires blood or a befittingly red blood-related substitute (e.g. Tru Blood) to "survive," or remain undead if you will, it appears that these creatures' affiliation or rather obsession with blood has undergone an extensive shift. While most prior depictions tended to show vampires as mostly or even solely guided by their insatiable thirst for human blood, oftentimes even entirely consumed or crazed by their bloodlust, recent representations continue to adhere to the tradition of blood as a, or even *the*, most desired form of nourishment, but simultaneously appear to move its significance for vampires away from the notion of food and necessity towards this fluid's socio-political, community-building importance as well as its positive and negative implications for the contemporary vampires' socialization.

Since the screen adaptation of *Interview with the Vampire* (1994), terminologies such as "the sympathetic vampire" or the "domestication" of the vampire have become recurring notions of recent vampire representations. Piatti-Farnell states that "vampires have become organised as a socially and economically independent group" (125) and that this "re-location of the vampire subject within operational systems unveils the inevitable presence of culture as an important and deeply re-discovered part of the twenty-first century

condition” (125). The slow but continuous domestication, or rather social evolution of vampires, including their increasing sense of morality, I argue, is strongly related to their dietary adjustments as reminiscent of the evolution of human civilization. Starting out as gatherers, and eventually hunters and fishers, humans needed to feed themselves on whatever resources were available at the time and season. Discovering that killing animals was one of their accessible resources, most humans, to this day, maintain a diet which includes the consumption of animal parts and products although other more animal-friendly diets are slowly experiencing more and more popularity. Discussing cave paintings and early rituals, Melissa L. Meyer explains that blood has early on been “central to life and death” as seen on gatherer-hunter-fishers’ dependency to pay incisive attention to the connection of blood to their own survival or death (2) as well as that of their prey. While piercing an animal’s heart, for instance, would result in the animal’s immediate death (similar to a vampire and further contributing to its prior animalistic perception), piercing its bowels would result in a slow death and soiling of certain meat parts. Similar to how humans have evolved from a vegetarian to a carnivore diet, partially in contemporary times reverting back to more animal-friendly dietary options, it appears that the figure of the vampire has undergone a similar development. Shaking off the murderous reputation as slayers, twenty-first century vampires have learned to feed more considerately, without killing their prey, by subsisting on a human-friendly diet, which eventually has even culminated in what resembles a vegetarian or vegan diet by drinking animal blood, artificially-produced blood substitutes, or bagged donor-blood.

The subsiding significance of blood as nourishment has, I assert, resulted in this fluid’s enhanced socio-cultural significance, which can be perceived in the today common prerequisite of a blood exchange between a vampire and its victim for the human’s transformation into a vampire. The required transfer of this red bodily fluid appears to be a relatively recent development. Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, for instance, remains a narrative

where this procedure can be carried out, but one in which it is not evidenced that the act constitutes an integral or even absolutely necessary part of the transformation process, as can be seen by the fact that Dracula feeds Mina his own blood, but does not do so during his turning of Lucy. Arguably, since Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, it has not been sufficient for vampires to merely drink their victims' blood, thus, passing on vampirism like a disease or venom (e.g. *Twilight* still adheres to this tradition). As Martin J. Wood interprets this process in Rice's work, "vampiric reproduction" has since then been shown as rather a "conscious sharing of the spirit-charged blood" (61). For post-2000 vampires, versions of this blood exchange can take on different forms and include varying necessary amounts of blood to begin the transformation of a human into a vampire. While humans in *The Originals*, for example, and its predecessor *The Vampire Diaries*, run the risk of joining the club of the undead by dying – no matter how – with only one drop of vampire blood in their system, a transformation in *True Blood* is more savage, as vampires need to drain their victims to the point of death before eventually feeding them their own blood. Illustrating this notion of a physical as well as spiritual exchange, Bill Compton explains to his progeny Jessica after she awakes as a vampire, "You drank from me. Your blood was replaced with mine and then I shared my essence with you when we slept together in the ground" (S01/E10, "I Don't Wanna Know").

The symbolism of blood as representing and constituting the life force is, however, not a new phenomenon. As Aubrey Sherman explains, "There are endless accounts and legends of blood rituals and sacrifices throughout history from the early pagan beliefs of eastern Europe to the ancient Mayan civilization, to the centuries of warriors, tribes, practitioners of magic, serial killers, and scientists" (14). In these accounts, and to this very day, the consumption of human or animal blood as a means to enhance one's prowess and strength has remained common practice in parts of the world. Quoting Renfield's exclamation "The blood is the life!" (202) from Stoker's *Dracula*, Sherman reminds

readers that “[b]lood *is* what keeps us functioning, after all” (14, original emphasis). When human blood has the ability to reanimate a corpse, it is no stretch of the imagination that a vampire’s blood, by implication, would also have some impact on the human body. Alluding to the historic symbolism of blood and underlining the disparate properties of their blood, Bill answers Sookie’s question of what it is that animates him, by simply saying “magic” (S01/E03, “Mine”). When Sookie reprimands him for insulting her intelligence, he continues, “You think that it’s not magic that keeps you alive? Just ‘cause you understand the mechanics of how something works doesn’t make it any less of a miracle, which is just another word for magic. We’re all kept alive by magic, Sookie. My magic’s just a little different from yours, that’s all” (S01/E03, “Mine”). Similar to Bill’s indication of the magic qualities of vampire blood in *True Blood*, the blood of the undead in *The Originals* also has supernatural healing qualities. Only able to “heal the living” (S03/E03, “I’ll See You in Hell or New Orleans” 34:05), as Klaus states at one point, the blood of the original siblings or regular vampires cannot bring back a person from the dead unless the vampire blood has been consumed prior to the person’s passing, as the siblings coincidentally find out a year into their vampiric existence.

As the previous examples of different works of vampire fiction show, blood has a tradition of playing varying but always crucial roles in the vampires’ existence. The fact that its importance and meaning has undergone a slow but continuous shift from that of food to that of remedy and metaphysical link is indicative of and maybe time-delayed to the continuous and changing significance of this red fluid in the evolution of the human and human societies. *True Blood* and *The Originals* undeniably raise race-political issues in their discussion of kinship and the role blood plays in this discourse. Here, especially both series’ setting in Louisiana strikes a chord, as during times of and in the wake of slavery, the states of the American South relied on genealogy and blood as a distinctive marker to determine a person’s worth, societal standing and rights or lack thereof.

Continuing the train of thought that the evolution of vampires can be compared to that of the human race, other conclusions surrounding the congenial significance of blood for both humans and vampires can also be drawn. Similar to the importance of blood as nourishment for vampires to keep their bodies “alive,” and simultaneously, their minds clear without falling into a frenzy, blood has been assigned a crucial role in the creation of beliefs about the human soul and identity, as well as the creation of human kinship. As I explained in Chapter 2.2.1, the process of turning a human into a vampire can, to a large degree, be compared to the creation of a human baby. This analogy, I assert, is central to the henceforth apparent progress of the figure of the vampire towards becoming not only domesticated, but rather a, to a larger degree, more functioning and adjusted member of society.

The idea that creatures who survive by tapping into the human body can become or are becoming part of society, even if it is only in our imagination, is particularly intriguing, as Mary Douglas has argued for the interpretation of the body as “a symbol of society” (*Purity* 116) where “the powers and dangers credited to social structure [are] reproduced in small on the human body” (116). Emphasizing the connection between rituals and the human body, Douglas states that “public rituals enacted on the human body are taken to express personal and private concerns” (116). Along the same lines and referring to the research of cognitive psychologists, Melissa L. Meyer points out that bodily orifices have been “perceived as vulnerable, marginal zones that symbolize the boundaries between internal purity and external danger” (2) and that “[h]umans invested substances that transgressed these boundaries, such as blood, semen, saliva, tears, urine and feces, with powerful properties” (2). With that in mind, the vampires’ traditional need to consume blood, hence to pierce a human’s skin to either feed or create a new vampire, gives the aforementioned birth analogy even more significance. Vampires in the twenty-first century, therefore, not only pose an “external danger” because they violate a human’s body

by penetrating the skin with their fangs, thus transgressing the border of the body,⁶⁶ but even more so because they eventually infuse a human's "pure" blood with their own, thus infecting⁶⁷ their victims' "internal purity" with their vampiric condition.

As previously stated, the mixing or replacing of human blood with vampire blood can be interpreted as an allegory of the mixing of human genes in the creation of a baby. That in mind, the creation of a new vampire strongly resembles the creation of a new human, which leaves ample room to expect that there will be further similarities between these two species' communal or societal setups. As Aspasia Stephanou states, "The body is no longer the integral body Foucault was referring to in his concept of biopolitics, but a body that is opened, dismantled and recombined" (16). I argue that the birth of this new type of vampire creation through blood exchange heralded the advent of a new type of the undead. Real blood-related vampires (sometimes even pre-vampirism kinship), hence, new vampire "bodies," who – with the creation of bloodlines and true kinship relations – lead to the existence of "true" vampire families and bloodlines, are tantamount to human families and even societies. Interestingly, while traditional human nuclear families have experienced a dismantling, recombination or even displacement (also in the light of events such as natural catastrophes or terrorism), vampire families have been on the rise and have seen new forms and recombinations following events like 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina (2005).

The fact that vampires have recently been depicted as not only living in mere agglomerations or clans but rather showing the appearance of real human-like families,

⁶⁶ Anne Scott, for example, reminds readers that anything which alters or violates the human body (in her case cyborgs) usually meets with skepticism as "[t]he human body is, in our rationalistic culture, the boundary object *par excellence*" (372), or as Stelarc states, "metaphysically, in the past, we've considered the skin as surface, as interface. The skin has been a boundary for the soul, for the self, and simultaneously a beginning to the world" (Atzori and Woolford n.pag.).

⁶⁷ Commenting on the traditionally negative aesthetics of vampire bites, J. M. Tyree states, "[t]he way a victim gets 'unclean' from a vampire bite involves illicit intimacy, and these pictures run the gamut of marginalized sex acts contained in the political unconscious: premarital hook-ups, gay and bisexual relationships, adultery, cheating, polygamy, S&M, the sexuality of children, and the hovering specter of quasi-willing sexual violence" (31).

communities, and societies, can be traced back to the simultaneously increasing depiction of vampiric kinship ties and the increased frequency of the occurrence of, as well as interest in, vampire bloodlines. While Chapter 2.2.1 has detailed the ways in which the bond between makers and their progenies is shown to be more reliable and loyal than actual human kinship ties, Chapter 2.2.2 has carved out the necessity to recognize that consanguinity and the acceptance of a patriarchal rule are not guaranteed to form a sound foundation for nor are they the sole base of loyal relationships. In the following analysis, I will work out the varying properties of blood relations in *True Blood* and *The Originals* while simultaneously depicting the dangers of vampire kinship and sirelines, in contrast to its previously analyzed more positive implications.

2.3.1 “I Hereby Release You.” Blood Relations and Dominion in *True Blood*

For the blood is the life that link human to human and human to vampire in a common myth that extends from the darkest past to the unforeseeable future.
(Leonard Heldreth and Mary Pharr, “Introduction” 6)

As was discussed at length at an earlier point, the bond between maker and progeny in *True Blood* is not to be taken lightly. Forged by an exchange of blood between the vampire and his/her victim that result in the human’s “turning,” this relationship can adopt several different shapes, which might even be exerted simultaneously. In comparison to *The Originals*, where part of the narrative focus lies on the existence and almost-destruction of bloodlines, as will be discussed in more detail at a later point, *True Blood* largely ignores the origins of vampirism, and sets its eye on the real life, or rather real “undeath,” implications blood bonds have on all individuals involved. In line with Julia Kristeva’s understanding of milk, but equally applicable to blood, as a “flow that mingles two identities and connotes the bond between the one and the other” (105), *True Blood* sets its oftentimes romanticized versions of the maker-progeny bond in stark relief to the many

dysfunctional human families in the series, instead of exploring origins of vampire kinship relations and their ramifications for the safety of different sirelines. Characterized by an intense loyalty, especially on the part of the progeny, as can, for example, be seen in Pam's allegiance to Eric or Eric's devotion for Godric, it should not be overlooked that most turnings, as often presented to viewers through flashbacks, are or were carried out against the humans' will. Resting on a foundation of major physical and psychological violations of the human individual, hence, mirroring the American Gothic tradition to "exemplify the destructive power of families" (Wheatley 124), it is unsurprising that this bond is also prone to problematic or even disastrous outcomes.

Commenting on the intoxicating effect of vampire blood on humans, Lafayette states "this blood *is* life. One drop, that's all you need. Can't be greedy. Billions of molecules of pure undiluted twenty-four carat life" (stress added, S01/E04, "Escape from Dragon House"). In fact, ironically enough, vampire blood, so the blood of the undead, really does constitute and signify life in the series. Not only does it work as an aphrodisiac, a stimulant and healing elixir for humans (and vampires alike), thus having an animating effect on humans, just like human blood has on vampires, but it is also the only "remedy" which, if previously consumed, lets humans reawaken after their death, hence bringing them back to the world of the living. As to the saying, "all that glitters is not gold," one should also not be blinded by the healing qualities of vampiric blood, since this red liquid and the bond it creates between the maker and its progeny comes with serious and partially downright negative side-effects.

Arguably, the most obvious example of a maker-progeny bond gone awry in *True Blood* is the relationship between Bill Compton and his maker Lorena Krasiki. It is through historical flashbacks – a common tool of the series and reminiscent of its foundation in the Gothic genre – that viewers learn of the circumstances of Bill's turning. Arriving on the doorstep of the oh-so-lonely supposed war-widow Lorena, at the end of the Civil War in

1865, Bill, the former First Lieutenant in the 28th Louisiana Infantry, finds shelter and food in the lone woman's cabin on his way home to his family. Eventually, Bill's rejection of Lorena's sexual overtures lead to the vampire's fascination with Bill's honorability and loyalty towards his wife and result in Lorena's delusion that Bill would be the perfect eternal companion for herself. Instead of feeding on him and killing him like she did with so many before, Lorena obstructs the exit of her home and without warning violently attacks and bites him in the neck, revealing her true nature (S01/E05, "Sparks Fly Out"). When Bill later awakes in bed, Lorena straddling him, it is immediately apparent that the vampire does not only seek stimulating company in the sense of a good conversationalist but also expects their relationship to be physical, if not that of true lovers or spouses. Forcing him to drink her blood under the false pretense that this would be the only way to see his wife and children again, Lorena, eventually, upon Bill's surrender, sighs with satisfaction: "Take me in you! Feel me in you! We are together William, forever! You're mine!" Lorena's triumphant exclamation does not only verbally express her desire to join and bond their bodies in every possible way, but is also reminiscent of the exchange of blood as a sharing of her essence with Bill and her progeny's ensuing dependence on and unbreakable connection with her as his maker.

The fact that Lorena turns Bill against his will and without prior knowledge of the existence of vampires is already indicative of the subsequent complicated nature of their relationship as maker and progeny. Forced to leave Louisiana without saying goodbye to his family, Bill continuously resents Lorena for what she turned him into. The initial uncontrollable bloodlust as well as Bill's efforts to reconcile with his new existence lead him to commit unspeakable acts in the company of his maker, leaving numerous dead and mutilated bodies in their wake. However, when, after seventy years, he refuses to continue to leisurely kill humans, his maker reminds him, "You are a vampire. They are food. That's your nature" (S02/E07, "Release Me"), to which Bill replies, "No, it is YOUR

nature. You have lost your humanity, and you have stolen mine, made me into a monster” (“Release Me,” emphasis added⁶⁸). This memorable moment between Lorena (almost one hundred and eighty years-old at the time) and Bill (little over one hundred years old) marks a crucial juncture in their relationship. Emblematic of a figurative discussion between pre-twenty-first century vampire versions and the contemporary model, Bill announces his intent to break away from old traditions. Stating “I will never again be what you want me to be” (“Release Me”), this flashback to the year 1935 can be interpreted as the series hinting at the early beginnings of the vampire figure’s “domestication” or “socialization”; a turning point on the way towards ending the prior traditional and violent modus operandi of more vicious vampire versions such as Dracula or their still atrocious depictions in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, for instance.

Although their blood bond makes it impossible for Bill to refuse a direct order from Lorena, their ensuing exchange emphasizes that progenies continue to have a free will even though they cannot always act upon it, which Bill’s statement to Lorena’s reproach that he has never tried to love her exemplifies. Stridently exclaiming “I have spent decades tryin’! I despise myself for what I did for you. God help me, I killed innocent people to prove to you that I loved you. But it was pure nihilism. I do not, I cannot, I will never love you” (S02/E07, “Release Me”), Bill proves that a turning does not guarantee a loving or at least caring relationship between two vampires. Instead, as between human family members, makers and progenies need to earn each other’s trust, loyalty and love if they want to make their mutual commitment a successful or enjoyable one.

As I assert, the nature of the different relationships between maker and progeny are highly dependent on the circumstances of the new vampire’s creation. Similar to Bill’s consideration of Lorena as monstrous for making him a vampire, he also sees himself as a monster for turning the teenager Jessica. Turning her as sentenced by the Magister

⁶⁸ Emphasis added to illustrate linguistic stress in spoken dialogue.

(S01/E10, “I Don’t Wanna Know”),⁶⁹ Bill eventually needs to go to ground with Jessica to complete the process. As “The Magister of North America” does not trust Bill to complete the turning instead of staking the girl to save her from becoming a vampire, Pam is ordered to watch them to ensure that Bill would not “do something to keep the little blood bag from joining our ranks” (S01/E11, “To Love Is To Bury”), as she explains. While Bill, himself the victim of an involuntary turning, is unable to see the silver lining of their situation, Pam has a much more positive attitude, clarifying, “You’ve already set her free. The same as Eric freed me. . . . You’ve given that pathetic lump of temporary flesh . . . the ultimate gift” (“To Love Is To Bury”). Pam’s exclamation “You’re a maker. You’re a hero” (“To Love Is To Bury”) is yet further proof of her outstanding loyalty to Eric and the full acceptance of her vampiric existence. Unlike Bill and Jessica, Pam was made a vampire of her own free volition. As viewers are informed through a flashback to the year 1905 in season five, Pam asked Eric to turn her so she would not have to grow old and die alone. When Eric refused her wish, she attempted to commit suicide (S05/E03, “Whatever I Am, You Made Me”), which Eric was unable to watch.

Although Pam and Eric’s relationship as on-again, off-again lovers and eventually continuous business partners appears to have been a rather harmonious one, this relationship also holds negative aspects, as it will and can never be one of equal status. Unlike human children, who have the possibility to eventually outgrow their parents physically and surpass their abilities intellectually or to even completely detach themselves should they desire to do so, progenies in *True Blood* always remain inferior to their makers and are unable to ever completely sever the link between them. As vampires’ powers grow with age, makers will always have a physical advantage over their progeny, which, in

⁶⁹ While Sookie was helping Eric to find out who had embezzled money from him, she was attacked by the culprit Longshadow upon her discovery of his deception. Trying to save Sookie from certain death, Bill stakes Longshadow, which is considered a federal offence in vampire society and is punishable by 100 years in a coffin.

addition to the psychological hold makers have over their “offspring,” makes it impossible for progenies to outgrow their makers and to ever truly be free from them.

As it is Lorena’s blood that runs through Bill’s veins, it is, for instance, impossible for him to overpower Lorena when she holds him hostage in Dallas although he is desperately trying to rescue his love Sookie. Literally imprisoning Bill in his hotel room, Lorena reminds Bill, “I made you. Your blood knows mine. You will never physically overpower me” (S02/E06, “Hard-hearted Hannah”). Drawing from medieval Christianity, Stephanou explains that “[b]lood creates kinship and collective identity . . . and reinforces the role of an individual within a community” (9). In *True Blood*’s vampire society this “role” is defined in highly hierarchical terms. Echoing the common phrase many parents use to reign in their children “You’ll do as I say for as long as you live under my roof,” or some rendition of it, the above-mentioned moment between Lorena and Bill is reminiscent of children’s dependence on their parents’ benevolence and understanding while growing up. However, while human children are eventually able to emancipate themselves from their parents, as Hoyt Fortenberry in the series, for example, does from his mother (Season Two), progenies will never be able to achieve complete freedom from their maker unless either one of them meets the true death.

While makers’ physical superiority gains them the power to keep their progeny at their sides for as long as they wish, the psychological and emotional bond between these individuals can arguably be seen as more detrimental to the progeny. As the seventy-year-long relationship between Bill and Lorena has shown, the fact that Bill was not allowed to leave Lorena’s side was one negative aspect of their bond. However, Bill’s compulsion to participate in his maker’s atrocities appeared to have been a much worse fate. This multi-dimensional dependence of progenies on their makers, I assert, is a simulacrum of the pre-mid twentieth century western reality when women were highly dependent on their husband. Not able to work, thus, to earn their own money unless allowed to do so, women

were mostly restricted to the domestic realm and were defined by their abilities around the home and raising of children, mostly defining their own worth through their husband's social and professional standing.

Reminiscent of these times, the relationship between Russell Edgington, King of Mississippi, and his Royal Consort Talbot Angelis can be interpreted as a more obvious contemporary version of this domestic setup. In the eye of twenty-first century small town America as represented by the citizens of Bon Temps, Russell and Talbot's relationship as a homosexual, and not fully monogamous, vampire couple might appear rather progressive and subversive. However, the series manages to simultaneously reflect a more traditional domestic model in this pair, leaving it to the viewers to positively or negatively interpret its dichotomy. Russell enjoys great authority and respect as King of Mississippi, which Talbot, in contemporary vampire society, only gains through his status as Russell's partner and not because of his history as former Prince of Byzantium, Greece, in the late thirteen hundreds. Aside from being ridiculed by the staff for his fascination with interior design and decorating their home, Talbot will, for all eternity, stand in his maker's and partner's shadow. While he regularly appears to complain about the fact that he is not allowed to accompany the king, there is nothing he can do to change the fact that he will have to remain in their mansion unless Russell gives him permission to leave. Imprisoned in a golden cage, the royal consort will spend eternity knowing that he has no power over his own life, which, I argue, can be seen as the reason for his obsession with their home, the only sphere over which he has free reign.

In line with the fact that makers are able to control every aspect of their progenies' lives, they also hold the reins when it comes to a vampire's decision to end his or her existence. Ultimately having power over their scions' life and death, or in the case of vampires over the continuation of their undeath or the achievement of the true death, makers are able to prevent their progenies from committing suicide. After Tara, for

instance, reawakens as a vampire, she is unable to accept her new existence and strongly opposes her need for blood. When she passes the town's "Curl Up and Fry" tanning salon she decides to end her existence. However, as soon as the UV rays of the tanning bed hit her skin and she begins to scream and writhe in pain, her maker Pam feels her suffering from miles away. Locating her with the supernatural beacon makers have for their progenies, Pam finds and saves Tara, declaring, "As your maker, I command you. Do not try it again. Ever" (S05/E04, "We'll Meet Again"). Wielding the power their blood bond gives her, Pam ultimately condemns Tara to an infinite tortured existence unless she finds a way to come to terms with her new reality.

As the examples have shown, save for being "released" or a maker's death, progenies in *True Blood* suffer the eternal fate of being linked to their makers. While the process of releasing one's progeny can be a desired act of benevolence as in the case of Lorena and Bill, the loss of a maker can also be cause for great distress for a loyal progeny, even almost to the extent of experiencing physical pain. As mentioned at an earlier point, Eric is intensely devoted to Godric, just as his own "child" is to him. When Eric and Pam are both set free by their respective makers, although under different circumstances, they react in similar ways. While both are distraught and almost desperate to retain their ties, the over one thousand year-old Eric would even go so far as to die alongside Godric (S02/E09, "I Will Rise Up") to not suffer this loss. Similarly, Pam cries at the verge of a mental breakdown when Eric, thinking he will die, releases her. While she does not want to be without him, his parting words help her to go on. When he declares, "Pamela, I renounce the ties of our blood and my dominion over you as my progeny. As your maker... I release you. You are my child. As I was a child of Godric. You were born into greatness. And you're a maker now. Our blood will thrive" (S05/E04, "We'll Meet Again"), Eric does not only reiterate his love for Pam. Instead, Eric also emphasizes the importance of carrying on their bloodline, as blood for the vampires in *True Blood* can be seen as commonly

attributed to “the ability to transmit or reflect the essence of the family, clan, lineage, people, nation, race or ethnic group” (M.L. Meyer 8), just as it is for humans. Although it appears that releasing one’s progeny can be understood as setting them free, it still needs to be acknowledged that even this act of renouncing the dominion over their progeny is a one-sided action which only a maker can perform. This once more demonstrates the unequal power relations between members of a bloodline as well as between members in traditional conservative family setups.

As has been shown on several examples, *True Blood*’s take on vampiric blood relations focuses on their implications on the involved individuals’ existence. While Chapter 2.2 mapped out the ways in which vampire families appear to be more progressive and successful than human family ties in the series, the discussion of the negative aspects of the maker-progeny bond has demonstrated that these family-like constructs are also far from perfect. Reciting Caroline Walker Bynum’s analysis of the “paradoxical meaning of blood in medieval theological discourse” (Bynum 214, qtd. in Stephanou 9), Aspasia Stephanou states, “[b]lood is both *sanguis*/inside blood and *cruor*/bloodshed” (9, original emphasis), and that it is blood “which is both life and death, expresses that which continues and separates” (9). *True Blood* largely, although not entirely, removes the significance of human blood as form of nourishment. Instead, the series carves out the significance of vampiric blood to create bonds which continue individuals’ existence (as vampires) and simultaneously separate them not only from their former life, but also from a free existence, by inserting them into the hierarchies of vampire society from which they can never escape. Piatti-Farnell states that vampire fiction has for the longest time employed vampires’ “[b]lood hunger [as] one of the clearest vampire signifiers in that it denotes what is different from the human, what exceeds it and – one might venture to say – improves it” (25). However, I argue that the series, contrary to Piatti-Farnell’s assertion, aims its attention at the socio-political importance of blood, uncovering characteristics

which show the vampires' superiority but also inferiority to humans. While vampires may very well be predators, endangering human life, they simultaneously underlie social constraints due to their blood bonds, which humans are able to escape and overcome by simply renouncing any acknowledgment of family ties.

Diverting the importance of blood from its nourishment aspects to a meaning equal to genetic kinship ties, *True Blood*, I argue, contributes to the vampire figure's continuous domestication and humanization. Explaining that "[t]he vampire's need for blood is the potent signifier of not only its diversity but also – and perhaps especially – of its manifest superiority" (26), Piatti-Farnell argues that by drinking human blood, "[t]he vampire reaches into the most remote depths of the human body to dispossess it of its life force" (27). While I agree with Piatti-Farnell that blood "proves an apt medium for the discussion of human anxieties regarding the dichotomy of life and death" (27), I assert that *True Blood* uses blood to stress even more so that also these seemingly superior creatures fall victim to and underlie existential restrictions due to the socio-cultural importance of blood in their culture. In this respect, for a vampire, blood ties signal the one component in their existence they can never escape, their one true eternal weakness, which might in some cases be a worse fate than their vulnerability to the sun.

While vampires might be on top of the food chain, the notion of consanguinity in vampire society is still strongly related to the concept of dominion or even possession. In the light of the cultural and political events of the twenty-first century, and the 9/11 terror attacks in America in particular, I argue that the impact of blood on the vampire's existence can be read as the nation's fear of what they do not know, do not understand or are not able to see. While the vampire has a long history of standing in for the othering of social groups and nations, the relevance of blood ties in *True Blood* mirrors restrictions put on individuals of certain ethnic groups or national identities from which individuals simply cannot easily escape, if at all. Along the same lines, although referring to images of the

“broken and brutalised body, and the freak-show attraction” (4) Ní Fhlann speaks of “the Imprisonment of the Body” (4), which is turned into a spectacle, and whose sight helps to “separate ‘them’ from ‘us’” (4). Ní Fhlann continues her interpretation explaining, “It also brings about the concept of being ‘trapped’ within one’s own monstrous skin, an inescapable host of signifiers and signification, the border perceived as marking the horrors contained within the monstrous body” (4). When thinking about restrictions put on individuals in the United States, the history of the American South involuntarily comes to mind. Although this is a nationwide problem, the South as a region looks back at a legacy of racism based on skin color and heritage, and continues to have a reputation for race-related hate-crimes and racial injustice where especially the region’s citizens of color and communities face discrimination in many areas of their lives. It seems as if outward appearances (e.g. skin color, a certain style of dress, hairdo or facial hair) are used most prevalently to draw distinctions between people. Yet, the concentration on physical aspects often leads to the ignorance of factors which exist inside individuals, societies and whole nations, which are hard or impossible to shake off, such as one’s heritage or religious/ideological upbringing. Robin Wood discusses the “concept of ‘the Other’” (*Hollywood* 65) to understand ideology of “surplus-repressive civilization in which we live” (65). Wood claims that “[o]therness represents that which bourgeois ideology cannot recognize or accept but must deal with (as Barthes suggests in *Mythologies*) in one of two ways: either by rejecting and if possible annihilating it, or by rendering it safe and assimilating it, converting it as far as possible into a replica of itself” (65-66). Applying Wood’s contention to the figure of the vampire, it supports my argument that post-2000 vampires have successively been tailored to embody discourses that characterize humanity, here U.S. American society in particular, instead of antagonizing it. Applying Wood’s understanding of “the Other” to the ascent of race-related hate crimes in the aftermath of 9/11, it can be interpreted as further evidence that blood is still used as a metaphor for

cultural origins. The fact that *True Blood* and *The Originals* are both set in Louisiana, one of the states making up the Deep South of America, certainly stresses their allusion and innuendo about racial injustice in contemporary U.S. society.⁷⁰ The depiction of blood as binding, almost inescapable and powerful in terms of its assigned role in the creation of hierarchical societal setups, leads to the realization that human beings continue to be considered as threatening based solely on their heritage. This is a fact that people of color and since 9/11 Muslims continue to experience on a regular basis in America (and many countries beyond).

2.3.2 Blood Wars: Sirelines, Belonging and Corruption in *The Originals*

*Blood releases the vampire not just from human nourishment
but also from human limitations.*
(Mary Pharr, “Vampiric Appetite” 94)

The shift from the significance of blood as a form of nourishment for vampires to its more prevalent socio-political significance in twenty-first century vampire fiction cannot be denied as has been revealed on the examples of *True Blood*. While the narrative of the HBO series appears to forge an aesthetic of vampire blood ties as more reliable and loyal constructs than human families – although concurrently emotionally and physically constraining – *The Originals* sets out to do almost the exact opposite. Still stressing the importance of loyal friends as well as gender equality, the series’ third season reveals sirelines and bloodlines to be threatening rather than beneficial. While prior to this third

⁷⁰ In “Political Philosophy and Racial Injustice: From Normative to Critical Theory” Thomas McCarthy explains, “If one asked, in Rawlsian terms, which morally arbitrary facts about individuals and groups have had the greatest consequences for their legal and political standing in the modern world, gender and ascribed race would certainly be near the top of the list, along with class, though their comparative significance would vary from context to context” (149). He continues his explanation, stating that “despite the successes of the American Civil Rights Movement here and decolonization struggles abroad, there is widespread agreement in this alternative tradition that the legacy of institutionalized racism is still with us, that is, that local and global relations of wealth and power are still structured along racialized lines. In fact, the persistence of ‘race’ as a significant ordering principle of social life, even *after* its political dismantling and theoretical deconstruction, is seen there to be one of the major problems of the age – ‘the problem of the color-line’ [W.E.B. Du Bois 1903:45]” (151).

season, the series has, as I argue, advocated the acknowledgment of alternative lifestyles and chosen familial setups as well as the importance of gender equality within this setup, an impending danger to the Originals' existence demonstrates how good intentions and progressive behavior and actions can be abandoned when one faces existential fears.

The title of the television series *The Originals* already hints at and invites the discussion of all that the term "original" can and does encompass. Even before immersing oneself into the series' complicated universe, questions arise, such as: Who are the originals and what makes them original? How do the originals differ from regular vampires and how does their being "the original vampires" impact their existence and the existence of the vampire race at large? As has previously been discussed, blood has a long history of playing a crucial role in human evolution, not only in terms of its importance for survival, as with the discovery of extensive blood loss as possible cause of death, but also in the construction of human societies and social hierarchies, e.g. continuously existing royal bloodlines in the twenty-first century (see Spain, the Netherlands, Great Britain, etc.). That in mind, it should come as no surprise that vampire societies would also be constructed with blood as their "social glue" (M.L. Meyer 8). Contemplating human customs, Melissa L. Meyer explains that "[i]n German folk speech, blood metaphors cemented social agreements" (8), and that "figurative blood was a sticky adhesive that sealed social contracts, figured in love magic, and secured pacts with demons" (8). As these examples show, this red liquid has traditionally been employed in formal as well as ritualistic acts to signal different forms of serious or official bindings between two or more individuals. Aside from its mythical and supposedly magical qualities, blood has also had a long history as a marker of race. Designating people's membership to a certain racial group, blood had played a crucial role in the American South, for instance, where it assigned race-membership during the South's times of slave-trade, Jim Crow Laws and the distinction of 'separate but equal.' Ultimately, blood has functioned as a "social glue," to use Melissa L.

Meyer's term again, which decided over domination and subjugation, and for which a dissolvent has not yet been found.

Similar to a binding contract or the indissoluble assignment to a certain group, the creation of a new vampire is understood as an "eternal commitment" in *True Blood*. While, in this HBO series, makers and progenies enter a profound relationship with one another (be it, for instance, parental, sexual and/or business-related), vampires in *The Originals* rarely turn a human with a certain purpose in mind and if there is one, it rarely is a positive one. Creating new vampires for either pure entertainment or out of vengeance or spite, the sires and their descendants usually lack any kind of far-reaching relationship and both parties quickly go their separate ways, if the sire does not simply leave its progeny to fend for him – or herself to begin with. The lack of emotional bonds between sires and vampires of their bloodlines in the series becomes apparent when one takes a closer look at the terminology used to describe both groups. While the vampires in *True Blood* frequently speak of makers and progenies or even "children," in *The Originals* only the begetters are referred to as sires while their scions are very rarely given any title at all, highly infrequently mentioned as their "progeny" (S03/E01, "For The Next Millennium").⁷¹ Mostly referred to as "members" of a certain sireline, vampires descending from one of the original siblings are so numerous that it would virtually be impossible for an original to form a bond with each and every one of them.

The Originals chronicles the lives of the original vampires, going back as far as to their human births and existence more than one thousand years ago and covering events such as their move to the American continent up until the present times. Thomas McCarthy states, "the conquest and settlement of the Americas, the subjugation and extermination of indigenous peoples, and the massive expansion of the Atlantic slave trade in the early

⁷¹ Lucien informs Klaus that his "progeny have grown somewhat restless" since the eradication of Kol's, Finn's and Mikael's sirelines.

modern period were integrally bound up with the social construction of racial differences and racial hierarchies” (150). As stated at an earlier point in this chapter, the witch Esther Mikaelson turned her children and husband into the first vampires in order to keep them safe. As this magical upgrade entailed the need of blood to survive as a side effect, the siblings’ existence was linked to this red liquid early on. Here, the fact that the Mikaelsons were Norwegian settlers who were turned into vampires to become more powerful than the “native” werewolves of the neighboring village strongly echoes the series’ discourse of race politics and racial domination. These are discourses which become even more prominent when considering the series’ setting in New Orleans, a city famous for the significant role it played in the slave trade, for example.

For Klaus Mikaelson, blood comes to play an even more crucial role when, during one of his first blood crazes, he kills his first victim and discovers his werewolf heritage. Finding out that he is not a pure-bred Mikaelson but only half-brother to his siblings, blood and kinship become somewhat complicated notions for the hybrid, if not even an obsession. While Klaus’s appearances in *The Vampire Diaries* were mostly tied to his wish to create an invincible army of hybrids, hence individuals that are both vampire and werewolf, just like himself, this wish derived from his almost pathological worry that his siblings would not truly love him as a real member of the family and would only remain with him because of the fear he instilled in them through horrible acts of physical and emotional violence. The fact that Klaus’s insecurities and paranoia ultimately stem from his discovery of his mixed heritage resonates with his desire to create more individuals who are like himself. As I have explained at an earlier point, Mikael Mikaelson, the man who raised Klaus in the belief to be his birthfather, eventually refers to him as “an abomination” (S01/E15, “Le Grand Guignol”), strongly reminiscent of the discrimination people of mixed heritages experienced in America and the South in particular during times of slavery.

Coming back to the creation of the original vampires, the series' third season reveals that the siblings were unaware of the magical qualities of their blood and their supernatural abilities for the first year of their vampiric existence, and it was only through an accident that they found out that they had the ability to create more of their kind. After one year of running from their father Mikael, the siblings find themselves in Southern France in 1002 AD. Gaining entrance into the upper French society with the help of the servant Lucien Castle, they, upon their arrival, impersonate Lucien's charges whom they previously killed. When, a while into their stay at the court of Marseille, Lucien eventually discovers that his love interest Aurora de Martel and Klaus are maintaining a secret romance, Klaus manages to flee before the guards and Aurora's brother Tristan de Martel arrive. Confused by his discovery and emotionally hurt by Klaus's breach of trust as well as the apparent loss of the love of his life, Lucien is taken in Klaus's stead and is brutally punished by Tristan, who assumes him to be his sister's clandestine suitor. Under the threat of Tristan's life, Klaus ends Lucien's torture and eventually tries to comfort the servant who cowers on the floor. After Lucien, however, in revenge for his betrayal and suffering, stabs Klaus with a knife he picks up from the ground, Lucien accidentally cuts himself on the bloodied blade, and the two men watch in astonishment as Lucien's wounds magically heal and fully disappear. Thinking he would now be one of the Mikaelson siblings' kind, he attempts to attack Tristan and is eventually killed by a guard, defending the royal member. Sad and confused by the fact that his blood could not heal Lucien again when he finds him dead, Klaus, with the help of Elijah, readies Lucien's body for a funeral in the forest contemplating that their blood "may only heal the living" (S03/E03, "I'll See You In Hell Or New Orleans"). Reawakening from the dead, Lucien's surprising resurrection, however, imparts to the siblings the knowledge of how to turn a human into a vampire and marks the creation of the first of Klaus's bloodline, hence the beginning of the second generation of vampires.

As Melissa L. Meyer explains, most indigenous peoples' as well as "[t]oday's major world religions" share the notion "that the spirit of the animal or person resided in its blood" (5). Reminiscent of this belief and the emanating assumption that "[i]f blood held the life force, drinking it, applying it to the body, or commingling it with one's own blood might convey the special qualities of that being" (6), *The Originals* reflects these beliefs by drawing parallels between the process of turning a human into a vampire and ancient blood rituals. Correlating with other twenty-first century depictions of vampire creation, the process in *The Originals* differs from that in *True Blood* and many other TV series representations in terms of the quantity of blood needed to complete the process. While in *True Blood*, for instance, the turning is initiated with an extensive blood exchange between the vampire and the human, vampires in *Being Human* (2011-14) need to infuse at least a sip of their blood into the humans' bodies after biting them. Taking the needed amount of blood to a minimum, it is merely necessary for humans in *The Originals* as well as in its precursor *The Vampire Diaries* to die with one drop of vampire blood in their systems in order to become one of the undead. Along with the history of the vampire as stand-in for race issues, this blood-related detail reminds of the era of Jim Crow segregation laws in the American South. Just like at the time of Jim Crow, the ruling class applied the so-called "one-drop rule"⁷² to determine whether or not a person was considered black and thus inferior to the white population, bloodlines in *The Originals* are shown to be rivals, trying to incapacitate or even eradicate one another to secure personal survival. The series creates a connection between the figure of the vampire and discussion of race, which will not be considered in detail, but whose implications will be infused throughout the analyses in this dissertation. The detail that only one drop of vampire blood is enough to enable the process

⁷² According F. James Davis, the "one-drop rule" meant that "a single drop of 'black blood' makes a person a black. It is also known as the 'one black ancestor rule,' some courts have called it the 'traceable amount rule,' and anthropologists call it the 'hypo-descent rule,' meaning that racially mixed persons are assigned the status of the subordinate group" (5). This theory was employed in the American South into the 1950s and 1960s as a measure to prevent interracial marriages.

of becoming a vampire is mostly known from turnings in *The Vampire Diaries*. The fact that it suffices for Lucien to cut himself on a bloodied blade already hints at a detached or even rather separating quality of sire-progeny relationships, in comparison to other more “physically intimate” ways of creating vampires. The previously described necessary complete blood exchange between vampire and human in *True Blood*, for example, is cause for careful consideration before a turning and results in a strong bond between maker and progeny. The fact that the accidental and minimal intake of vampire blood can lead to the creation of a vampire in *The Originals* already indicates the resulting lack of emotional attachment between sire and progeny.

As previously explained, Klaus begat his sireline accidentally, just as Rebekah did when she tried to use the healing qualities of her blood to save Aurora de Martel. Ultimately, seeing this as an opportunity, Elijah turned Aurora’s brother Tristan and used mind compulsion to make the trio (the first generation of descendants of the original siblings) think they were the three Mikaelson siblings. Using Lucian, Aurora and Tristan as decoy for Mikael, Elijah hence managed to free himself and his siblings from their father’s persecution for a little over one hundred years.

As the accidental creation of sirelines has shown, bloodlines in *The Originals* were from early on built upon a foundation of betrayal, disloyalty and abandonment, which is indicative of the originals’ henceforth treatment of most of their sired vampires. As stated at an earlier point, blood has historically had a formally binding function and meaning. While all vampires of the Mikaelson sirelines are therefore blood-related to their sires, this connection, however, does not grant them any formal advantages in vampire society in the series. Of course, the older vampires, thus the vampires of younger sireline generations, demonstrate more powerful vampire abilities and extensive strength, but ultimately they all go back to the same origins. Mimicking human evolutionary history, which arguably began on the African continent, the vampires in *The Originals* are, hence, all of North American

origins – with Norwegian ancestry⁷³ – without any sireline having an inherited predisposition or supremacy over the other. This fact strongly underlines the racial undertones of the series in that *The Originals* almost ridicules, but most certainly criticizes, the use of blood or race in general to determine dominance and superiority of one group of individuals over another. Yet, this continues to be a common practice in the twenty-first century as can be seen on examples of institutional racism and racial profiling. Commenting on the “rise of ‘racial formations’ at both national and global levels” (150), Thomas McCarthy explains,

[s]ystems of racial categorization centered around visible body types had not only expressive but constitutive significance in modern society and politics. They not only justified preexisting practices of racial domination, they entered into and informed them. Stereotypical images of racial capacity and incapacity not only reflected institutional reality, they were essential to its very intelligibility and normativity (150-51).

He continues “that political discourses, practices, and institutions have been suffused with racism throughout the modern period and racial politics persist into the present as the legacy of centuries of oppression” (151). *The Originals* as a product of the twenty-first century offers a supernatural version of the discourse of racism and the formation of racial hierarchies, which are characterized by the series setting in the American South and the fact that the Mikaelson siblings’ life story runs parallel to the evolution of the American people until the present times.

Just, like there exist human “monsters” in the real world who believe themselves to be superior to others, the series also depicts vampires who want to step out of the shadow of their sire and stand out from the crowd. In analyzing a quote of *The Night Eternal*, Aspasia Stephanou states, “blood is a metaphor for vampirism, carrying within it both monstrosity and traces of its opposite humanity” (1). The original siblings – for over one

⁷³ The Mikaelson family originated in the Kingdom of Norway in the mid- to late tenth century and traveled to the New World in the very late tenth century.

thousand years – have adhered to the vow they swore to each other, “Family forever. Family above all” (S01/E01, “Always and Forever”). While their commitment to each other signaled their remaining humanity and their clinging to the last remaining part of their human life – namely their kinship – they, for the longest time, did not extend this devotion and loyalty to other individuals, showing their monstrosity not only in atrocious acts, but also in their abandonment and disregard of those whose lives they upended by turning them into vampires.

With the brothers Kol’s and Finn’s deaths, it was discovered that the elimination of an original vampire results in the eradication of the respective vampire’s whole bloodline. While this surprising discovery was of no real concern to the remaining siblings, due to the, at the time, recent destruction of the last remaining white oak stake (the only material able to destroy an original) in Season Two, Season Three begins with the siblings’ notification by their first sire that the bloodlines have been at war since the Kol’s and Finn’s sirelines had been wiped out. The first progeny to bring up this threat is Klaus’s first sire, Lucien, explaining:

The life of every vampire is linked back to the Original who begat the line. The world is a finite place, territory limited. And even ancient vampires are not above vicious turf-wars. What if I told you there’s a growing conflict between the remaining three sirelines? Think about it! Kill an Original, wipe out an entire line of competition! A tempting goal, made more so by the fact that your family is divided and thus weaker than you have ever been! (S03/E01, “For the Next Millennium”)

In his attempt to make Klaus recognize the dangerous situation in which all vampires find themselves, Lucien also verbalizes that, although both blood-related, there is a large distinction between the relationship of the original siblings and their relation with the members of their respective sirelines, who are not considered to be more than acquaintances at best. While Klaus, Elijah and Rebekah have spent the better part of a millennium alongside each other, Lucien’s revelation that the different sirelines have been

fighting over territories brings to mind the history of early European colonization on the North American continent, further stressing the third season's underlying race politics. Interpreting the Mikaelsons' guest appearances in *The Vampire Diaries* as assuming a "proto-American identity" (293) and displacing "actual Native American peoples to occupy the position of surrogate Indian" (293), Rebecca Lush argues that the siblings "finally erase what Native Studies scholars term the tribal real by reproducing fakelore that helps legitimize their American roots" (293). Lush explains, "[t]he vampiric Mikaelson family sees itself as the 'first' significant inhabitants of Virginia despite their European ethnicity due to their vampiric birth on American soil" (296). She continues that "[i]f we consider the family as metaphor for the nation, then gothic television series raise fears and concerns about the country's past in a coded way that allows for wary reconciliation due to the focus on intimate relationships and familial conflict" (295). While I agree with Lush's interpretation of the Mikaelsons' guest appearances, I argue that the spin-off series *The Originals* does not so much focus on the treatment and rewriting of the nation's past, although their narrative structure does in fact resemble homemaking myths of immigrants' to the United States. These myths aimed "at overcoming the traditional dichotomy of Other and Self and gave the two a chance to interact outside this confrontational structure" (Stasiewicz-Bieńkowska 85). Although these parallels cannot be denied, the series even more so, I argue, addresses American race concerns of the present and future, using bloodlines as metaphors for contemporary dangers such as terrorism and continuous discrimination even within the American nation, as well as the necessity to stand united to successfully fight such evils. After all, the fact that all sirelines descend from one original family does not deter the individual groups to search for indicators that distinguish them from all others and hence justify their superiority. As this is a mindset which does stray too much from that of members of certain groupings within contemporary human societies, it

is almost impossible to miss the series' critique of prevailing practices of racial domination and there therein resulting discrimination as visible in social hierarchies.

At the beginning of Season Three, Lucien introduces Klaus and Elijah to a witch (also referred to as seer) who is able to foretell the siblings' future. In her prophecy, she predicts the siblings' death, which Freya is later able to further detail to Elijah and Klaus, saying, "It's true. You have a terrible shadow over you. Rebekah, too. If this prophecy is fulfilled, you will *all* fall. One by friend, one by foe and one by family" (S03/E02, "You Hung The Moon" 38:15). While the Mikaelsons have always stood by one another, this prophecy momentarily makes them question their loyalty to one another as it states that one family member will turn against another. As it turns out, their first sired vampires, Lucien, Tristan and Aurora, counted on this mutual distrust to weaken the siblings' position. After all, it is easier to take down one's enemies separately. In an attempt to turn Elijah and Klaus against each other, Lucien and Tristan both feed their sires lies about the respective other's intention to eradicate a complete sireline by getting one Original to kill the other (S03/E03, "I'll See You in Hell or New Orleans").

However, as the saying goes, "blood is thicker than water," Lucien and Tristan underestimate Elijah and Klaus's loyalty to one another and although there are moments when their plan seems to succeed. However, the siblings ultimately stand united against this common threat, true to the iconic American motto "United we stand, divided we fall," which regained popularity during World War II and has become a famous post-9/11 exclamation. Talking to his older sister, Elijah explains, "Freya, something you must understand about this family, under threat, we take action, for better or worse. Whatever it takes to protect our own" (S03/E06, "Beautiful Mistake"). When Freya then asks, "So, you're telling me their days are numbered?" ("Beautiful Mistake"), Elijah matter-of-factly replies, "If indeed they're working against us, yes. Without question" ("Beautiful Mistake"), making it abundantly clear that no one who threatens their family will survive

such a betrayal. Repositioning the series vampires with the cultural moment of its audience, America's post-9/11 nation and generation, Elijah's declaration of war is reminiscent of George W. Bush Jr.'s speech of 14 September 2001 when he announced: "War has been waged against us by stealth and deceit and murder. This Nation is peaceful, but fierce when stirred to anger. This conflict was begun on the timing and terms of others. It will end in a way and at an hour of our choosing" ("Remarks at the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance Service").

Eventually stating, "Our unity is a kinship of grief and a steadfast resolve to prevail against our enemies" ("Remarks at the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance Service"), George W. Bush Jr. in his speech created a familial relationship between all American citizens, who ultimately had been targeted with the attacks on their fellow Americans. Similar to the former president's symbolic and unifying speech, Elijah's words to Freya echo his certainty that he and his siblings will be able to prevail against and overcome this imminent threat to their family's unity and ultimately their existence since when attacked, they rely on the only bond that really counts for them, and that is kinship.

It has been argued that, in twenty-first century families, "postmodern values . . . weaken the will to commit oneself to lifelong commitments because citizens increasingly prioritize individualism, autonomy and self-realizations" (Esping-Anderson 13). As the above-mentioned exchanges, show, however, the Mikaelson siblings, as representatives of the American people at large and despite any individualistic tendencies and controversies prove an unwavering commitment to stand united against any external threats.

While Season Three of the series continues the series' overall discussion of the notion of family, the first five episodes of this season take on a more race-concerned note, reminding viewers of nationalist discussions. With the impending "war between the sirelines" (S03/E03, "I'll See You in Hell or New Orleans"), nationalist stances are being expressed as members of one sireline try to convey their superiority over the others.

Although Klaus's sireline is extensive, due to his habit of turning humans out of pure enjoyment or to blow off steam, so to speak, his brother's sireline is much more skilled than his. As Elijah explains to Hayley, he "wanted to assemble minds curious about the world and eager to improve it, along with the time and circumstance to do so" (S03/E04, "A Walk on the Wild Side"). He continues, "my desire was to create an elite brotherhood devoted to a new, better civilization. It was naive. Eventually, I was forced to abandon them once I realized I'd cultivated a legion of ego-maniacal *sociopaths*" (S03/E04, "A Walk on the Wild Side"). Once more, the parallels to the attacks of 11 September 2001 stand out as the phrasing of Elijah's description of his sireline clearly reflects the blind devotion and utter dedication to their cause of those terrorists who planned and carried out the attacks without any consideration of or interest in the lives of those they killed in the name of terrorism.

As Melissa L. Meyer determines, "Instead of serving merely as a potent metaphor, the vicious blood flowing through human bodies was believed to convey essential attributes" (208). While Elijah originally set out to create a "fellowship unburdened by the limitations of man" (S03/E12, "Dead Angels") in "pursuit of a glorious new world" ("Dead Angels") Aya defines the attributes of the Strix as "we're the top of the food chain, the smartest, the strongest" (S03/E04, "A Walk on the Wild Side"), clearly stressing their supremacy over the other sirelines and other supernatural races. Such statements of and exchanges between characters of the series, in addition to their analogies to the events of 9/11, bring to mind the race-politics in the Third Reich in Europe when it was the goal to create a superior race to all others, created out of one person's mad ideology and influence. In a similar vein to the Nazis, the Strix also believe to be a master race, superior to all others and blinded by their devotion to the cause.

As quickly becomes clear after the first quarter of the third season, the siblings' first sired had in no way arrived in New Orleans with the intent to warn their sires and fight

alongside them. Instead, they had aligned with one another with the aim to create a magic trap for the Mikaelsons, sealing them away forever, aiming at simultaneously protecting all sirelines by removing the most powerful vampires from society so that others will eventually get the opportunity to rule.

In respect to the Mikaelsons' occupation of surrogate Indians in *The Vampire Diaries*, Lush writes that the series "utilizes [American Gothic] narrative methods by showing how familial trauma is inextricably tied to national guilt" (299). Relaying her interpretation to *The Originals*, I argue that Elijah's guilt over creating the Strix, but even more so compelling and abusing Tristan, Aurora and Lucien as bait for his father, can be read as a warning to divide up communities, societies and nations. With the series' setting in New Orleans, Louisiana and the South's history of race segregation as well as to this day nation-wide continuing discriminating attitudes (e.g. racial profiling, affirmative action, institutionalized racism, etc.), the series illuminates the weakening effects such division has on a nation in the face of foreign threats and invasion.

When comparing the Strix's arrival in New Orleans with the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the Mikaelson siblings, just like the American people, manage to withstand any attempts at manipulation and continue to stand by each other against this common threat. After a member of Elijah's Strix tried to kill Hayley and Marcel, Hayley addresses Elijah saying, "There was a time when all I wanted was to find my family. It *consumed* me. And then, once I did, as crazy as it is, all I wanted was a home. And New Orleans *is* that home. And the Strix are trying to take that, aren't they?" (S03/E06, "Beautiful Mistake"). When Elijah replies, "We won't let them" ("Beautiful Mistake"), he, sure of his family's dedication to one another, leaves no room to question that they will succeed in this endeavor, just like the American President's statement left no room for doubt when he exclaimed, "But our responsibility to history is already clear: To answer these attacks and rid the world of evil" ("Remarks at the National Day of Prayer and

Remembrance Service”). In an attempt to reunite the siblings after their sister’s kidnapping, Freya uses Elijah’s blood to find Rebekah, stating “Mikaelson blood tracks Mikaelson blood” (S03/E06, “Beautiful Mistake”), once more verbalizing the family’s special blood link in comparison to their rather disjointed relationships with their sirelines. I argue that in the series’ third season, the city of New Orleans is used as a stand-in for the whole of the United States as a country, with the siblings being representatives of the people’s different cultural and ideological backgrounds who, when under threat, always stand with each other.

In Season Three, the Mikaelson family, as I assert, represents the American people at large, who, in the face of terrorist attacks on American soil, had to stand together in order to overcome this threat of religious zealotry. Planning to turn Lucien, Tristan and Aurora against each other, just like they were trying to do to the Mikaelsons, the siblings invite the trio to their home. When Elijah addresses everyone at the dinner table he addresses the group with the words “We need to unite to prevent the prophecy from coming to pass” (S03/E07, “Out of the Easy”). Although he linguistically includes all people present, even Tristan, Aurora and Lucien, it is clear to the viewers from a prior exchange between Elijah and Klaus that all the brothers set out to do is save their family, even if this requires that they “expose and destroy our first sired” (S03/E06, “Beautiful Mistake”), as Elijah suggests to Klaus, who “couldn’t agree more” (“Beautiful Mistake”).

The series’ first two seasons stressed the importance of a safety network, and, among other things, the necessity to accept alternative modes of family instead of insisting on traditional patriarchal structures. While it seemed like the Mikaelson siblings had learned that a nontraditional family setup (e.g. Hayley became a full-fledged member although she married Jackson and became Queen of the Crescent werewolf pack) as well as extension of the family (e.g. Marcel) offer a greater protection against impending threats to their rule of New Orleans and their family’s safety, the danger to the siblings’ actual existence in

Season Three shows how some hard won realizations can quickly be thrown overboard by the sheer fear of death.

As previously stated, the bond between sires and the members of their sirelines are weak, one could say watered down, comparable of the miniscule amount of blood exchange needed to initiate the turning process. The only reason for progenies to be loyal to and protective of their sire is self-defense and self-preservation, as turning on their sire and killing him or her would result in one's own death as well as the death of all members of the respective sireline. With that knowledge, neither one of the siblings ever really feared the wrath of their descendants until the Strix, with the help of the witch Davina, searched for and found a way to break this bond. When Marcel presents the Strix with the last missing ingredient to complete the Unlinking Spell⁷⁴ (the heart of an unsired vampire), he reprimands Aya to never stand in his way again. Replying that "commitment to a common goal is as strong a bond as family" (S03/E13, "Heart Shaped Box"), Aya compares their mutual endeavor to free themselves from their sires to as real a family bond as the Mikaelsons share, once more illustrating the influential effects of zealotry.

Again and again, throughout this season, the different sirelines turn against one another in an attempt to eventually come out as the last remaining or at least the most powerful line of all. Instead of truly working with one another to achieve their common goal, to rid themselves from the original family without dying alongside them in the process, they all seem to forget that in a war there is always one person or a small number of people who try to make the most gain out of such moments of conflict, and secretly pull the strings. In the case of *The Originals*, this one person is Lucien Castle, who uses the distraction of the war between the sirelines to his advantage. Procuring the necessary ingredients to turn himself into an "upgrade" (S03/E17, "Behind the Black Horizon") of

⁷⁴ Also referred to as "De-siring spell."

the original vampires, Lucien, upon completing the process, wants to become the most powerful creature on earth.

Similar to Klaus learning in Seasons One and Two that his monstrous patriarchy over his family weakened him instead of empowering him, Lucien quickly finds out that a war can never be won by just one person. Standing alone against Klaus, he underestimates the Mikaelsons' loyalty and vehemence, which ultimately results in his death through the siblings' joint powers and efforts. Although the Mikaelsons manage to eliminate this threat by trusting in each other's abilities and cooperating with one another, they craft a new threat in the process. Ultimately sacrificing Marcel Gerard's friend and protégé Davina Claire, who he said "was like a daughter" to him (S03/E21, "Give 'Em Hell Kid"), the third season ends with a disillusioned Marcel, who realizes that no matter what he does, he will never become a true Mikaelson:

MARCEL. What am I to you, Klaus? Am I your friend? Your sidekick? I mean, at first, I was a charity case. We all know that. How about now? Am I your ally? 'Cause you sure as hell don't treat me like one.

KLAUS. You and I are bonded by blood. And yes, we quarrel, but that is what family does.

MARCEL. Oh, okay. So I'm family. No. I don't see it. Once upon a time, you were my mentor, my savior. My sire. But you've never been my brother. And now, now you're nothing to me.

(S03/E21, "Give 'Em Hell Kid")

As this exchange between Klaus and Marcel shows, in their attempt to save their own "true" family, the Mikaelsons have eventually destroyed any kind of loyalty they had from their extended family. When Marcel does not hand over the last remaining serum to create another upgraded original vampire, Elijah, much to Klaus's shock and dismay, kills Marcel to ensure their family's safety. Marcel, who had already expected this kind of betrayal, had – prior to this confrontation – already ingested the serum. With Marcel's complete loss of

any kind of empathy he ever had for Klaus, he ultimately becomes “the beast”⁷⁵ which, according to the seer Alexis’s prophecy, would destroy the family. The racial undercurrents of this exchange cannot be renounced. While Klaus had saved the young black slave over a hundred years before, Marcel never truly felt like a member of the Mikaelson family. Instead, as he now realizes, he was only treated like being of their blood if the siblings needed him in one way or the other. The fact that Marcel has dark skin, compared to the Mikaelsons’ fair skin tone due to their Norwegian origins, always already set him physically apart, which everyone was able to overlook in times of distress. Just as African-Americans in the United States continue to face discrimination on a daily basis, the season’s finale is a reminder that it is necessary to overcome differences and to treat everyone equally if one wants to create true loyalty.

As this chapter has demonstrated, twenty-first century vampire narratives have stressed the socio-political significance of blood. With vampires completely forsaking human blood (e.g. the Cullen family in *Twilight*) and others turning to scientifically produced blood substitutes (e.g. Tru Blood in *True Blood*), *The Originals* eventually rarely shows its main vampires feeding at all. While, at the beginning of the series, viewers would still see Klaus indulge in rather messy feeding habits and his sister removing dead bodies from their home like regular people take out trash, the Mikaelson siblings, with the progression of the series, are hardly ever portrayed drinking “straight from the source.” Unless they intend to kill or turn the human on purpose or they intend to frighten others into obedience, Klaus, Elijah and Rebekah are shown to decadently drink their blood – from a mostly anonymous source – from wine glasses or champagne flutes, usually marking some kind of important social or festive event.

⁷⁵ In S03/E01, “For the Next Millennium,” Lucien’s prophetic witch gave Lucien and Klaus the prophecy: “Drink deep but beware, What you broke is past repair. All your oaths you betray, your sacred vows you sever, And now you see that nothing lasts for always and forever. Three yet remain, two already crossed, Yet in one year’s time, you’ll all be lost. As your family is undone, you will seed the beast that is to come”).

In respect to the vampires' mostly consistent need for human blood as nourishment in twenty-first century vampire literature, Piatti-Farnell states that the vampire has successfully replaced and surpassed the human on the evolutionary scale with the result that "through the vampiric blood metaphor, human beings are presented with their own inadequacy, their loss of control and purpose, and the fear that what is commonly known as a fantasy could take on a prophetic quality in predicting the disintegration of the human species by its own doing" (29). As the series' third season has shown, it is dangerous to divide up communities, societies, even whole nations according to unalterable factors such as their blood, race or physical appearance. While the figure of the vampire has a long-standing tradition of being employed for the discourse of racism and discrimination, the series' discussion of the war between bloodlines illustrated that no matter how small or big the threat may be, it is crucial to stand together to overcome disasters, which can come in the shape of man-made threats (e.g. terrorism) or natural catastrophes (e.g. Hurricane Katrina).

3. The Power of Hospitality: (Re-)Claiming One's Home

Hospitality converts: strangers into familiars, enemies into friends, friends into better friends, outsiders into insiders, non-kin into kin.
(Tom Selwyn, "An Anthropology of Hospitality" 19)

As has been previously shown, twenty-first century vampires appear to be more gregarious than their prior representations. With a strong focus on kinship, their recently cultivated tendency to either unite formerly-human family members through vampirism or to create some sort of resemblance of a family set-up with other non-consanguineous (e.g. the *Twilight* Cullen family) or blood-related vampires (e.g. Bill and Jessica in *True Blood*) is, as I argue, reason for yet another notably intensified inclination of these creatures: their desire to claim or reclaim a/their home.

Just as the family has been one of the major preoccupations of the American Gothic, the home has regularly represented the boundaries which are transgressed to create this genre's inherent horror. The concept of home is, however, an ambiguous one. Usually, signaling a safe haven, a place where most people find comfort, the walls of a home can also become signifiers for looming danger or unescapable discoveries and traumatic events. Analyzing the term *heimlich* or *homely*, Sigmund Freud, in his work "The 'Uncanny,'" points out that this term has two different although not mutually exclusive or necessarily contradictory meanings. Stating that "on the one hand, it denotes what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight" (224-25), Freud creates a relation between the architectural space and its dwellers' internal processes. In the American Gothic tradition, a threat does not have to be external; horror and danger may very well be created on the inside (of a structure or the psyche). In line with this tradition, Freud's quoting of Schelling's definition of the *Unheimliche*, hence, *the uncanny*, as "everything that was meant to remain secret and has come into the open" (Freud, *Uncanny* 132), perfectly describes the direction post-2000 vampire fiction has

taken. Making vampires out to be either integrated, albeit still their-true-identity-hiding members of society¹ or letting them join humanity in all their blood-thirsty glory, seeking equal rights to their non-life-challenged² human counterparts, current representations of vampires credit these creatures with an existence that no longer needs to hide completely from humanity but rather tends to become or represent normalcy in the contemporary world.

Capable of profound emotions and loyal relationships, it is not surprising that vampires, parallel to the process of their humanization, also strive for a home, a fixed space where they can anchor and consolidate above-mentioned relationships. Just as many post-2000 vampires do not focus on threatening the concept and discourse of family anymore but rather stress its importance and need for progressiveness, these creatures are no longer shown to solely invade homes with ill intent. Instead of attempting to breach the threshold to harm human families (which some of them still occasionally do), twenty-first century vampires now display a distinctly strong interest in creating a safe home for themselves and those with whom they cultivate close or even intimate relationships.

The threatening nature of vampires has been markedly reduced since Anne Rice's manifestation of the thoughtful and restrained Louis de Pointe du Lac – who, similar to post-2000 representations, temporarily also sought to find a home for himself and his beloved companion, the child-vampire Claudia. Yet, the human safety mechanism that vampires need to be invited in in order to enter a human home is still part of many of these narratives. Largely considered the point of reference against which all other representations of vampires have been and continue to be measured, also Dracula “may not enter anywhere at the first, unless there be some one of the household who bid him to come, though afterwards he can come as he please” (sic), as Jonathan Harker explains (Stoker 342).

¹ See, e.g. *Twilight*, *Being Human*, *The Vampire Diaries*, or *The Originals*.

² See, *True Blood*, where vampires refer to themselves as “life-challenged individuals” (S01/E03, “Mine”).

Similarly, many televisual vampire representations in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century still adhere to this restriction. While human characters in popular TV series and movies like *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), *Angel* (1999-2004), *Let The Right One In* (2008), or *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-17), *True Blood* (2008-14) and *The Originals* (2013-2018) do need to verbally articulate an invitation, viewers of said shows allow these creatures of the night entrance into their homes without explicit invitations by turning on the television.

Commenting on the interrelation between the home and the television, Melanie Waters states that “[t]he breached status of the home is likewise articulated through the symbol of the television itself” (36) and that “[a]ccording to Jacques Derrida (Derrida and Stiegler, 2002, p. 33) television represents a distinct, if ambiguous, assault on the domestic space” (36). By using the Gothic trope of *doubling*, hence discussing the problematic and positive aspects of human versus vampire families and homes, *True Blood* and *The Originals* bring the Gothic into the home more through the medium of the television than through actual instances of vampiric violence in human homes within the series.

While we are taught at a young age not to open the door to strangers and with that to keep possible dangers outside, television allows us to watch and experience disturbing or frightening events and actions in the believed safety of our own four walls. Especially in the Western World, television has become an essentially irreplaceable part of the household. While not even a century ago, people would entertain themselves or exchange information by talking to one other, telling stories or listening to the radio in their homes, it is now common practice for many people to turn on the television upon entering their home. Although the Internet will probably eventually surpass the TV in its significance, if it has not already done so in some households, it is in times of distress when the effect of this technical device and its political function becomes most apparent. Thinking back to the attacks of 11 September 2001, many Americans, but also people all across the globe,

watched some of the events in New York City and Washington, D.C. simultaneously to their actual occurrence. Almost a decade before these horrifying assaults on American soil took place, Derrida was interviewed by Bernard Stiegler on the topic of television and what Derrida termed “teletechnologies” (Derrida and Stiegler 31). Noting that “. . . the ‘home’ [le ‘chez-soi’] . . . is no doubt what is most violently affected by the intrusion” (33), Derrida explains that it is “the breaking and entering [l’effraction] of the telepowers” (33) which violently injures “the historical distinction (it is old, but not natural and not timeless) between public and private space” (33). Echoing this assertion, Melanie Waters states, “[a]s an object, the television forces us into a dangerous pact as soon as we invite it into our homes; while we are beguiled and entertained by it, it carries with it the potential to undermine the fantasized ‘safety’ of the domestic sphere by exposing us to images of threats which would otherwise remain ‘outside’” (36). When relating Waters’ assertion to vampires, it sounds like a perfect description of these creatures who, especially in traditional representations, fascinated and beguiled the humans, who eventually invited them in, only realizing the danger when it was too late.

Continuing that “television itself acquires a vampiric cast – seducing, deceiving and imperiling us at the same time” (36), Waters manages to create an inherent connection between the figure of the vampire and TV. In similar terms, Stacey Abbott explains that “the vampire . . . is shaped both by the changing world into which it emerges, as well as by the medium through which is it represented” (10-11), which, through both literature and the television set, brings the vampire into our domestic sphere. Discussing the meaning of hosting technology, Claudio Ciborra states that “[b]eing able to host the technology will redefine our identities” (27) and that granting technology hospitality ultimately results in “accepting a paramount symmetry between humans and non-humans” (27). Once more, the figure of the vampire can, thus, be understood as becoming closer to our human identity than it did in the pre-2000 era. Addressing the dangers of this hospitality towards “non-

humans” (27), Ciborra continues that like any guest, technology can but “should not dominate the host” (28) and that technology “can turn into an enemy” (28), which leads to the risk that humans and technologies “can become hostages of each other” (28). Explicitly stressing the transgression of boundaries which technology performs, Ciborra’s assertion, as I argue, can well be extended to this medium’s representation within television series, such as *True Blood*, as well as the vampire’s representation through this medium as my analysis will disclose. Although both, the vampire and the television, are threatening the home and its dwellers, the technical device and the content it broadcasts as well as the Gothic creature are too intriguing to be ignored. Mesmerizing their audiences with the vampire’s supernatural powers or attractiveness as well as the TV’s topicality makes it almost impossible to escape, including the television’s transmission and the vampire’s discussion of events from across the globe without hardly any time lapse.

In *True Blood*, the medium of the television plays a crucial role as vampires, mainly the American Vampire League spokeswoman Nan Flanagan, address the human population through talk shows, interviews and other televisual formats. In Season One, a scene with Jason Stackhouse addresses exactly the inescapability of this visual technology, this “political medium” (vii), as Matthew Pateman refers to it. After an argument with his sister Sookie about his dismay over her relationship with the town vampire Bill Compton, all Jason wants to do is relax in his old armchair and watch TV in the comfort of his living room. However, as he zaps through the different channels, still aggravated about the dispute, it becomes obvious that he simply cannot escape vampires, even in his own home. Every channel broadcasts some kind of vampire-related format, be it an interview with Nan Flanagan, an advertisement of the religious vampire-hate group The Fellowship of the Sun or even a soap opera with vampire characters.

Quoting André Bazin, Melissa Gronlund explains that “film is ‘time mummified’” (qtd. in Gronlund n.pag.). She continues that the tendency of contemporary artwork to “associate horror and intrusion with new forms of visual and reproductive technology suggests that the traditional subjects of the Gothic novel – mainly the home, and the identities sustained within in – are now being radically reorganized, similar to the way the introduction of the TV reorganized domestic life in the 1950s” (Gronlund n.pag.). In my discussion of the concept of family earlier in this study, I asserted that the middle of the twentieth century is famous for its advertisement of the ideal of the nuclear family. As I stated in Chapter 2, post-2000 vampire television series have broken down this ideal, depicting its flawed and failing nature and opening the doors for a more progressive understanding of family and the acceptance of alternative lifestyles. Just as the notion of family has been contested, the concept of home has also undergone crucial changes with the continuous advancement of the television in the first half of the twentieth century and its growing installation into homes. Ultimately serving as a distraction from everyday life, television, however, simultaneously opened up homes to the terrors of the outside world as the creation of “a televisual aesthetic . . . is understood as political gesture” (vii), as Pateman claims. Kimberly Dovey asserts that “[t]he unfamiliar and insecure world may threaten, but it is at the interface between it and the ordered center that we find all new experience, and hence the excitement and adventure of life” (46). Blurring the boundaries between the familiar and the unfamiliar – just like the figure of the vampire – the invention of the television created a crack in the walls of our ‘homely fortress’ through which the horrors of our times, the Gothic, or in the case of this dissertation, vampires, could slip. Uninvited, they bring with them the desired entertainment as well as notions about our lives which we would rather ignore.

3.1 Home and Identity

The scale of home obviously depends on the extent of actual or expressed power, control, or personal investment in space. Home, however, connotes not only a physical or spatial condition but also social and habitual conditions. The essence of home lies in the recurrent, regular investment of meaning in a context with which people personalize and identify through some measure of control.
(Theano Terkenli, "Home as a Region" 325)

With the continuous globalization of the world, humanity is becoming more and more mobile. National and international travel is constantly being facilitated and the duration of journeys reduced through continuous technical advancement. While telework is on the rise, simultaneously, also the willingness to work away from home or to commute long distances appear to have become job requirements similar to expertise and specialized know-how in the twenty-first century. Whether it is for pleasure, as when going on vacation, or in the professional sector, much of contemporary society shows a tendency to be more adventurous and flexible concerning their travels or commute to work.

Parallel to Western society's growing opportunities in terms of mobility, the figure of the vampire appears to have experienced an evolution, although into the opposite direction. Many myths and folklore tended to restrict vampires to the village they formerly inhabited, some legends even confined them to their graves, such as "the *Nachzehrer*, or 'after-devourers'" (Little n.pag.) of northern Germany, who supposedly "stayed in the ground, chewing on their burial shrouds . . . harming their surviving family members through occult processes" (n.pag.). Even Dracula, the alleged progenitor of vampires in fiction, could only travel away from his home country when taking with him "boxes of earth" (Stoker 120).³ Unlike the prior rather stationary image of vampires from legends, Dracula's journey to England marked the beginning of the later vampires' tendencies to be more

³ Similarly, Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's vampire Le Comte de Saint-Germain in the novel *Hôtel Transylvania: A Timeless Novel of Love and Peril* (1978) wears boots with special soles containing soil from his native land without which he would be unable to cross running waters such as rivers.

nomadic, passing from one city to the next in an attempt to remain uncovered while leaving dead bodies in their wake.

Supposedly, with the TV series *Angel*⁴ (1999-2004) and its introduction of a vampire detective, it became more common again for vampires to have a stronger inclination to settle down in one particular place. Just to name some examples, similar to Angel, who resided and worked in Los Angeles, California, the vampire Mick St. John lived as a private investigator in the City of Angels in *Moonlight*⁵ (2007-2008), while Henry Fitzroy in *Blood Ties*⁶ (2007) led a rather sedentary existence in Toronto, Canada, working as a graphic novel artist and eventually helping the human private investigator Victoria Nelson to solve supernatural crimes. While these and other examples show the vampires' growing and recurring predilection to settle down for longer periods of time, it was once more the *Twilight Saga* which arguably marked an obvious turning point from vampires' traditionally nomadic existences to their inclination to sedentariness, or even an apparently full-blown desire to create a home for their family (e.g. the Cullens).

Just as Gothic novels regularly used architectural elements of the domestic sphere, making them into "characters in themselves, aiding and abetting the horrors that went on within" (Gronlund n.pag.), the Cullen home in the *Twilight* movies can arguably be seen as a mirror image of the vampires' open participation in Forks' society, where they attend high school or, in the case of the father-figure Carlisle, work as a doctor amongst humans. The Cullens' home is shown to be a large, very modern and airy construction. Although it is set in the middle of the forest, the many windows and the therein resulting brightness in their home signal that these vampires no longer want to hide from humans but try to fit in as much as is vampirically possible. Although they do not openly out themselves to be

⁴ This spin-off series of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, also created by Joss Whedon, was broadcast on The WB from 5 October 1999 to 19 May 2004, comprising 110 episodes.

⁵ The U.S. series ran from 28 September 2007 to 13 May 2008 on ABC, consisting of 16 episodes.

⁶ The 22 episodes of this Canadian production aired on U.S. television from 11 March to 1 December 2007.

vampires and continuously need to pay attention to their potential discovery due to their sparkling skin, for instance, they have essentially created a home for themselves which does in no way lack the comfort of human equivalents. Instead, the Cullen residence rather surpasses human homes in its aesthetics and décor, and is far removed from traditional rundown Gothic structures.

The vampire home in *Twilight* is a good example of how a home is linked to the notion of identity. Kimberly Dovey states that “[i]dentity implies a certain bonding or mergence of person and place such that the place takes its identity from the dweller and the dweller takes his or her identity from the place” (40). Just as Stephenie Meyer’s vampire family settled down and assimilated into human society, the nomadic vampires in her narrative, Victoria and James, were unable and unwilling to pass for humans, letting themselves be guided by their predatory instincts in their continuous and seemingly restless journey from one city to the next, which was also mirrored in their rather wild and unkempt appearances.

Addressing the vampire figure’s tendency to adjust to the times and culture that surrounds it, Lindsey Scott asserts that “the twenty-first century vampire moves closer to our homes to become a more complex insider, a sympathetic, humane or romanticised figure who ultimately succeeds in becoming ‘one of us’” (113). This is an accurate description, especially of post-2000 representations of this figure as there has been a trend towards the vampires’ stronger longing for human experiences such as love, family and home, especially on the small screen, running parallel to the emergence and growing popularity of the Paranormal Romance genre. Understanding home as “an integrative schema that is at once a bonding of person and place and a set of connections between the experience of dwelling and the wider spatial, temporal, and sociocultural content within which it emerges” (44), Dovey explains that “[h]ome orients us and connects us with the past, the future, the physical environment, and our social world” (44). In connection with

the Gothic genre's capacity to bring back the past to haunt the present, together with the vampire figure's traditional objective to uncover human insufficiencies, the notion of home lends itself perfectly for the discussion of the contemporary issues of belonging, security and national identity, as will be part of my following analysis.

The fact that a home somewhat reflects its dwellers' identity and vice versa is not surprising. After all, aside from many people's ability to choose where they want to live, a home also gives its residents the opportunity to make decisions about its appearance. Residents achieve a certain amount of power and authority in their lives through the institution of a home. Not only are we free to make our own decisions about the appearance of our home, but we are also able to decide to whom we want to grant entrance into our personal space.

In Chapter 1, I have explained how *True Blood* and *The Originals* are anchored in the Gothic tradition and that the Gothic dichotomy of exterior/interior ultimately results in the possible assignment of group membership. The television plays a crucial role in the therein resulting distinctions of who belongs to whom and where. Through the television screen, for example, the audience is able to distance itself from what is shown on TV, all the while being in the presumed safety of our own four walls. After all, the monsters are highly limited in their ability to harm us or exert power over us when we can hide in our home. Considering that the Gothic is inevitably about power and "who is allowed to do what based on their subject position" (Weinstock 2), the idea that a predatory and Gothic creature like a vampire would long for a home does not come as a surprise. When one considers the fact that in most contemporary narratives, vampires are continuously prevented from entering a human home unless they have been explicitly invited, it is an obvious assumption that, upon their growing disposition to a sedentary life, they would not pass up this opportunity to exude their own authority over humans, their own kind or other supernatural creatures. Even though a vampire's home lacks the same safety a human

home provides – after all, it is essentially open to everyone – it does still grant its owners a certain amount of power.

While also Dracula's castle was not secure from possible trespassing, traditional vampire dwellings such as, for instance, castles and crypts generated feelings of unease or even fear in those who approached or entered these spaces, deterring at least some intruders. Reflecting upon his arrival at the castle in the Carpathians, Jonathan Harker, for instance, states, "It all seemed like a horrible nightmare to me, and I expected that I should suddenly awake, and find myself at home, with the dawn struggling in through the windows" (Stoker 23). Contrasting Count Dracula's castle and the darkness of the night with his own home and the comforting sense of the early rays of sunshine, Harker, immediately upon his arrival, feels an uneasiness, which seems to intensify when Dracula opens the door and bids him welcome with the words "Welcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own free will!" (24). Unlike the modernity of the Cullen home, Dracula's "vast ruined castle, from whose tall black windows came no ray of light, and whose broken battlements showed a jagged line against the sky" (20) appears to exude an air of concealment unlike the revealing and open atmosphere of the Cullen home, for instance. In agreement with Dovey's assertion that "[t]he home is both a 'statement' and a 'mirror,' developing both socially and individually, reflecting both collective identity and authentic personal experience" (40), Dracula's castle, for example, still reflected the traditional vampires' old world identity. In Stoker's novel, the architecture already hinted at the potential doom which awaited its guests within, whereas the light and homey appearance of the Cullen's residence mirrored these vampires' friendly attitude towards and attempted peaceful coexistence with humans.

Just as the examples of *Twilight* and *Dracula* have shown, the concepts of home and identity are inextricably linked to one another. With the assimilation of vampire homes to human homes, boundaries between humanity and monstrosity are once again becoming

more and more blurred, also aesthetically. As Sue Chaplin asserts, the line which separates humanity from “its monstrous ‘other’ is rarely secure” (27);⁷ its slow but evident disruption becomes apparent also in these creatures’ emphasized interest in the creation of a home, a place with which they can identify in one way or another. Although this connection of home and identity may be realized to different degrees, the existence of a home and its appearance help its dwellers to orient themselves in time and space, resulting in the development of a certain self-image as well as an outward presentation, which can either enhance or diminish social acceptance. As will be shown later in this chapter, it is especially this dichotomy of insideness versus outsiderdom⁸ which is addressed in the discussion of “home” in *True Blood* and *The Originals*, as discussed in the light of post-2000 events like 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina.

Home and Hospitality

As mentioned earlier, a home grants those who live within its walls certain powers. While we may also be able to make decisions about our home’s appearance, it is the fact that we are able to restrict who can visit and who will have to remain on the outside which ultimately puts us into a position of control and gives us authority over this domain of our lives and other people. However, in times of global terror, international wars and natural catastrophes, which deprive thousands of people of their homes, it is the question of hospitality, which, in turn, can be a defining feature of our world’s *humanity* or

⁷ In her subchapter “The Promise of Monsters,” Elaine L. Graham writes, “Western culture may be confronting a technological mediated ‘crisis’ of human uniqueness, but a more satisfactory way of framing the situation might be in terms of the blurring of boundaries, a dissolution of the ‘ontological hygiene’ by which for the past three hundred years Western culture has drawn the fault lines that separate humans, nature and machines” (11). This has previously been achieved through the help of monsters, such as vampires, zombies, etc.

⁸ Similar to my argumentation in this dissertation that twenty-first century vampire representations help to reduce attribution of categories as markers of belonging or being considered a threat, Anne Scott, referring to the cyborg figure, for example, explains that “[w]estern rationalistic forms of domination have relied heavily both on notions of the unitary subject, and on dualisms between the self and the ‘other’ in all its varied forms” (370).

monstrosity. Gronlund claims that “a preoccupation with the Gothic tropes of the uncanny, the undead, and intrusions into the home show how notions of the individual, the family, and the domestic are in fact being newly contested” (n.pag.). *Home* does not only denote the architectural construct of a house or an apartment, which is the most common association people make with this term. Instead, home can be understood as encompassing spaces on a scale, where some people would for instance call a room in a shared apartment their home, and others would refer to their neighborhood, city or even a whole nation as their home (Dovey 46). Hence, hospitality, so the willingness to assist others, or, in contrast, the conscious decision to restrict other’s entrance in order to protect oneself and what is one’s own are what ultimately define not only personal, but also national identity. The relation between the host and the guest, or the nation and foreigners, has been a strenuous one, especially in legal terms. Referring to a charge in France called “violations of hospitality” (*Cosmopolitanism* 16), Jacques Derrida explains that at the end of the twentieth century, a proposal in the National Assembly and in the Senate suggested that “all hospitality accorded to ‘foreigners’ whose ‘papers are not in order,’ or those simply ‘without papers’” (16) should be treated as “acts of terrorism, or as ‘participation in a criminal conspiracy’” (16). By giving an example of the legal limitations of hospitality, or “the perversion of the law of hospitality” (16), Derrida claims, “[h]ospitality is culture itself and not simply one ethic amongst others” (16). Rather, he inversely defines ethics to be hospitality in that it combines our home with the “manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners” (16), making it a question of how we define ourselves and with that our nation.

The figure of the vampire has – for the longest time – been othered, and it was their physical appearance and behavioral traits which made them – just like other monsters – the perfect tools to “define and construct the politics of the ‘normal,’” as David Punter and Glennis Byron assert (263). Popular characteristics such as protruding fangs, pale skin, the

thirst for blood, the tendency to kill their prey as well as their rather solitary lifestyle are amongst the most common and persistent denominators which helped the human audience to distance themselves from these monstrous creatures. However, it was not just the vampires' appearance which helped with this dissociation. Addressing the architectural elements of Gothic sites to be "characters in themselves," as I explained on the basis of the examples of Dracula's castle and the Cullens' home, Gronlund states that "[t]he sheer unknowable 'otherness' of Gothic villains – their monstrosity, vampirity, non-humanity – reflects not only the scale of these great domestic alterations, but also that of the inability to make sense of them" (n.pag.). At an earlier point, I asserted that post-2000 vampire television series and their current placement of the vampires *within* human society, instead of locating them on its fringes, have continuously made the "unknowable" known. Hence, holding up a mirror to twenty-first century Western society, the discussion of home and the resulting power of executing or denying hospitality touch upon issues and stipulations which are addressed on a small scale in narratives about supernatural individuals and communities but can and, in fact, should be transferred to and renegotiated in our contemporary society.

One of the most famous authors to touch upon the discourse of hospitality is the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Derrida differentiated between two different types of hospitality: *conditional hospitality*, which rests on the prerequisite of an invitation, meaning that hosts already imply the condition to await and receive the guest upon issuing an invitation, and *unconditional hospitality*, hence "if I accept the coming of the other, the arriving [*arrivance*] of the other who could come at any moment without asking my opinion and who could come with the best or worst of intentions" ("Hospitality" 17). With reference to the work of Derrida, Kevin O'Gorman further explains that the etymology of the term *hospitality* correlates three aspects ("Jacques" 51) and originates from a Latin root. John D. Caputo clarifies that the term also derives directly from two proto-Indo-

European words that have the meanings of “stranger,” “guest” and “power” (110). As Jacques Derrida and Kevin O’Gorman profess, there is an ineluctable connection between home and hospitality, which allows for power relations between the host and the visitor to become apparent and to be executed.

The notion of hospitality often encompasses questions of race and nationality and has come to play a crucial role once more in the twenty-first century, the age of global terror and global warming. When thousands of people are forced to run from the destruction and debris that once was their home town or home country or find themselves displaced from their homes for an indefinite period of time, neighboring states or countries and nations across the globe find themselves in the position to offer help, in granting hospitality to those in need. However, this help is not an unconditional one, and whether or not or how hospitality is granted largely depends on each country’s current political leadership. In discussing their vampires’ desire to settle down, *True Blood* and *The Originals* discuss questions of belonging after having lost one’s home, and what it means to (re-)claim said home. As “[h]ome . . . is a highly complex system of ordered relations within place, an order that orients us in space, in time, and in society” (Dovey 39), the discussion of belonging is especially productive when using the example of creatures who have traditionally been othered and – as Cohen contests – through whose body “fantasies of aggression, domination, and inversion are allowed safe expression in a clearly delimited and permanently liminal space” (“Monster Culture” 17). As Cohen continues, “Escapist delight gives way to horror only when the monster threatens to overstep these boundaries, to destroy or deconstruct the thin walls of category and culture” (17). Using the figure of the vampire once more to uncover societal shortcomings, *True Blood* and *The Originals* discuss the twenty-first century concern of belonging in that the respective supernatural individuals or communities find themselves in the position of being in need of hospitality themselves or of being able to grant it to others.

In his influential work *Of Hospitality*, Jacques Derrida poses the question whether “[p]erhaps only the one who endures the experience of being deprived of a home can offer hospitality” (56). True to the adage “You don’t know what you have until it’s gone,” also the two supernatural main characters, the vampire Bill Compton (*True Blood*) and the hybrid Klaus Mikaelson (*The Originals*), experience what it means to lose one’s home due to unexpected circumstances. In the following analysis, in order to remain consistent with my previous analysis of the discourse of family, I will give a short overview of the meaning and depiction of human homes in *True Blood*⁹ before I will map out their different meanings for the supernaturals. Eventually analyzing the vampire Bill’s and the hybrid Klaus’s desire to create a home for themselves and the role the concept of (Southern) hospitality – which they and others in the series will experience as well as exert – plays in this endeavor, I will show these concepts’ productivity to uncover prevailing discrimination and spatial segregation in U.S. society.

Human Homes as Sites of Destruction and Trauma

Similar to how *True Blood* and *The Originals* depict human families to be deficient and abusive, representing sites of disappointment and disillusionment to the human characters in the series, human homes are also shown to be *loci* of destruction and trauma, functioning as everything but a safe haven for most of the human characters. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is a long-standing tradition in vampire fiction that vampires can only enter a human home upon an explicit invitation. Unless a building is publicly owned,¹⁰ humans are thus able to protect themselves from the undead simply by

⁹ I will refrain from discussing any examples of human homes in *The Originals* as the series, as already stated at an earlier point, largely ignores the human population of New Orleans. Here, it shall be noted that there are instances when vampires attempt to invade human homes, mainly Camille O’Connell’s home, but these are rare and do not contribute to my analysis at this point. I will, however, briefly refer to human homes in *The Originals* at a later point in this chapter.

¹⁰ See, for example, in S02/E01, “Rebirth,” when Elijah manages to buy the abandoned foundry of Olmstead Foundry Co. through his foundation, “which has aligned itself with the city’s Historical Preservation

not giving them verbal permission to enter. However, what if it is not the vampires who pose a threat to humans but those who already reside in the home or other humans who can enter unconditionally?

True Blood addresses the easily breached or maybe even illusory safety of human homes already in the first episode of the series, hinting at the fact that the notion of home in combination with the concept of hospitality will play a crucial role in the discussion of belonging throughout the series. Many of the events of the first episode, “Strange Love,” take place in the outdoors of the fictitious Southern small town Bon Temps or its local diner Merlotte’s. However, viewers also gain insight into private homes, such as Sookie’s grandmother Adele Stackhouse’s ancestral home, as well as the inside of the minor character Maudette Pickens’ rather humble abode. While Adele’s house is shown to be a well-used but caringly maintained cozy family residence, the living room of Maudette’s home is introduced with the more provocative scene of Jason Stackhouse performing oral sex on his host, who is leaning back on her couch while simultaneously watching TV. The difference of both dwellings could not be more evident as viewers, for example, see Adele’s house during daytime, bathed in the warm light of the sun, bringing out its elaborate interior decoration in vivid colors. In contrast, Maudette and Jason are engulfed in the dimmed light of a small table lamp and the flickering light of the running television. Both light sources cast the room and its furniture in shadows and shades of a dark yellow and beige, creating a somewhat unpleasant atmosphere and the impression that the place is unkempt, just like its sweating and tousled owner.

It has been argued that “the domestic sphere is used to personify the familiar, and as such it becomes a character in itself” (Gronlund n.pag.). With this in mind, above-

Society.” Eventually, the Guerrera Family, a family of werewolves, who intends to dethrone and use Klaus Mikealson to ultimately rule New Orleans, make this mansion their home they assume to be safe from the attacks of vampires. However, when Elijah states, “I was so pleased when the city took my suggestion to protect its heritage status and invoke imminent domain,” they realize that they were misled, which results in the death of most of them at Elijah’s hands.

mentioned aspects about Maudette's living room create a mutually trashy appearance of herself as well as her home. This impression is further enhanced through details such as the fact that – in comparison to Adele's neatly hung family pictures – Maudette's wedding picture (with her deceased husband) carelessly stands on the mantle of the fireplace, in front of which she does not only let Jason chain her up to have rough sex but did the same with a vampire not too long before. In sync with Dovey's assertion that "the home is a social symbol of our identity, we participate in this self/other dialectic of imagining how we are perceived through the symbol of our home" (47), Adele keeps her home in order, stating that "I'm doing this for me, so I can be proud of my home" (S01/E02, "The First Taste"). Using the less appealing interior of Maudette Pickens' living room to create an allusion to its corruption – after all, Maudette had obviously invited a vampire inside before – it comes as little surprise to the viewers and a number of characters in the series when it eventually becomes the site of her murder, supposedly at the hands of a vampire.

Maudette's death in Episode One, however, does not remain the only homicide. Instead, the first season of *True Blood* is marked by numerous murders which happen inside human homes. Three more characters, who – in one way or another – were associated with vampires, brutally lose their lives in what were their own four walls or what they intended to make their home. Already in the third episode, "Mine," Sookie's co-worker, the waitress Dawn Green, meets an untimely demise in her own bed during one of her erotic encounters with Jason Stackhouse, shortly after admitting to having sex with vampires from time to time. Only two episodes later, in "Sparks Fly Out," the home of the loving grandmother Adele also becomes the site of her gruesome murder. Following the meeting of the Descendants of the Glorious Dead,¹¹ which Adele had organized to hear vampire Bill's recollections of his experiences during the Civil War, Sookie's grandmother

¹¹ *The Descendants of the Glorious Dead* is the name of a genealogy group of regularly gathering, mostly elderly, citizens of Bon Temps who discuss the events of the Civil War as well as the effects it had on the locals.

would become yet another vampire victim, as the detectives of Bon Temps interpret these murders.¹²

In comparison to the fourth and last victim, Amy Burley, in this series of hideous crimes in Season One, Maudette, Dawn and Adele were what one could refer to as vampire sympathizers. While they voluntarily engaged in sex or conversations with vampires, Amy is introduced paying a visit to the area's vampire bar Fangtasia in Shreveport for a different reason. Instead of enjoying conversations about bygone times like Adele or taking pleasure in the thrill of rough erotic encounters with the undead, Amy turns out to be a "V"-addict¹³ looking for a new source of her drug of choice. Ultimately meeting and eventually falling in love with Jason Stackhouse, who shares her addiction, Amy also falls victim to the same perpetrator who killed Maudette, Dawn and Adele, as she is strangled to death in Jason's bed. For most of the first season and assuming that the killer is a vampire, viewers of the series are led to believe that the three women had, in fact, metaphorically speaking, invited the villain into their homes, offering what Derrida refers to as conditional hospitality, seeking knowledge or pleasure from the guest. However, Amy distinguishes herself from the other victims in two respects: intending to use vampires for their blood only, without offering any reciprocity (such as exchanging pleasure through sexual intercourse or stimulating conversations), Amy does not only eventually die in Jason's home, but prior to her own demise also exerted violence and even committed murder in Jason's house.

Claiming to pay Eddie Fournier, Lafayette's volunteer-V-supplier, a visit to politely ask him to donate some of his blood to Jason and herself, Amy takes her boyfriend by surprise when she disables the vampire by throwing silver chains and a silver hood over him. Getting Jason to participate in kidnapping Eddie (S01/E09, "Plaisir d'Amour") and

¹² See, e.g. S01/E06 "Cold Ground," when Sherriff Dearborne, talking to Bill Compton, says: "So, Maudette Pickens, Dawn Green, Adele Stackhouse, they were all very gracious, to your eh- people. That's just about the one thing they had in common. Now is that one hell of a plus-size coincidence or what?"

¹³ Throughout *True Blood*, vampire blood is frequently referred to as "V" – especially by users – to denote its drug-like, highly addictive, stimulating and aphrodisiac quality.

holding him hostage in Jason's basement, Amy – in order to make Jason feel better about the situation – suggests, “All we need to do is make Eddie love us” (S01/E10, “I Don't Wanna Know”), so he would feel “like being part of a family” (“I Don't Wanna Know”). Already displaying sociopathic traits in her behavior, Amy eventually does not hesitate to stake Eddie when she fears that her plan will not succeed and that Eddie could drive a wedge between her and her boyfriend.

Similar to Amy's mental instability and propensity to violence, the murders of Maudette, Dawn and Adele will ultimately be traced back to a human perpetrator, the local René Lenier, aka Drew Marshall.¹⁴ Unlike the previously assumed vampire culprits, René did not need an invitation in order to enter the homes of his friends and acquaintances. In their chapter “The Monster,” David Punter and Glennis Byron assert that “monsters function to define and construct the politics of the ‘normal’” (263) and “[l]ocated at the margins of culture, they police the boundaries of the human, pointing to those lines that must not be crossed” (263). Supporting their argument, most of Bon Temps' citizens readily assign the gruesome acts to vampires, whose co-existence many are not yet ready to accept in the series. This fear and even distrust of “this strange other” (Meijer-van Wijk 46) stresses how “[t]he unknown brings unease” (46), which humans oftentimes try to disregard and ignore in what is known or considered obvious by outsiders,¹⁵ seemingly indicating “a violation of our integrity” (46).

As the mentioned murders have shown, human homes in *True Blood* are represented as sites of destruction from the series' very beginning. Especially Season One is replete with traumatic events or the memories of instances of abuse and domestic violence. Flashbacks, for example, to Sookie's childhood show her great-uncle Bartlet sexually

¹⁴ Drew Marshall is the birth name of the resident of Bon Temps who was originally from somewhere around Bunkie, Louisiana, who, after murdering his sister Cindy Marshall in the fit of a psychotic rage about her sexual relations with vampires, flees his hometown and starts a new life in Bon Temps under the alias René Lenier.

¹⁵ Here, one can, for example, think of instances when spouses try to find explanations which would negate any signs of their partner's infidelity.

molesting the young girl in Adele's home, while, in turn, Maxine eventually reveals that Hoyt's father committed suicide in their home, which she staged to look like an armed robbery to get her hands on the insurance money. Similarly, Sookie's best friend Tara's childhood memories are not happy ones but revolve around her mother's drunken escapades, which still in the present regularly result in Lettie-Mae physically attacking her daughter, driving her out of their home more than once.

Contrary to Dovey's statement that "[h]ome is a place of security within an insecure world" (46), however, the numerous above-mentioned examples depict human homes in *True Blood* as a place of danger and insecurity. In the series, home is a place where human life is imperiled, not by vampires – thus those who need to be invited in – but by the human race itself. Somewhat emancipating the figure of the vampire from its historical reputation as a significant threat to humanity, the examples of human homes as places of danger emphasize Pramod K. Nayar's proposition that "the human is what it is *because* it includes the non-human" (*Posthumanism* 2, original emphasis). I will use the above-mentioned instances of human atrocities as a backdrop against which I will negotiate the meanings of home and hospitality for the supernatural characters in *True Blood* and *The Originals* with the aim to uncover the relevance and ambivalence of these notions in twenty-first century Western societies.

3.1.1 “Coming out of the Coffin” and the Question of Belonging in *True Blood*¹⁶

BILL. They are staring at us because I am a vampire. And you are mortal.

SOOKIE. Who cares what they think?

BILL. Well, I want to make this town my home, so I do.

(S01/E01, “Strange Love”)

“Vampires are real and have been living amongst us for centuries!” This could have been an editorial in a major newspaper shortly after vampires proclaimed their existence to the world in the *True Blood* universe during the event of their “Great Revelation” in what should have been the year 2006. Given the historic reputation of the “newcomers,” it is unsurprising that the humans in the show face the undead citizens with wariness and fear. However, for every adversary there is also always another who does not shy away from the unknown, but embraces it with interest and curiosity. One such person is the supposedly human, although telepathic, waitress, Sookie Stackhouse. Exclaiming “Oh my God! I think Merlotte’s just got its first vampire” (S01/E01, “Strange Love”) and “Can you believe it?! Right here, in Bon Temps?! I’ve been waiting for this to happen since they came out of the coffin two years ago!” (“Strange Love”) when a vampire enters her workplace, it becomes immediately clear that Sookie meets this new customer open-mindedly and without prejudice.

Throughout the previous chapters, I have aimed to put forth how the post-2000 vampire television series *True Blood* and *The Originals* mirror and criticize contemporary society by contrasting human and vampire experiences. Just as both factions were shown to interpret and perform the concept of family differently, so does their understanding of home and the opportunities of the realization of this concept vary, which will shed light on issues of twenty-first century Western society. Since the broadcasting of the series’ first

¹⁶ Large parts of this chapter were published in: Bernardi, Verena. “‘No Darlin.’ We’re White. He’s Dead.’ Southern Hospitality and Reconfigurations of Discrimination in *True Blood*.” *Entertainment – Journal of Movie and Media Studies*, vol. 1, 2016, pp. 115-34. ejournals.epublishing.ekt.gr/index.php/entertainment/issue/view/614/showToc.

episode in 2008, academic and non-academic writers all over the globe have created a large body of analytical work on this HBO series. Largely celebrated for its depiction of the vampire as a metaphor for the discussion of gay rights, the gay liberation movement and the struggle the LGBTQ+ (Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transgender-Queer+) community has faced in the process, the series, however, was created in a way which leaves ample room for the discussion of many other issues, such as the question of racism and gender equality in the US, sexuality, religion, the heritage of the Civil War as well as the aftermath of war and terror in a post-9/11 society. In the following, I will analyze *True Blood*'s depiction of Southern hospitality, a well-known characteristic but also stereotype of Southern culture, as a crucial factor in the vampire Bill Compton's attempt to reclaim his family home in Bon Temps. Focusing on the series' discussion of the discrepancy between (Southern) hospitality and discrimination arising from the characters' struggle with their Southern identities, I will reveal how the South – as represented by Bon Temps, Louisiana – is displayed as being othered, but, also, as othering itself through its residents' manners, traditions and inherent attitudes, which will become obstacles to Bill's attempt to reclaim his old plantation house and the small town as his home.

“We Just Want to Be Part of Mainstream Society”¹⁷

Located in rural northern Louisiana, the fictional small town of Bon Temps plays a central role in the representation of the societal set-up. Its location in the Deep South of the U.S. renders the town a microcosm for discussions of aforementioned issues. While Bon Temps serves as an exemplary depiction of the South and its divergence from popular expectations as well as its adherence to popular stereotypes, *True Blood*'s characters range from the regular blue-collar town folk to dominatrix-style lesbians and murderous

¹⁷ See *True Blood*, S01/E01, “Strange Love,” American Vampire League spokeswoman Nan Flanagan in a TV interview.

psychopaths. Regularly exploiting Southern clichés and stereotypes such as the representation of Sookie Stackhouse and Bill Compton as Southern Belle and Gentleman respectively (even if these depictions will eventually be subverted), characters such as white supremacist rednecks, town drunks or the lone flamboyant homosexual Lafayette complete the town's diversity, even before the series' vampires and other supernaturals step into the light as regularly recurring characters. While the humans in the series are depicted in a you-get-what-you-see kind of way, the vampires seem to be more mysterious and multifaceted. Their outward attitudes reach from their apparent search for belonging and acceptance in a modern society for some to others pretending to want to assimilate but having no intention of doing so in earnest, reveling in atrocities committed behind closed doors. However, as viewers find out throughout the series, it is not only the vampires who are dangerous and violent, even downright evil, but even more so the human population of Bon Temps who turn against vampires and each other.

In the first few minutes of "Strange Love" (S01/E01), viewers are introduced to, as I argue, the underlying topic and essence of the show. Obtaining the position of a silent observer, watching a TV discussion between HBO's Bill Maher (as himself) and American Vampire League spokeswoman Nan Flanagan on a small screen at a gas station, viewers are already confronted with the suggestion and critique that vampires are in reality no worse than humans. To Nan Flanagan's claim and entitlement, "We're citizens. We pay taxes. We deserve basic civil rights just like everyone else," the famous political commentator and television host Bill Maher replies, "Yeah, but, I mean, come on. Doesn't your race have a rather sordid history of exploiting and feeding off innocent people? For centuries" ("Strange Love"). With this exchange at the very beginning of the series, viewers are immediately reminded of the vampire figure's traditionally negative depiction and reputation. Putting humanity into the position of having been victims of vampires for

hundreds of years, the series in this moment appears to encourage the audience's tendency to distance themselves from these wicked creatures.

In his work *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, Jacques Derrida asserts that hospitality is "the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners" (16). While Bill Maher supposedly invited Nan Flanagan into his show, he makes it evidently clear that he and his audience in front of their televisions (in the series) set themselves apart from vampires through the vampires' assumed inherent and perpetuated tendency to violence. Turning this argument around, however, Nan Flanagan destroys the illusion that humans are more humane than vampires, arguing:

Three points. Number one: Show me documentation. Doesn't exist. Number two: Doesn't YOUR race have a history of exploitation? We never owned slaves, Bill, or detonated nuclear weapons. And most importantly point number three: Now that the Japanese have perfected synthetic blood which satisfies all of our nutritional needs there's no reason for ANYone to fear us. I can assure you that every member of our community is now drinking synthetic blood. That's why we made our existence known. We just want to be part of mainstream society. (S01/E01, "Strange Love," emphasis added¹⁸)

While the vampire Nan Flanagan states in her last sentence that she and her people want to be recognized as "part of mainstream society," her assertion – as will become clear throughout the series – does not only apply to vampires, who, as it is and due to their undead state, constitute a separate class, race or species. Instead, it also denotes the struggles of characters of color as well as characters who display sexual orientations divergent from heteronormative expectations and who are deprived of an equal status in the American society of the *True Blood* universe. What members of all these groups have in common is that they do not seem to achieve the same status in society as their non-vampire, white and heterosexual neighbors.

Reminiscent of and alluding to the experiences of African Americans, especially in the American South, the idea of individuals being citizens, paying taxes but not having

¹⁸ Emphasis added to illustrate linguistic stress in spoken dialogue.

basic civil rights strikes a chord, especially with the series' U.S. audience. In their paper on the politics of African American belonging, Derek H. Alderman and E. Arnold Modlin Jr. assert that "hospitality is not confined to one region in particular, [but] it has become strongly identified with the American South" (12). The disparities of Southern hospitality and the acceptance of the vampiric newcomers throughout the series have shown how difficult the objective of justice and equality for all still is in a modern world, even in a world where supernatural creatures are part of everyday, or rather 'every night' life.

Just as the vampires with their "rather sordid history of exploiting and feeding off innocent people" (S01/E01, "Strange Love"), the American South also hosts its own violent past. Bill Maher's statement can be interpreted as an accurate description and portrayal of the history of this region. As previously mentioned, the South has continuously been othered in literature and popular culture¹⁹ due to its maintenance of a certain image or even notoriety and its adherence to traditions and stereotypes. While this region has been "othered" by outsiders, it has also actively contributed to this process through, for instance, the region's residents' utmost insistence on the right to carry weapons, the discrimination of the region's non-heteronormative-conforming population as well as the occurrences of race-related hate-crimes and continuously numerous incidents of police-violence.

Of course, the American South is not only famous for negative reasons, which set it apart from the rest of the United States. This region is also famous for its hardworking and family-oriented population as well as the Southern cuisine and being the birthplace of country music in the 1920s. Another widely-known and mostly positively regarded cliché

¹⁹ Alluding to the South's history, contemporary popular culture continues to broach the issue of this region's and Louisiana's past in particular of abusive discrimination and exploitation of African Americans. Here, one can for example think of Pink's socio-critical song "What about us" (on the album *Beautiful Trauma*, 2017), addressed to the U.S. government where she sings: "We are billions of beautiful hearts, And you sold us down the river too far," comparing contemporary society to events in the nineteenth and twentieth century when slaves were afraid to be sold down the Mississippi because of Louisiana's reputation for particularly harsh and inhumane treatment of slaves on the state's sugar and cotton plantations.

of the South, however, is that Southerners are said to be inherently hospitable. Forgetting or even actively ignoring how this practice came to be institutionalized, many Southerners claim this attribute amongst the most favorable of this part of the United States of America. Alderman and Modlin explain that “such an essentializing perspective fails to appreciate the social relations and conditions that gave rise to southern hospitality as a culturally important idea” (12). According to Anthony Szczesiul, Southern hospitality “first existed as a narrowly defined body of social practices among the antebellum planter classes” (127), where its achievement “from and for whites was in large part achieved by being inhospitable and inhumane to African Americans” (Alderman and Modlin 12). Szczesiul explains that these practices have been “an important vehicle for self-definition among southerners” (Szczesiul 127) while they simultaneously enabled non-southerners to “imagin[e] their relationship with the region” (127). Although *True Blood* will address the topic of racism and the continuous discrimination against African Americans throughout its seven seasons, it is the human characters’ treatment of the vampiric citizens which largely unveils these in the series no longer fantastic creatures’ search for belonging as well as society’s racial intolerance as indicative of continuously existing contemporary concerns of Western society.

Belonging, Home and Southern Hospitality

True Blood is known first and foremost for its overly dramatic and exaggerated depiction of sexuality and violence in small town life. Adopted as almost common practice for a number of television series, a plethora of clichés and stereotypes gives viewers the choice of either buying into the action on screen or adopting a more objective perspective. Arguably using exaggerations as a means of illuminating societal issues through a lens of irony and dark humor, *True Blood* buys into the interest of twenty-first century visual art works and media to depict suburban and rural life. In said depictions, life is shown to be so

boring as that the residents of suburbs and cities “entertain fantasies of death” (Gronlund n.pag.) and engage in excess or socially frowned upon (sexual) practices, ultimately feeding their darker impulses, simply to have something to do.²⁰

As mentioned at an earlier point, the series’ location in northern Louisiana, replete with its untamed wilderness, as well as the fact that a great part of the plot takes place at night when the vampires come out to play, lend the series a certain mystification and create a setting which gives rise to and maintains the assumption that nothing is as it seems, indicative of the persistence of “the thriving afterlife of horror, a genre whose obituary many critics composed following the event of September 11, 2001” (Briefel and Miller 1). As Punter and Byron point out, the combination of traditional Gothic elements with “the particular concerns of the American South” (116) leads to “an emphasis on the grotesque, the macabre and, very often, the violent” (116), as can be seen in the many instances of aggression and violence between the series’ humans and vampires, which, at times, almost conceal its underlying discussion of belonging.

Recognizing “that a ‘politics of belonging’ is constituted and constructed through regional identity and how it is represented” (9) and that “[w]hile a sense of belonging is certainly a personal, emotional attachment to place, it is also a socially mediated matter” (9), Alderman and Modlin’s assertions coincide with Marco Antonsich, who claims that “one’s personal, intimate feeling of belonging to a place should always come to terms with discourses and practices of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion at play in that very place and which inexorably conditions one’s sense of place-belongingness” (649). While vampires, according to Nan Flanagan, supposedly want to belong to American society, only Bill Compton explicitly expresses the desire to make the town of Bon Temps his true and permanent home.

²⁰ Here, Ryan Trecartin’s visual art film *A Family Finds Entertainment* (2004) comes to mind as well as the more famous TV format *Desperate Housewives* (2004-12).

When Bill visits Sookie and her grandmother to talk about his possible attendance at one of the Descendants of the Glorious Dead meetings, viewers find out for the first time that the vampires in *True Blood*, just like in most of prior vampire fiction, need to be invited in by one of the inhabitants of a home. When Sookie welcomes Bill on the front porch and walks through the door, she notices that Bill does not follow her inside. Asking him what the matter is, Bill explains that it is physically impossible for him “to enter a mortal’s home” (S01/E02, “The First Taste”) without an invitation. Stepping over the threshold after Sookie politely asks him to come inside, she, however, immediately recognizes the disparate power relations this necessity of an invitation creates. Wanting to be certain that she is able to control what happens in her and her grandmother’s home, Sookie asks their supernatural visitor, “So, if I were to withdraw my invitation, would you have to leave?” (“The First Taste”). Seemingly uncomfortable to reveal this weakness, Bill gives a somewhat awkward affirmation by nodding his head to which Sookie states, “Well I’ll have to remember that” (“The First Taste”). Although this statement appears to be made jokingly, Sookie clearly marks her territory and lets Bill know that he will have to behave during his visit since it is ultimately herself and her grandmother who are in charge.

Upon entering Adele’s living room, Bill finds out that Tara and Jason are also present, who unlike Adele and Sookie meet him with distance and almost downright hostility. Exuding her usual friendliness and hospitality, Adele has prepared food and drinks for her guests. Offering Bill a sandwich, she is obviously embarrassed when she notices that she forgot that the vampire is unable to consume anything other than blood or the synthetic substitute. Eventually, settling on the couch, Adele asks if Bill has ancestral connections to the town of Bon Temps. When he replies, “my father’s people were Comptons, and my mother’s people were Loudermilks” (S01/E02, “The First Taste”), Adele sympathetically informs him, “Oh, there are a lot of Loudermilks left, but, I’m afraid, old Mr. Jesse Compton died last year” (S01/E02, “The First Taste”). To this, Bill

explains that the fact that there were now no living Comptons left anymore was the reason why he returned to Bon Temps and “set up home in the old Compton place” (S01/E02, “The First Taste”). Continuing that he was hoping for the Vampire Rights Amendment (VRA) to pass, he is harshly interrupted by Jason’s exclamation “Yeah, I wouldn’t be too sure about that if I were you. A lot of Americans don’t think you people deserve special rights” (S01/E02, “The First Taste”). While Jason becomes continuously more hostile towards the vampire, Bill’s critique that vampires just want the same rights humans have, and that, in fact, their legal distinction is unjust, lead Jason to eventually snap at him, “it’s called this is how we do it” (“The First Taste”). Ignoring the fact that Bill, and vampires in general, once were human, Jason’s hostility is a prime example of humanity’s self-proclaimed superiority over other species. In her analysis of the posthuman. Rosi Braidotti explains this sentiment stating, “[w]e assert our attachment to the species as if it were a matter of fact, a given. So much so that we construct a fundamental notion of Rights around the Human” (1). Although vampires are on the way to gain similar rights to the human population in *True Blood*, Jason’s reaction to Bill (and vampires at large) suggests the persistence of prejudices and the “us” versus “them” mindset in Western and American society, which has been reinforced by the events of and after 9/11.

Although Bill was invited to this get-together by Sookie’s grandmother and attends it as a favor to Sookie, the heated exchange between the two men is a perfect example of how “[m]oments of welcome, domestication and dispossession follow on from each other, undercut each other and complicate each other in numerous ways” (Baker 7). Adhering to Gideon Baker’s claim that “[l]eaving be is as much the ethics of hospitality as the welcome is” (7), Adele reprimands Jason for his rudeness, making it abundantly clear that she will not accept this unfriendly treatment of a guest in her house. When Jason exclaims, “Look, Gran, I am the man in this family,” (S01/E02, “The First Taste”) Adele admonishes him. Kimberly Dovey asserts, “[h]ome is demarcated territory with both physical and symbolic

boundaries that ensure that dwellers can control access and behavior within” (36). Firmly stating, “You are A man in this family, but I am the oldest person here and this is my house. You better respect me, boy!” (“The First Taste”, emphasis added²¹), Adele stresses that Jason is in her home, her territory so to speak. Not only does she make it clear that she invited Bill into her home, but she also lets her grandson, as well as everyone present, know that they will have to adhere to her rules of conduct.

In the above-mentioned exchange, one can clearly discern the connection between the notion of home and the power it grants its owner. Jason’s outrage is evidently based on prejudices towards the vampire race and simultaneously reminds us of former and prevailing discriminatory practices in contemporary American society, especially due to its setting in the American South. The interdependency of home and power and the use of the vampire as a destabilizing figure of identity form the ideal foundation in *True Blood* for the discussion of societal issues and the negotiation of various cultural conflicts.²² Needless to say, vampires are known for their usefulness in the analysis of racial prejudice, as can be seen in Judith Jack Halberstam’s exposure of Stoker’s *Dracula* as an anti-Semitic text in “Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*” (1993). Taking up this tradition, *True Blood* draws a concept of discrimination in various forms, revealing that past mistreatments of certain groups are still present and that society has not yet learned its lesson from history but rather continues to be prejudiced towards anyone and anything that seems new, unknown or deviant from norms that usually were arbitrarily established long ago. The argument between characters of different species or races and their discussion of, for example, a Vampire Rights Amendment in a series which premiered in the year 2008 was surely no coincidence. The fact that it was in 1968, 40 years prior to the broadcasting

²¹ Emphasis added to illustrate linguistic stress in spoken dialogue.

²² In her chapter “The Posthuman as Becoming-Animal,” Rosi Braidotti states, “[t]he dialectics of otherness is the inner engine of humanist Man’s power, who assigns difference on a hierarchical scale as a tool of governance” (68).

of the series and this episode, that the Civil Rights Act of 1968, also referred to as the *Fair Housing Act*, was passed, essentially prohibiting discrimination in housing, strongly underlines *True Blood*'s exposure of the longevity of discrimination and its continuous relevance in twenty-first century society in its discussion of the discourses of home and belonging.

By following Gothic traditions, such as the figure of the vampire and the tropes of home and family, I argue, *True Blood* offers a platform where, as Marina Levina and Diem-My T. Bui state, "society can safely represent and address anxieties of its time" (1). As Robin Wood sets forth, "culture and society dictates that which we must repress" (*Hollywood* 4) and this "repression is closely linked to the concept of the Other . . . as representational of those characteristics that we repress in order to fit into the cultural normative regime" (4).²³ The vampires in *True Blood* are – at least in their own culture – free from the societal constraints mentioned here. In contrast to the human race, for vampires it continues to be normal to give in to their urges and desires without being reprimanded by members of their species, although, in their attempt to coexist peacefully, they will need to try to adhere to the human rules of conduct if they want to succeed.

Throughout the series, the vampires – although oftentimes several hundred years older than the humans – appear to be a more open-minded (especially sexually), practical, maybe even in certain respects a more progressive race than the humans. Especially in Season One, when, for a while, consorting with a vampire is believed to be deadly for humans,²⁴ Bill tries to make Sookie aware of the dangers of socializing with a vampire, saying, "We don't have human values like you" (S01/E01, "Strange Love"). However,

²³ Asserting that boundaries, which had been considered rigid for a long time, are slowly beginning to ease up, Elaine L. Graham explains that "[n]ew relationships between 'the human, the natural, or the constructed' (Haraway, 1991c: 21) . . . reveal the very categories 'humanity,' 'nature' and 'culture' as themselves highly malleable. Technologies call into question the ontological purity according to which Western society has defined what is normatively human" (5).

²⁴ See, for instance, the previously mentioned murders, which were initially attributed to vampiric perpetrators.

instead of being afraid, Sookie simply counters this warning with the statement “Well humans turn on them who trust them, too” (“Strange Love”), echoing Nan Flanagan’s earlier mentioned argumentation during the TV interview with Bill Maher. Here Sookie does not only allude to the history of the South when slave-owners habitually abused their slaves physically and psychologically, but she also refers to and foreshadows frequent occurrences throughout the series when her fellow residents of Bon Temps turn against her brother, herself or each other. The American South and its inhabitants that are portrayed in *True Blood* can, hence, be seen as what Robin Wood in *Hollywood From Vietnam to Reagan* defines as “the Other” which must either be rejected or assimilated (65-66). Assimilating experiences and desires of the vampire figure, such as the desire for a family and a home, to those of humans, the series walks a fine line between openly criticizing contemporary and continuous societal trends while simultaneously giving hope that they can be overcome eventually.

3.2 Home and Hospitality, Marking Humanity or Monstrosity?

As the past two decades have shown, American vampires and other supernaturals regularly continue their tradition of inhabiting regions which set themselves apart and are distinct for one or the other reason. Here, as I have mentioned at an earlier point, one can think of examples such as Stephenie Meyer’s vampires and werewolves who live in the remote and constantly overcast small town of Forks in the state of Washington, or L. J. Smith’s vampires (*The Vampire Diaries*), who mix and mingle with the population of Mystic Falls, Virginia, a seemingly average small town which distinguishes itself from other towns in that it is situated on so-called magical ley lines, which cause it to be a supernatural hotspot. Falling in line with the examples of Forks, WA and Mystic Falls, VA, the Deep South of the U.S. with its distinct history of slavery and the Civil War, as well as its dangerous

swamps and mysterious wilderness (e.g. Southern moss, giant oak trees), constitutes the ideal location for a story about vampires and other supernatural creatures. New Orleans in particular, with its notorious historical connection to voodoo and the practice of magic (e.g. witchcraft), has been depicted in fiction as a mecca for the non-human population of the United States. Movie- as well as TV-vampires oftentimes find themselves in New Orleans at least once during their screen time,²⁵ as this large and vibrant Southern city appears to be a great place to blend into its cultural and ethnic diversity or hide in plain sight. However, the South is not only known for its distress and connection to magic and mysteries, but its rural regions are especially famous throughout the world for the people's friendliness, politeness and hospitality. This binary perception seems to be what really accounts for the appeal of the South and plays a central role in *True Blood*.

As, for example, political debates about the removal of the Confederate flag from the capitol of Charleston, South Carolina, in the year 2015 but also the South's self-advertisement show, this region does not appear to be capable of, or maybe does not want to, shake off its history. Instead, it seems to continuously, even consciously, struggle against this region's entry into the modern world. Yet, the detachment from the rest of the U.S. is what lends this region a certain mystification and excitement. Tourists are fascinated by the traditions and manners, which while "distinguishing it from other regions" (McPherson 150), "are repeatedly framed as the glue that binds the South together" (150), where values such as family and politeness, for instance, still appear to be capitalized. Yet, in stark contrast to tourists' perceptions of these manners and traditions, McPherson defines Southern hospitality as "a performance, a masquerade, an agreed-on social fiction, albeit a powerful one with material effects" (150), which is supported by the region's apparent oblivion to this customs' origins. Similarly, obliterating this well-known

²⁵ See, for instance, Louis and Lestat in *Interview with the Vampire*, Bill and Eric in *True Blood*, Stefan and Damon Salvatore in *The Vampire Diaries*.

and well-exploited characteristic of the South, Diane Roberts also construes Southern hospitality as a “‘performance’, representing itself as special, chosen, a favoured region congratulating itself on not having the problems associate with the rest of the country” (90). In *True Blood*, the South, however, does face the same problems as the rest of the country: Vampires have come “out of the coffin” and – even though a little later – also find their way to Bon Temps in the backwoods of the southern states, where they will find Southern hospitality rather obstructive than conducive to their attempt to become accepted members of society. While hospitality and friendliness seem to be cornerstones of Bon Temps’ society, both are regularly revealed to be performances instead of heartfelt attitudes. The characters in the series are mostly ignorant of their own hypocritical behavior towards one another; the viewers of the series, however, are privy to their true inner thoughts (some positive, but most heinous) through Sookie’s mindreading abilities. The series offers many examples of performed friendliness and hospitality, such as Maxine Fortenberry’s attendance of Adele Stackhouse’s (Sookie’s grandmother) wake, for instance. Although she pretends to attend for emotional support, stating how much everyone will miss Adele, Maxine is in reality disappointed that there is no evidence left of the gruesome murder. When Sookie overhears Maxine thinking “I heard they almost cut off her head. I don’t see any blood. Should’ve gotten here sooner” (S01/E06, “Cold Ground”), viewers recognize Maxine’s friendliness and concern for what it really is. Wearing a mask to cover her disgusting and hurtful sensationalism and deceptive self-advertisement, Maxine’s performance functions as a mirror image of Southern friendliness and hospitality. Although both might very well also be meant and carried out honestly, they also serve as a marketing tool that stresses the South alterity from the rest of the nation.

As Jim Goad states, “the South has become America’s cultural [n***] rendered in geographical terms”²⁶ (87), Allison Graham infers that the South is “[t]he ‘dark’ underbelly of the nation, the reversed image in the mass-media mirror” (335). The notion of being revolting while simultaneously fascinating also adequately describes the reception of vampires in *True Blood*, creating a connection between the undead and this region. While the locals of Bon Temps are afraid of the ‘newcomers,’ they are at the same time fascinated. With ‘vampire Bill’s’ arrival, life as the locals know it is over and it is then, when vampires and humans are forced to interact with each other, that the struggle of identity in this region becomes most obvious. Viewers gain insight into the still prevalent problematic of old versus new South mentalities through the series’ allusions to discrimination and events in African American history. Not only, as previously mentioned, does *True Blood* introduce the vampires’ quest for “basic civil rights” (“Strange Love”) within the first two minutes of the show, but, for instance, the main character Sookie also mentions to vampire Bill that her boss Sam “supports the vampire rights amendment” (“Strange Love”). Here, as I argue, Sookie’s statement alludes to issues such as the Reconstruction Amendments in the mid-nineteenth century, the African American Civil Rights movements in the 1950s and 60s, or the LGBTQ+ community’s fight for the abolition of the Federal Marriage Amendment in the early twenty-first century.²⁷ Bill sarcastically replies to Sookie’s affirmation of Sam’s good will, “How progressive of him” (“Strange Love”), hinting at the series’ continuous exposure of bigotry and the feigned friendliness and performed hospitality towards the vampire race.

The fact that said friendliness is only a pretense, concealing the characters’ actual bigotry becomes apparent already early on in Season One when Sam and Sookie argue

²⁶ For reasons of respect, I altered the original wording, refraining from using such an emotionally and race-politically charged epithet.

²⁷ J. M. Tyree explains that “*True Blood* positions itself as a loose but obvious allegory about the mainstream acceptance of so-called ‘alternative lifestyles’ – it’s about tolerance and integration of many kinds, using the vitriolic American debate over gay marriage as a touchstone, while linking it with the Southern reaction against civil rights” (32).

about prejudices towards and the maltreatment of vampires. Informing her employer and friend that she will need to leave work a little earlier than usual so she can go to the vampire bar Fangtasia with Bill in order to find out information which could clear her brother's name in the ongoing murder investigations,²⁸ Sam does not support Sookie consorting with vampires. When he reminds her that all vampires want to do is drink your blood, Sookie is disappointed at his behavior, saying "Frankly Sam, I'm surprised at you. I thought you were for the Vampire Rights Amendment" (S01/E12, "You'll Be the Death of Me"). To his defense that, if it were up to him, vampires could have their own bars, but that humans just should not go there, Sookie exclaims appalled, "So you just wanna turn back to the days of separate but equal?" ("You'll Be the Death of Me"), which Sam confirms, replying that the vampires can have more than humans do, "just as long as everything is separate" ("You'll Be the Death of Me").

Similar to how Jason made his chagrin known about vampires being out in the open, Sam Merlotte signals, in no uncertain terms, that he does not like to welcome vampire customers in his establishment. The idea that vampires and humans should not mingle is shared by many of Bon Temps citizens, as viewers of *True Blood* regularly find out through Sookie's mindreading abilities. Bill meets with many obstacles in his attempt to make Bon Temps his home, which – even before he attempts to make acquaintances – already begin with difficulties in renovating the old plantation home he moved into and the ownership of which he hopes will revert back to him once the VRA will pass. Explaining to Sookie that he has been doing most repairs himself as he has been unable to get an electrician to return his calls, Bill is aware of that fact that he is not yet accepted in Bon Temps. Agreeing with "[Elspeth] Probyn (1996, 13), when she affirms that 'belonging cannot be an isolated and individual affair'" (649), Marco Antonsich asserts that there exist

²⁸ See, S01/E04, "Burning House of Love": After the second of Jason's affairs, Dawn Green, is found dead in her bed, the police and many of the town folk readily believe Jason to be the murderer.

“[b]oundary discourses and practices that separate ‘us’ from ‘them’ [which] are indeed at the very essence of any politics of belonging (Bhambra 2006, 39; Lovell 1998c, 53; Yuval-Davis 2006, 204)” (649). Continuing his argument, Antonsich states that “[w]ithin this context, belonging to a place becomes one and the same as belonging to a group of people, i.e. belonging becomes synonymous with identity, both social and individual (Lovell 1998a, 1)” (649), which the examples of *True Blood* strongly support. Bill has not yet been able to create a feeling of belonging in Bon Temps, as he has neither been able to root himself spatially, nor emotionally or socially.

Dovey sees the notion of home as “a relationship, an experienced meaning” (35), which, as I argue, humans prevent Bill from achieving. Being relatively new in town, although Bill has grown up in Bon Temps as a human child and young man, he does what many people do when they move to a rural region and want to meet the locals: he frequents the local diner. Already upon his first visit, Bill understands that he will need to work hard to fit in. Ordering a glass of red wine, since the bar’s Tru Blood supply has gone bad due to the until then lack of vampire customers, he states that the wine gives him a reason to be there (S01/E01, “Strange Love”). During later visits to Merlotte’s, mostly to be able to see Sookie, Bill is able to drink bottled blood, which Sam kindly reorders. However, even though Bill behaves like the perfect Southern Gentleman, he still is not granted the hospitality one would stereotypically expect from a bar in the South. When he, for instance, comes to pick up Sookie to go to Fangtasia in Shreveport, Sookie’s friend and co-worker Arlene almost outright refuses to take his drink order of a bottle of O Negative, claiming that A Negative was all they have in store. When he then confirms this option and tries to make small talk, Arlene simply turns around and leaves, turning the order in with Tara, who, tending the bar, tells her that Sam has recently bought both types of faux blood. Making it clear that she purposefully lied to the vampire, Arlene snidely replies, “Fuck him. I’m giving him A. And don’t microwave it neither. He can have it cold” (S01/E04,

“Escape from Dragon House”). As this example confirms, in order to make a place one’s home, it does not suffice to have a dwelling. Instead, the realization of home as rootedness can only be achieved through the creation of social relationships, which Antonsich affirms, stating:

To be able to feel at home in a place is not just a personal matter, but also a social one. In fact, if one feels rejected or not welcomed by the people who live in that place, her/his sense of belonging would inevitably be spoiled (Jayaweera and Choudhury 2008). This means that one’s personal, intimate feeling of belonging to a place should always come to terms with discourses and practices of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion at play in that very place and which inexorably conditions one’s sense of place-belongingness. As put by Yuval-Davis et al. (2005, 528), the ‘sociology of emotions’ should come to terms with the ‘sociology of power.’ (649)

Once again, the connection between home and power becomes visible. As I have attempted to show, the notion of hospitality grants the host a certain amount of power over the guest. This power can be exerted by either the residents of a home, the owner of an establishment or a person who, due to the socio-political relationship, has more authority than the guest (i.e. the waitress Arlene Fowler). Unlike the human homes, vampire homes in *True Blood* do not grant the residents any kind of security and only a limited amount of power. Open to any visitors or intruders, Bill, for instance, cannot do anything to prevent other vampires from entering his house. Some vampires assume the role of guests, at least to a miniscule extent, such as the vampires Diane, Malcolm and Liam, who are similarly powerful as Bill. However, vampire protocol as well as the necessity to not lose face by appearing weak dictate Bill to entertain them and force him to almost helplessly watch when they threaten Sookie in his home (S01/E03, “Mine”). Eventually leaving Bill’s house on their own account, their visit has made it clear that the three are not attempting to mainstream, but rather bask in their monstrosity. As they enjoy frightening, abusing and even recklessly killing humans, as when they, for example, toy with and threaten the patrons of Merlotte’s, it comes as no surprise when they ultimately meet the final death in their own “nest,” when their house is set on fire during daylight at the hands of some Bon Temps rednecks and

Merlotte customers (S01/E07, “Burning House of Love”). Once again, the racial undertone is not lost on viewers of the series as this act ultimately constitutes a hate crime, which is defined on the FBI “as a ‘criminal offense against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by an offender’s bias against a race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, ethnicity, gender, or gender identity’” (“Hate Crimes” n.pag.).

Unlike Diane, Malcolm and Liam, however, Eric Northman does not feel the need to behave like a guest in Bill’s home at all or in any way. Entering when Bill is not there, he even goes so far as to spend his time waiting, taking a bubble bath in candle light and listening to Old Swedish music from his native country. Evidently appropriating Bill’s home as if it were his own, Eric uses this invasion of Bill’s privacy to remind his fellow vampire of their different standing in the vampire hierarchy. Befitting this situation, Dovey creates a connection between privacy, so “the autonomy in the phenomenon of home” (47), and identity. According to Altman, privacy mechanisms “define the limits and boundaries of the self” (50) where “[w]hen the permeabilities of those boundaries is under the control of a person, a sense of individuality develops” (50). Unable to protect his privacy, Bill finds himself in a situation where he is insecure of his identity and position in society (human and vampire) as well as his undead existence in general. Gideon Baker explains that historically hospitality was considered “an outworking of innate human sociability” (42), where “[h]ospitality, the welcome of the stranger, was thereby seen as a key tenet of the law of nature and nations” (42), which “implied something like a right of free passage” (42). As most vampires in *True Blood* are creatures whose existential humanity ended centuries or at least several decades ago, they might still exercise hospitality in such a way, adhering to rather traditional behavioral rules. However, as Eric is also the Sheriff of Area Five, which encompasses Bon Temps and Shreveport, the former Viking’s higher rank forces Bill to follow Eric’s orders and to show him his due respect, which includes the granting of his involuntary hospitality as well as to accept Eric’s appropriation of Bill’s

home. While both of these examples depict Bill's inability to control vampiric behavior inside his own home, it becomes obvious that he endures these moments of lost control over his house but also avoids to offer polite actions, customarily attributed to hospitality, such as offering nutrition/drinks to the vampiric intruders. Similar to how, in *The Originals*, the original family as Norwegian immigrants are made out to be the most powerful vampires, also *True Blood* suggests a European supremacy over those vampires who are native-born Americans. Examples of this supremacy can be found in the characters of Eric Northman, a former Swedish Viking, and the Magister, Jorge Alonso de San Diego, who was born in 15th century Spain and was a feared inquisitor during the Spanish Inquisition, eventually (after being turned into a vampire) being in charge of tribunals where he decides over vampires' punishments. Both of these characters underline the series' race-political undertone as they mirror the Eurocentrism still exercised by certain groups of Western society and particularly fraught with meaning considering the series' setting in the Deep South where hate-groups like the Ku Klux Klan still operate and hate crimes like the Charleston church shooting (2015) still happen due to such prevailing ideologies.

While Bill's low level of authority and inferior standing are reflected in his lack of control over his home, it is also reflected in the actual appearance of his home. Commenting on his seemingly unimpressive vampire powers and his inability to turn into a bat, to levitate or turn invisible, Sookie states, "You don't seem like a very good vampire" (S01/E02, "The First Taste"). Pointing out that Bill, thus, does not confirm such stereotypical vampire attributes, Sookie, and with her the series' viewers, discover that also the interior of Bill's home, just like his apparent lack of powers, is rather unremarkable and more befitting of a stereotypical vampire. Run-down and unkempt, the old plantation home reminds us more of the Gothic cliché of a traditional vampire lair than a true home.

Lacking any natural light,²⁹ Bill's home appears everything but homey with its paint peeling off of walls and doors and the seeming uncleanliness of the stairs as well as most surfaces which are covered in dust. Mary Douglas's assertion that "[h]aving shelter is not having a home, nor is having a house" ("Idea" 289) appears as an adequate description of the lack of homey atmosphere in Bill's house, as indicative and explanatory of his lacking sense of belonging. Considering Douglas's assertion that "[f]or a home neither the space nor its appurtenances have to be fixed, but there has to be something regular about the appearance and reappearance of its furnishings" (289), the fact that Bill hardly owns any furniture besides a couch and living room table give his dwelling a rather deserted, uninhabited appearance mirroring his "unbelonging."

Especially in Season One, the Compton Home will serve as a site where the past conflicts repeatedly with the present, a commonly used Gothic dichotomy as I explained in Chapter 1. For Bill, the plantation house causes both positive and negative emotions. Holding pleasant memories of his human life, it simultaneously signifies all he has lost: his humanity, and his family first and foremost. Defining the Gothic genre, Gronlund asserts that "[i]n its barest bones, the Gothic is a clash of the old and the new, weighted toward the former as it struggles with its own obsolescence" (n.pag.). While this could arguably be understood as a fitting definition of the figure of the vampire, Bill's home in *True Blood* represents the same qualities. Although only the shadow of the former glory of this large Southern structure³⁰ is visible still in Season One, Bill replicates his history in this house, exhibiting the Southern manners he acquired when he was raised there. Similar to how Adele offered food to Bill upon his visit, the vampire also keeps contemporary beverages such as soda in his home to offer to human visitors. When Bill, for instance, offers Sherriff Dearborne and Detective Bellefleur a can of soda when they come to question him, is one

²⁹ The inside of Bill's home is mostly shown at night when he is awake to welcome or entertain guests.

³⁰ Especially Seasons 1 and 2 provide short flashbacks to Bill Compton's past and give glimpses of what his home looked like when he was living there with his wife and children.

example of the clash of the past and the present. While the appearance of Bill's home is everything but welcoming, the vampire still knows how to perform hospitality, which ultimately does not only surprise both law enforcers, but also lets the viewers of the series see that this vampire is not so different from humans.

Throughout the seven seasons of *True Blood*, Bill Compton undergoes a significant development. Gaining more authority as the seasons progress, the appearance of his home continuously mirrors his growing level of power as indicative of the "sociology of power" (Antonsich 649), which he can exert through hospitality. The first change in Bill's representation and standing occurs rather involuntary when he is forced to create a vampire as reparation for killing Eric's associate Longshadow. Turning the teenager Jessica into a vampire, Bill suddenly finds himself in the position of being a maker.³¹ While he is overwhelmed by the situation of no longer solely being a progeny but now also a maker, he tries to pass his responsibilities concerning Jessica over to Eric and Pam, who, however, quickly tire of the girl's antiques and return her to him. Once Jessica lives with Bill full-time, the two slowly begin to adjust to their new roles, which entail that Jessica will need to follow the rules Bill lays out for his progeny in his home. Carol M. Werner et al. suggest that "[s]ocial rules describe what behavior are appropriate and expected in settings at particular times, thereby giving meaning to the settings, people, and their behaviors (Argyle, 1976, 1979; Rapport, 1982)" (3). When Bill explains, "Your bedtime will be at 4 a.m. and not a minute later. . . . And whilst you are under my roof, hunting is completely forbidden. . . . We also recycle in this house. Tru Blood and other glass items go in the blue container. And paper products go in the white container" (S02/E01, "Nothing but the Blood"), the vampire creates a familiar domestic scene. Indirectly communicating his newly attained status as authority in his house – of which he himself might even still be unaware –, this is the first instance when the vampire displays a sense of belonging in his

³¹ See, Chapter 2.2.1 for further information on the different maker-progeny relationships.

home in that he expects a certain behavior in his house. Finally finding himself in a position where he can make the rules, this newly gained power seems to be a step towards finding and creating the missing link between himself and the structure for it to become a true home. The creation of familiar domestic scenes and behavior in *True Blood* slowly but continuously helps to portray the vampires as being similar to humans as such scenes and acts disrupt the traditional othering of the vampire figure.

Generally offering Jessica his hospitality, Bill's invocation of rules and regulations underscores Kevin O'Gorman's assertion that "[i]n the case of hospitality, the 'other' is often forced to take on the perceptions of the 'host'" ("The Hospitality" 200). Just as it is important for the vampires to live peacefully amongst humans, they need to adapt to human social codes of conduct, the younger vampires are also forced to adhere to the prescriptions of those older and more powerful than themselves.

The fact that the rules pertaining to the granting of hospitality in *True Blood* easily change from benevolence to the exertion of control over the guests, supports Dovey's claim that "[h]ome as a mere order and identity can well become a prison" (46). Bill and his sheriff Eric Northman leave their home bases on several occasions throughout the series to visit other vampires or vampire royalties, such as the Vampire Queen of Louisiana, Sophie-Anne Leclercq, and the Vampire King of Mississippi, Russell Edgington. Arriving at Sophie-Anne's mansion in New Orleans to seek information on how to free Bon Temps from the maenad Maryanne's influence and kill her in the process, Bill is greeted by the Queen, who is messily feeding on the femoral artery of young girl, which he is immediately offered to join. Throughout Season One, viewers were confronted with several instances of the offering of hospitality through the provision of food and drink. In scenes in which Adele Stackhouse, for example, welcomes Jason or Tara, even Bill, in her home, she is shown to immediately set out to cater for them, preparing breakfast, brewing fresh coffee or offering sandwiches. Although offering refreshments to guests is a polite

practice throughout most of the world, Southerners are most commonly associated in the United States of America with the manner of entertaining guests with food. Similar to how Bill adheres to the custom of offering drinks to the police upon their visit, Sophie-Anne Leclercq also pretends to be the perfect host although her attempted hospitality rather serves to underscore her power and authority than to make her guest feel welcome or comfortable in her home.

Getting reprimanded for declining “the femoral blood of a good woman” (S02/E11, “Frenzy”), Her Majesty asks Bill whether he has already eaten that evening. When he admits to not having fed yet, Sophie-Anne offers, “I have several new members of court. A Latvian boy. HAS to be tasted to be believed. Not polluted like most humans. Tastes exactly the way they used to taste just after I was turned, before the Industrial Revolution fucked everything to hell. Should I summon him?” (“Frenzy”, emphasis added³²). Declining also this second offer, Bill eventually manages to discuss the reason of his visit, although with unsatisfactory results. When he expresses his wish to return home to Bon Temps, Sophie-Anne simply cuts him off mid-sentence, telling him to “spend the day and leave tomorrow” (“Frenzy”), changing the subject to how he has not yet told her how he likes her “new dayroom” (“Frenzy”), which presents the end of this scene. The whole exchange between Bill and the Queen resembles a satire of Southern hospitality, reminiscent of McPherson’s assertion that it is “a masquerade, an agreed-on social fiction” (150). Ridiculing this southern custom through the Queen’s exaggerated intonation and obvious and deliberate disregard of Bill’s request for help, Sophie-Anne’s hospitality is unmasked to be a rehearsed behavior instead of an inborn virtue.

As the above-given example has shown, the Vampire Queen of Louisiana does not tolerate the rejection of her offers or orders although she camouflages her indisputable superiority with hospitality. Mirroring Dovey’s assertion that home “is a place of

³² Emphasis added to illustrate linguistic stress in spoken dialogue.

autonomy and power in an increasingly heteronomous world where others make the rules” (46), Sophie-Anne’s behavior highlights her standing and dominion in her kingdom. Her offer of a selection of humans, as if they were a choice of chocolates to be tried, indicates that she (just like most vampires in the series) is everything but coherent with human heteronormative ideologies. The Queen’s transgressive and domineering behavior is also stressed when, several scenes later, the plot returns to Bill’s forced stay in the Queen’s home. While the previous scene already seemed like a parody of hospitality when Sophie-Ann simply declined Bill’s wish to return home, the viewers’ return to the mansion surpasses this previous effect. Showing Bill nervously lounging in a chair by the indoor pool of the day room,³³ he is dressed in nothing but swimming shorts and sunglasses. With the Queen by his side, he is presented with a line-up of scantily dressed humans from whom he is supposed to choose his food. Simply forcing him to comply, Sophie-Anne eventually chooses for Bill when she tires of his continuous refusal to feed, finally letting the mask of hospitality drop. Sophie-Anne’s treatment of Bill as well as her lavishly decorated home demonstrate that Bill is in no position to make his own decisions in the New Orleans mansion as he is hierarchically too far down the ladder in vampire society.

Just as Sophie-Anne and Russell Edgington, the Vampire King of Mississippi (see Chapter 2.2.1), show off their standing in vampire societies through their lavishly decorated large mansions, Bill’s home also gets a real make-over when his standing changes. Offering his hospitality, he invites the Queen to enter his home upon her visit. Killing her within his four walls, which previously had provided him with little to no safety, the mansion as location for this crucial fight is significant for the alteration and surge of Bill’s power, which will also be displayed in his home’s excessive makeover. As

³³ Sophie-Anne Leclercq’s day room is a large structure with an indoor pool and numerous crystal chandeliers. In order to create the illusion of being at the beach, numerous make-believe terrace doors are laminated with pictures of an oceanfront, complete with dunes and waves. Playing the sound of breaking waves, together with music, the artificially created daylight simulate a beautiful sunny day.

previously mentioned, Bill used to have little to no control over who entered or invaded his home, which drastically changes once he replaces Sophie-Anne as head of the vampire community in the state of Louisiana in Season Four (S04/E02, “You Smell Like Dinner”). Quickly refurbishing his home, turning it into a residence worthy of his new position as King, the walls are no longer flaky or the rooms bare of furniture, but the interior and outside of his plantation home now shine in new splendor, complete with modern art works and state-of-the-art technology. When Sookie, for instance, walks across the cemetery to Bill’s house, as she had many times before, she suddenly finds herself surrounded by security guards carrying automatic firearms who inform her, “Nobody sees the King unless they’re on the manifest” (“You Smell Like Dinner”). Sookie in this moment experiences firsthand what Bill must have felt like many times before. Suddenly needing to be invited or rather allowed in, Sookie finds herself at the receiving end of hospitality, with the roles of host and guest reversed between her and Bill.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Bill and other vampires had the aim to become part of mainstream society. Being granted the same citizenship as their human counterparts, however, does not simultaneously allow these vampires to experience belonging to a place or a community. Dovey’s previously quoted assertion that “the home is a social symbol of our identity” (47) is only one step towards achieving a sense of belonging. As history has taught us, it does not suffice to have a home to feel at home. African Americans, for instance, were granted citizenship in 1868 with the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution. However, it took over 100 years until discrimination was outlawed and African Americans were accorded full protection under U.S. American law. Still to this day, people of color experience discrimination and are treated differently, such as, for instance, U.S.-born children of illegal immigrants from Mexico to whom states such as Florida deny instate tuition rates. In fact, these states violate these students’ rights as they defy the Fourteenth Amendment that states, “All

persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside” (U.S. Constitution). Similar to the above-mentioned contemporary examples, for Bill, the feeling of belonging can only progressively be achieved the more power he has over his home and actions. Dovey explains that “[b]eing at home is a mode of being whereby we are oriented within a spatial, temporal, and sociocultural order that we understand” (35). Only when Bill accepts his identity as a vampire and stops to bemoan the loss of his human life, can he finally find his place in vampire society. Beginning with becoming a maker to Jessica and continuing with dethroning the Queen of Louisiana, Bill experiences the “dynamic adaptability” of home (Dovey 43), which “allows for both the *representation* and the *growth* of identity” (43, original emphases). By taking on responsibilities, first as maker and then as king, Bill has finally created a connection between his identity and his home, which will not only become obvious in his changed attitude but will also be reflected in the decor of his home.

As my examples of vampiric experiences with the concept of hospitality have shown, *True Blood* uses the stereotypical adherence to Southern traditions and manners to convey feelings of disconnectedness and unbelonging. Presenting a sense of community among the series’ human characters where certain issues, for example the right to rights, maybe even this region’s history itself, need to be repressed to uphold tradition and order, *True Blood* suggests that this region does not need monsters. Instead of portraying the vampires as being more monstrous than the humans, viewers are confronted with Bill Compton’s attempt to reclaim his home, as well as other vampires’ display of the same customs and manners normally only attributed to human Southerners. While vampires’ traditional monstrosity has been interpreted as an “embodiment of cultural difference and a reflection of power relationships through which difference may be rendered monstrous in order to expel it from a social group that seeks homogeneity” (Marino-Faza 131), Bill and other vampires in *True Blood* are examples of the continuously growing likeness between

vampires and humans. Similar to the vampires, the region of the South appears to resemble a double-edged sword, with the shadow of its past still looming over the present, which, as I assert, mirrors the maintenance of ‘Old South’ behavior and ways of thinking as presented in the series discussion of a modified version of the tradition of ‘separate but equal.’ While the South, as part of the United States, still distances itself from the rest of the nation through its compliance with manners and traditions, the self-generated “othering” of the South culminates in the exploitation of this region’s particularities in popular culture.³⁴ More often than not, such representations parody socially and politically charged issues in order to address them in a covert manner. The series’ treatment of the discourse of belonging in its discussion of the notion of “home” achieves “a politically recharged setting for the nation’s ongoing melodrama of race and social class” (A. Graham 335). Here, the vampire serves as a stand-in for former, current and future groups of individuals who search for belonging, but have been and continue to be denied its achievement. In this scenario, the fictional small-town of Bon Temps serves as an in-between-space or contact-zone where the old and the new South try to come together and where both human and supernatural factions prove to be equally monstrous.

As my analysis of human homes and vampire homes in *True Blood* has shown, academic definitions of the concept and discourse of home are applicable to vampire homes in almost identical fashion. Ultimately, stressing the fact that vampires face problems akin to those certain communities (communities of color in particular) have been facing for a long time, the series creates a similarity between humans and the traditional monster of the vampire. In his influential work *The Government of Self and Others* (2008), Michel Foucault claims that “what defines the monster is the fact that its existence and

³⁴ In the introduction to *Representations of the Post/Human*, Elaine L. Graham proposes that “[p]opular culture should . . . be considered as a significant site of the contemporary ‘genealogy of subjectification’” (13), a term Nikolas Rose introduced in his essay “Identity, Genealogy, History,” which, he argues, describes “the history of the *relations* human beings have established with themselves” (130, original emphasis) and which designates “all those heterogeneous processes and practices by means of which human beings come to relate to themselves and others as subjects of a certain type” (130-131).

form is not only a violation of the laws of society but also a violation of the laws of nature” (55-56). This is an apt description of the vampire figure, which, for a long time, has represented an unnatural state of being as well as a marginal figure of society. Foucault discusses the notion of the “human monster” (55), stating that “[i]t could be said that the monster’s power and its capacity to create anxiety are due to the fact that it violates the law while leaving it with nothing to say. It traps the law while breaching it” (56), which once more could be understood as describing characteristics normally attributed to the undead. The depiction of hospitality as a marker of hierarchy and power or control over individuals highlights the fact that the American South has not yet been able or willing to shake off its past, just like the concept of Southern hospitality cannot ignore or distance itself from the fact that it was invented and achieved on the backs and through the suffering of African American slaves. *True Blood* clearly states that hospitality always needs a hierarchical structure in order to be carried out. The series achieves this revelation in that it presents its viewers with the sad truth that twenty-first century U.S. society, just like societies in prior centuries, will continue its search for communities and individuals who can be defined as outsiders. Ultimately, when they are in need of hospitality or are searching for a place to belong, these communities and individuals, these “others,” will always depend on the benevolence of those in power.

In the new situation where vampires live amongst humans, which might be uncanny for some, and exciting for others, *True Blood*’s display of Southern hospitality serves as an indicator for people’s “true” feelings and stance towards what is seen as different or unknown. Whether the hospitality is meant honestly or not, it is performatively constructed and its workings are exposed through, for example, parodic or satiric exaggeration. This custom is a crucial part of Southern culture, and it is therefore not surprising that *True Blood* offers insight into the use of and critique of this cultural stereotype. Working out the shortcomings of hospitality, the series depicts the discriminatory effects and power this

concept continues to have. Coming back to Derrida's statement that there is "[n]o hospitality, in the classic sense, without sovereignty of oneself over one's home, but since there is also no hospitality without finitude, sovereignty can only be exercised by filtering, choosing, and thus by excluding and doing violence" (*Of Hospitality* 55), the cultural work of *True Blood* becomes obvious once more. Through the exposure of the interdependence of home and hospitality for the construction and display of power, and the role alterity plays in this interdependence, the series points out larger societal issues such as the still prevailing struggle for equal rights and acceptance of communities of color.

3.2.1 Whose Home Is It? *The Originals* and the Fight for New Orleans³⁵

KLAUS. People quake with fear because I have the power to make them afraid.
 What will this child offer me? Will it guarantee me power?
 ELIJAH. Family is power, Niklaus. Love, loyalty. That's power. This is what we
 swore to one another a thousand years ago, before life tore away what little
 humanity you had left. Before ego. Before anger. Before paranoia created in this
 person before me someone I can barely even recognize as my own brother. This
 is us. The original family. Now we remain together always and forever. I am
 asking you to stay here. I will help you and I will stand by you. I will be your
 brother. We will build a home here together.
 (S01/E01, "Always and Forever")

The concepts of home and family are strongly connected as many of the world's societies and communities have come to lead a more sedentary family lifestyle. Due to global warming and its growing effects on our planet in the recent past and present, humans all over the world have experienced the negative impacts of natural catastrophes on families as well as on their understanding of the concept of home or their accessibility to it. Thinking of August 2005 when Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast of the U.S., vast regions from Florida to Texas were flooded, homes destroyed, and people killed. While

³⁵ Large parts of this chapter were published in Bernardi, Verena. "Come on in! - The Interrelation of Home, Family and Hospitality and the Construction of Power in *The Originals*." *Hospitality, Rape and Consent in Vampire Popular Culture: Letting the Wrong One In*, edited by David Baker et al., Palgrave Gothic Series, 2017, pp. 37-52. Reproduced with permission of SCSC.

reconstruction in the years to follow would put a strain on all affected communities and U.S. states, the city of New Orleans would become a prime example of the continuous existence of race-political spatial segregation and unequal treatment of people of color even in the face of such a natural disaster.

As has been shown on the basis of several examples, the TV series *True Blood* portrays the negative implications of hospitality and the fact that home and identity, in fact, exist in a state of mutual interdependence. In this interdependence, the opportunity to selectively confer hospitality to outsiders enables the residents' identity to grow. This psychological development can, for instance, be enabled and achieved by procuring a dwelling and bringing people together in this space in order to create a home. This process has also become a recurring theme in post-2000 vampire fiction. Having experienced a progressive domestication especially in the past fifty years, the figure of the vampire has been depicted to be more humane than most of its previous representations. During this process, the discourses of home and family have recurrently been redefined, leading to the representation of new and possibly more progressive social, cultural and political meanings while simultaneously revealing their own inertia, as will be shown in this chapter. Intricately linked to home and family is the notion of hospitality, signifying the opening up of one's (family) home to outsiders, hence the acceptance of others into the fold. The television series *The Originals* employs the concepts of family and home to discuss how their interrelation bestows power upon the monsters, which is ultimately mirrored in the vampires' ability to selectively confer hospitality and to grant outsiders entrance to their home while at the same time banning others.

“My Home. My Family. My Rules.”³⁶

As I have already outlined, the difficult past of the Mikaelson siblings in previous chapters, I will refrain from repeating the reasons for their erratic relationships at this point. Suffice it to say, the city of New Orleans has come to play a crucial role for Klaus, Elijah and Rebekah as it was the first place where they were able to consolidate their status of being their own family. The famous writer of vampire fiction Anne Rice, herself also a native of New Orleans, has voiced the connection between the city and the concept of family. Stating, “Never have I experienced a place where people knew more about love, about family, about loyalty and about getting along than the people of New Orleans” (“Do” n.pag.), Rice’s comment echoes Klaus’s memories about the time with his siblings in the city one century before the events where the series picks up. Now, caught up in a constant war for power, New Orleans has become a site of supernatural politics, which Klaus all too happily joins in order to make the Crescent City his family’s home once more. The concepts of home, family and hospitality entail a multifaceted nature and significance for the different communities and species in *The Originals*. The following analysis will focus upon their importance in relation to the main character Klaus, as explored throughout the first season of the series as well as the significance of home and hospitality in the allocation of space amongst the supernatural communities, which can arguably be interpreted as a stand-in for the spatial segregation in U.S. cities in past as well as present times.

Similar to Bill Compton’s experience in *True Blood* upon his return to Bon Temps after several decades, the Mikaelson siblings also only truly realize that they consider New Orleans their home when they find their way back to the Big Easy, supporting Dovey’s claim that “[t]here is no sense of home unless there is also a journeying” (48). Stating that

³⁶ See, Marcel Gerard to Klaus Mikaelson in S01/E01, “Always and Forever.”

“[h]ome . . . is always more than a structured space; it is . . . always more than a material dwelling. It is also an ideological, historical, and affective construct within which and through which ideas about origin, belonging, family, the body, identity, and nation are lived” (45), Joy Fuqua, in line with Dovey, creates a connection between home and identity. Broadly interpreted, home can refer to any kind of place: a country, an area, a city, a village, a house; one might also feel at home in the company of family, friends and significant others. As the saying goes, “home is where the heart is.” This notion is a category that encompasses both material and psychological/emotional aspects. In *The Originals*, the concept of home cannot be realized without family, more precisely without the stabilization of familial and emotional ties, and both are crucial to Klaus Mikaelson’s negotiation of hospitality as a tool for acquiring dominance and power.

As has already been established earlier, the city of New Orleans has a special meaning to Klaus, Elijah and Rebekah. It is especially because of their involvement in the city’s establishment that New Orleans eventually comes to signify a place of belonging, family, and identity for each of the siblings. The notions of belonging and identity, however, are highly complex ones for the Originals, and particularly for Klaus, who early on in his life had to endure his father’s cruelty and lack of empathy, causing him to feel alienated and disconnected from his family. The constant uncertainty of whether he truly belonged to his family, which he experienced as a boy and young man, is evidently part of the reason why his transformation into a vampire instigated a more profound change in his personality than in his siblings. When Klaus’s life was turned upside down not just by being made a vampire but also through the recognition of his true heritage, he more than the others seems to have suffered from the loss of his childhood home as well as the family of which he believed to be an equal part, even though it was abusive. Several hundred years after their escape from Mystic Falls, Rebekah comments on these changes in Klaus’s personality, saying: “What has happened to you? I remember the sweet boy who made me

laugh and gave me gifts. Who loved art and music. I wanted to be just like you. How could you have fallen so far?” (S01/E16, “Farewell to Storyville”). In her statement Rebekah articulates the long-lasting influence the experienced loss of home and believed loss of family membership has had on Klaus’s character.

Spending one hundred years together in New Orleans, it is there that they truly begin to solidify the respective roles each one of them will embody in their family. None of the three will stay permanently in New Orleans but the bond between them as well as their connection to the city stays strong, supporting Antonsich’s claim that “[t]he continued presence of family members in that place . . . contributes to feelings of place-belongingness” (647). When Klaus arrived in the early 1700s, the city was still in its early formative phase, which made it a perfect place to become the dwelling for a dominant personality such as Klaus. Not only was Klaus able to shape the city’s outward design, but he was also able to influence behavior within, according to his wishes and aspirations, which would nowadays be referred to as “citizenship projects”³⁷ (Rose and Novas 439). As Mary Douglas points out, home “is not necessarily a fixed space . . . but space there must be, for home starts by bringing some space under control” (“Idea” 287). She further explains that what home signifies and how it is constructed may vary depending “on the ideas that persons are carrying inside their heads about their lives in space and time. For the home is the realization of ideas” (287). Both the notion of control and the realization of ideas resonate with Klaus’s perception of New Orleans. It is there that the vampire-werewolf-hybrid is eventually able to shape both his family and his home, maintaining Kathleen Mee’s assertion that “to participate in and actively shape one’s environment . . . is deemed important in generating feelings of belonging” (Mee 844, qtd. in Antonsich 648). In a city famous for its tendency to offer entertainment as well as excess, the

³⁷ According to Rose and Novas, citizenship projects refer to “the ways that authorities thought about (some) individuals as potential citizens, and the ways they tried to act upon them. For example: defining those who were entitled to participate in the political affairs of a city or region” (439).

notorious “evil hybrid” (S01/E01, “Always and Forever”) eventually achieves agreements and truces with, as well as the subjugation of, the human, werewolf and witch communities, over time establishing himself as the highest authority in the city as well as amongst his siblings. Thus, the Originals’ understanding of home and family becomes inextricably linked with the concept of power over the city of New Orleans, over its diverse communities, over his household and family.

Dovey claims that home is “a place of certainty and of stability. It is a principle by which we order our existence in space” (36). Arguing that a home allows its owners or residents to establish connections with their past and future, as well as the physical and social space in which they operate (44), home, according to Dovey, “is a centre of security . . . a place of freedom where our own order can become manifest, secure from the impositions of others” (43), which “is also fundamentally linked to home as identity” (43). Due to the combination of vampire qualities such as heightened senses, fragile impulse-control and enhanced speed and strength, with the heightened temper and aggression of a werewolf, Klaus is the most volatile creature to roam the Earth. Before they arrive at the banks of the Mississippi, Klaus and his siblings have spent centuries on the run from their father, always fearing capture and death. Disembarking their ship, they find a city in its making, a place that is untainted by their past and ignorant of their nature. As New Orleans signifies a place of freedom for the siblings, Klaus quickly revels in his conniving and brutal identity in *his* city, and enjoys his self-proclaimed and self-instituted position as a ruler. As, for a long time, he was forced to submit to the man who raised him, Klaus soon basks in his unchallenged authority and relishes his own strength, power, and unrivalled ruthlessness. These qualities once more alienate him from others, however, making him “a monster” (S01/E13, “Crescent City”), as he refers to himself; just as becoming a vampire-werewolf hybrid once further alienated him from Mikael, his supposed father (his

biological father being werewolf), and, in his perception, estranged him from his “pure-bred” Mikaelson (vampire) siblings.

New Orleans, just like Klaus, is a hybrid. The Big Easy has gained notoriety from the 1700s for its vast array of ethnic and cultural groups, resulting in a mixed variety of customs and traditions. Founded as a French colony, passed on to the Spanish and eventually sold to the United States, Louisiana has a history of racially diverse settlements. Just as Klaus’s character is a mixture of different species, New Orleans can be seen as a city with many identities, transgressing boundaries and intermixing races, making it the perfect home for the vampire-werewolf. From the time of the city’s foundation to the twenty-first century, New Orleans has been set apart and indeed set itself apart from the rest of the nation, “articulating complementary, yet divergent, narratives about the relation between nation and citizen, inclusion and exclusion in a wider context of neoliberal practices and policies” (Fuqua 44). For tourists, New Orleans, with its “long and rich history of abandon, indulgence, transgression and the pleasures of the flesh” (52), embodies the fears and desires of those who visit the city and who want to “experience carnality, or its simulation through the mythology of the city” (52). Aside from its cultural diversity and idiosyncrasies, the Crescent City’s history of tales and legends about supernatural residents and occurrences, as for instance the famous Carter Brothers,³⁸ make it the perfect place for supernatural creatures like Klaus to hide in plain sight; the “othered” creature in the “othered” place, so to speak. Tim Edensor states that the “construction of home, like the nation, is integral to the boundaries of space-making . . . and the national as distinct from the space of the ‘other’” (57). Stating that rising sea levels cause large parts of Louisiana wetlands to be swallowed up by the Gulf of Mexico each year, Fuqua

³⁸ John and Wayne Carter were brothers who worked and lived in New Orleans. Due to incriminating evidence, they were accused of being vampires and eventually executed. Although their bodies had been laid to rest in a vaulted tomb, the tomb was found empty when it was opened many years later in order to inter another family member (Gibson n.pag.).

explains that New Orleans is continuously distancing itself geographically from the United States, which causes the city to be seen as not only peripheral but also marginal in relation to the rest of the nation (50), a private territory almost. Edensor explains that, in relation to home, the “notion of privacy is perhaps best expressed in the idea of home as a place of *comfort* . . . where the body is relaxed and unselfconscious” (58). The combination of New Orleans’ attraction to tourists due to its mythical character as well as New Orleans’ estrangement from mainstream America, I argue, is at the heart of what might be subconsciously appealing to Klaus, creating his desire to make New Orleans his family’s home, his territory. Due to his hybrid nature, he has felt like the “Other” for his entire life. Self-conscious about being “the bastard child of a man who saw him as nothing but a beast” (S01/E13, “Crescent City”), as Rebekah mentions, Klaus longs for a family and community which accepts him for what and who he is.³⁹ As he is well aware of his inability to truly form deep-going or long-lasting connections with anyone, Klaus is content with his achievement of a simulation of loyal followers in a city and region which is known to be special and different, just like himself. That his “followers” might only swear their allegiance to him out of fear for their lives, just like his siblings sometimes only seem to stay by his side to avoid being daggered again,⁴⁰ hence, does not influence Klaus in his attempt to achieve his objective.

Just as Klaus expects the supernatural inhabitants of New Orleans to bow to his authority upon his return, he appears incapable of exercising his leadership without violence and torment and is unreasonably suspicious of everyone around him. Even hardly

³⁹ For a long time, Klaus suffered from Mikael’s, his supposed father’s, wrath without either of them knowing why Mikael was unable to accept and treat Klaus as he did his other children. When he found out that Klaus was half werewolf and not his biological son, Mikael’s disappointment enhanced his intolerance towards Klaus, turning into hate, instead. Relating to Octavia Butler’s *Fledgling*, Ali Brox explains, “A hybrid nature assumes prior purity that is then mixed together. The hybrid vampire’s unfixed, unstable identity challenges the notion of past purity” (398). Disgusted by Klaus’s hybridity, Mikael sees him as “an abomination” (S01/E15, “Le Grand Guignol” which “you do not talk to . . . You do not reason with them or try to change them. You erase them,” as he explains (“Le Grand Guignol”).

⁴⁰ See e.g. S01/E01, “Always and Forever,” where Rebekah explains: “Because if I cross my brother, there’s still a coffin downstairs with my name on it.”

trusting his most loyal siblings Elijah and Rebekah, Klaus needs to reclaim the French Quarter Compound, also referred to as The Abattoir, as his home, in order to be able to draw symbolic as well as physical boundaries between his family and those whom he considers not more than the subjects of his rule. Dovey explains that “to be at home is to know where you are; it means to inhabit a secure center and to be oriented in space” (36), where “home as territory also involves a kind of home range that can include neighborhood, town, and landscape” (36). Especially the Mikaelson Compound, but also the French Quarter as well as the whole of the city of New Orleans mark Klaus’s territory, of which he is extremely protective. This protectiveness might well be connected to his werewolf heritage as wolves are by nature highly territorial. Throughout Season One of the series, Klaus invites and accepts several people from human and superhuman factions into his French Quarter home to stay for various lengths of time. While the occasion and reason for such welcomes may vary, one fact never seems to change: the hybrid’s hospitality does not come without a price and should always be treated with caution. There is no question: it is Klaus who controls his territory and no one else.

Home in *The Originals* is ambiguous, both protective and threatening. The familiar popular cultural traditions, as already stated before, in which the notions of home and hospitality are employed as protective mechanisms against vampires, are no longer reliable talismans against threat in the twenty-first century. While the homes of humans, witches and werewolves can only be entered by vampires if they are given an explicit invitation, vampire dwellings in *The Originals* are just as open to outsiders as vampire homes in *True Blood* and other post-2000 vampire fiction.⁴¹ Consequently, vampire homes often become a site for power plays and violence. Derrida’s assertion that “for the invited guest as much as for the visitor, the crossing of the threshold always remains a transgressive step” (*Of Hospitality* 75) points to the interplay and interdependence of home and hospitality. In

⁴¹ See, for example, *Twilight*, *The Vampire Diaries*, *Being Human*.

accordance with what Derrida termed “traditional hospitality, hospitality in the ordinary sense” (55), *The Originals* portrays the importance of this concept to create dominance and to establish power. Taking the significance of hospitality one step further than *True Blood* did, home in this series encompasses more than just an architectural structure.

With reference to the work of Derrida, John D. Caputo explains that in the “deconstruction” of the word *hospitality*, there can be seen “an essential ‘self limitation’ built right into the idea of hospitality, which preserves the distance between one’s own and the ‘stranger,’ between owning one’s own property and inviting the ‘other’ into one’s home” (110). As there can be no hospitality without a home (Derrida, *Of Hospitality* 53), it is the home which bestows upon the owner the authority to decide who can enter and who is to be left outside. Thus, because the home is a source of power and control, the power-hungry Klaus has an almost pathological need to create one for himself and his family. That there exists an intrinsic cultural connection between the notions of home, hospitality and family is, for example, evident in old Chinese where the word *family* “translates into English as ‘people in house’” (326), as Theano Terkenli points out. For Klaus, there is also a strong connection between his family and a home. As it appears that without their symbolic connection, a foundation so to speak, the family he has created with his sister Rebekah and his brother Elijah might very well break under the pressures of his constant paranoia and compulsive need for control. This supports Altman and Werner’s claim that “families establish, grow, and bond themselves into a unit in homes and often bond themselves to the larger society through their homes” (xix). As homes “are often essential to the very survival of their occupants” (xix), Klaus, true to the old adage “Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer” (*The Godfather, Part II*), uses the custom of hospitality to achieve his goal of being in control, while his role as host simultaneously reflects his status and degree of power.

Hospitality is commonly attributed to the virtues of generosity and friendliness, and is defined as “a host’s cordial reception, welcome and entertainment of guests or strangers . . . into one’s space to dine and/or lodge temporarily” (Lashley et al. 2). However, Klaus’s decision whether or not to welcome someone into the French Quarter’s Mikaelson Compound depends strongly on the guest’s or invitee’s political allegiance or usefulness. For the vampire-werewolf, hospitality is politically motivated and equals strategic warfare and his home regularly comes to represent the site of political meetings and a battlefield. He invites no one without an ulterior motive, and those on the receiving end of an invitation quickly find out that they are putting their lives in jeopardy by accepting it. Already in the first episode of the series, the continuous violence in the Mikaelson compound, even under Marcel’s rule, is hinted at by Marcel’s tradition of arranging a feast of humans (S01/E02, “House of the Rising Son”) for his nightwalkers in *his* home. The bloody history of the compound is regularly portrayed through flashbacks, such as when Klaus and Elijah invite the most influential figures of New Orleans to their French Quarter home in the year 1919 to discuss the trafficking of alcohol during the Prohibition. When the brothers, a NOLA police-officer, and two siblings from the Guerrera crime family (werewolves) semi-patiently await the arrival of the city’s mayor, they are surprised by the appearance of the new leader of the French Quarter witches, Papa Tunde. Instead of acceding to Klaus’s and Elijah’s rule and supervision as all the other factions are forced to do, Papa Tunde openly declares war between the witches and the vampires by presenting the brothers with the mayor’s head in a leather case (S01/E12, “Dance Back from the Grave”).

In the series pilot, “Always and Forever,” the interrelation of the concepts of family and home as well as the strategic pertinence of hospitality in *The Originals* is already made obvious. When Marcel Gerard, Klaus’s former ward and the current ruler of New Orleans, welcomes Klaus to “his” city, he issues an invitation that is also a clear warning: “You

wanna pass through? You wanna stay a while? Great. What's mine is yours. But it IS mine. MY home. MY family. MY rules" (emphasis added⁴²). With this statement, Marcel unmistakably communicates that the hospitality he offers is in no way unconditional (cf. Derrida's notion of "unconditional hospitality," *Of Hospitality* 135), as his invitation clearly states the rules and the limitations to which Klaus is supposedly obliged to adhere. Echoing Derrida's "axiom of self-limitation or self-contradiction in the law of hospitality" ("Hospitality" 14), Caputo interprets such rules as follows: "When the host says to the guest: 'Make yourself at home,' this is a self-limiting invitation. 'Make yourself at home' means: please feel at home, act as if you were at home, but, remember, that this is not true, this is not your home but mine, and you are expected to respect my property" (111).

While earlier Klaus cynically called Marcel "Master of your domain, Prince of the city" (S01/E01, "Always and Forever"), he eventually asks him what would happen if someone broke his rules. When Marcel explains, "They die. Mercy is for the weak. You taught me that, too. And I'm not the prince of the Quarter, friend. I'm the king. Show me some respect" ("Always and Forever"), he makes it evident that Klaus, just like everyone else, will have to abide by his rules, which also include the linguistic acknowledgement of his status. With these prescriptions of verbal and physical behavior, Marcel validates and solidifies his position and his identity. Arguably reminiscent of Ernest "Dutch" Morial, the first African American mayor of New Orleans, serving from 1978 to 1986, coming from a working class background, Marcel has even risen from slave boy to ruler of New Orleans. Being proud of his achievements, Marcel's emotional outburst echoes Terkenli's assertion that individuals return to certain patterns or maintain routines, such as the all-you-can-eat-buffet, which "encapsulate all consolidated lessons from past trials, errors, and successes" (326), representing "strategies for survival and personal fulfillment" (326) to reinforce their own perception of their identity.

⁴² Emphasis added to illustrate linguistic stress in spoken dialogue.

Predictably, Klaus cannot accept such an insult to his ego and standing, and a conversation with his brother Elijah marks the beginning of the fight for power over the city. Klaus's proclamation "This town was my home once and in my absence Marcel has got everything I ever wanted. Power. Loyalty. Family. I made him in my image and he has bettered me. I want what he has. I want it back. I want to be king" (S01/E01, "Always and Forever") illustrates that Klaus does not only see himself as the rightful ruler of New Orleans, but rather as the owner of the city, and as such, he does not have to answer to anyone. Klaus's statement begins with his frustration about New Orleans not being his home anymore, encompasses the notion of family, and ultimately culminates with him wanting to be sole ruler, the highest decision-making authority. Dovey's observation that the home can be "a 'statement' of identity" (40), where "the home may indeed represent a socially desired identity rather than any depth of character" (40), can be understood as an accurate definition of what Klaus expresses in his lamentation. Supporting my interpretation, Yuval-Davis explains, "[e]motions, like perceptions, shift in different times and situations and are more or less reflective. As a rule, the emotional components of people's constructions of themselves and their identities become more central the more threatened and less secure they feel" (202). Similar to Marcel's outburst, caused by his insecurity in the face of his sire, Klaus's mourning of all he has not lays bare that he, too, feels insecure in his return to New Orleans. However, as he is well aware of his incapability of or disinterest in interpersonal relationships with anyone other than his siblings, Klaus's sole aim is to rule the city at no matter which cost, beginning with reclaiming The Abattoir,⁴³ their former home.

Through numerous flashbacks to the siblings' past life in New Orleans, it is apparent that since the very moment when Klaus embraced his one-of-a-kind, unrivalled hybrid

⁴³ Throughout the series, the French Quarter Mikaelson home is referred to as either The Abbatoir, The Compound or the Mikaelson Mansion.

nature, he has continued to thirst for power. Exercising his authority over human beings, the vampire-werewolf, for example, kills the Louisiana governor's son Emil by throwing him off the balcony of the governor's mansion near New Orleans, also known as the Plantation House,⁴⁴ as the young man attempts to reprimand Klaus for insulting Rebekah, with whom Emil is in love (S01/E02, "House of the Rising Son"). Klaus ends the life of his sister's suitor and simultaneously teaches Rebekah a brutal lesson in heeding her brother's advice and following his will. As Gerasimos Kakoliris states, "[t]he host exercises his or her sovereignty by selecting, filtering, choosing his or her guests or visitors – by deciding who to offer the right of hospitality to, and also by fixing the period over which they can stay" (149). Although Klaus is not the owner of this house, he sees himself as the highest authority as the governor, a mere human, is no match for him. In this instance, several rules of hospitality have been broken. Reprimanding his guest, Emil breaks the rule of making the guest feel at home, while Klaus clearly oversteps his bounds, in turn, breaking the convention that the guest may not hurt the host.

Until this moment, Klaus's understanding of hospitality has always been a way of intimidating his guests and hosts, forcing them to do his bidding out of fear and under the threat of death. However, a few days after Emil's murder, on the way to the young man's funeral, Klaus manifests a different side of his character upon seeing a young black boy being whipped by a man on a horse. Saving the victim from further torture by killing his assailant, he commits a seemingly selfless act, leading to his eventual adoption of the role of father and mentor for the boy. Accepting the boy into his fold and saving him from further harm at first appears to constitute the epitome of *unconditional hospitality*. However, on closer examination, Klaus's actions still fall under the category of *conditional hospitality*, according to Derrida's definition. In asking the boy, "What's your name?"

⁴⁴ The Plantation Home will eventually also be referred to as the Mikaelson Mansion, as Elijah apparently acquired this building in the past and the siblings occasionally reside there throughout the series until it is destroyed in S01/E13, "Crescent City."

(S01/E02, “House of the Rising Son”), he already violates one of the crucial ethics of hospitality, as, according to Mark W. Westmoreland, the identification of a stranger by asking his name and/or origin already “imposes certain conditions upon the guest”⁴⁵ (2). When the boy replies that he has not been given a name yet, as his now deceased mother would not name him until he turned ten in fear the Yellow Fever would take him before that, Klaus readily assigns him the name Marcellus, aka Marcel, meaning “little warrior.” The fact that Klaus sees himself as having the authority to choose a name for the boy already signals his paternal authority over Marcel, which will only grow with time. Douglas asserts that a home, and the relationships and events within, can also be crippling and stifling (“Idea” 288). Resonating with this assessment, Klaus is going to dominate every important decision in Marcel’s life until his display of power reaches its climax when Klaus daggers his sister Rebekah, with whom Marcel is in love. Sending her into a ninety-year long magical slumber for clandestinely pursuing a relationship with Marcel, Klaus forces Marcel to choose between his love for Rebekah and the opportunity to be made a vampire one day. This decision, I argue, can be seen as Klaus’s way of threatening to rescind his hospitality to Marcel in the most permanent way possible, although this revocation would not take immediate effect. Ultimately, the young man is forced to choose between immortality, for which he must pay with the loss of liberty and love, and pursuing his romantic interest in Rebekah, for whom he must resign from eternal life.

As Klaus’s compulsive need for control demonstrates, his hospitality, be it spatial or emotional, always comes at a price. While the previous examples illustrated how the hybrid’s hospitality subjects even his inner circle, his family, to his thirst for power, later incidents in the series depict how Klaus strategically welcomes others into his home in order to display and exert his power over them. Derrida states that “sovereignty can only

⁴⁵ Cf. Derrida, *Of Hospitality*: “The law of unlimited hospitality (to give the new arrival all of one’s home and oneself, to give him or her one’s own, our own, without asking a name, or compensation, or the fulfilment of even the smallest condition) . . .” (77).

be exercised by filtering, choosing, and thus by excluding and doing violence” (*Of Hospitality* 55). Due to Klaus’s predisposition to violence, it comes as no surprise that his “guests” find themselves facing a predicament. Painfully aware of their host’s strategic and twisted mind, his invitees cannot do anything but accept his invitation while simultaneously fearing for their lives. When, for instance, Hayley’s betrothed, the werewolf Jackson, joins Klaus for a private meeting, Klaus greets him with a smile, saying, “I’m so glad you accepted my invitation” (S01/E17, “Moon over Bourbon Street”). In replying “So, is this where the great Klaus Mikaelson says something poignant, and snaps my neck?” (“Moon over Bourbon Street”), Jackson verbalizes his awareness that his life is in jeopardy in Klaus’s presence and that the hybrid’s hospitality might be withdrawn at any moment, resulting in his death. Klaus’s polite greeting is, however, feigned and insincere. As he is hoping to gain an advantage in the impending war between the supernatural communities of New Orleans by forming an allegiance with the Crescent pack’s alpha, Jackson, he once again uses his hospitality to evoke fear and to insinuate his power, which Jackson immediately recognizes.

Referring to this more calculating side of hospitality, Conrad Lashley states that, as far back as “[i]n most pre-industrial societies, the receipt and kindly treatment of strangers was highly valued, though . . . the motives were not always solely altruistic. Receiving strangers into the household helped to monitor the behaviour of outsiders” (“Research” 3). Similarly to Jackson, who, in later episodes, finds himself at Klaus’s beck and call as he subjected his pack to the vampire’s reign by making a deal with him, the powerful witch Genevieve, to whom Elijah refers as the “lingering monster with whom you share a bed” (S01/E17, “Moon over the Bourbon Street”), also finds herself in a precarious situation due to her close relationship with Klaus. With the French Quarter witch coven trying to kill Klaus’s unborn child, Klaus is literally sleeping with the enemy, even granting Genevieve his protection, which includes access to his house and bed. Predictably, this is Klaus’s way

of connecting business with pleasure, as he benefits from the alliance not only sexually but also strategically. Echoing the idea of keeping an eye on what is happening outside the home, Elizabeth Telfer defines this kind of hospitality as hospitality based on “ulterior motives” (48). Lashley explains this type of hospitality to come with “some thought of subsequent gain” (“Hospitality and” 83) and where “[i]t is assumed that the guest is able to benefit the host, and hospitality is offered as a means of gaining that benefit” (83). Though pretending to have genuine affection for Genevieve, Klaus also admits to his wish to maintain and foster a political allegiance with her, since, as he explains, “one never knows when a powerful witch might come in handy” (S01/E18, “The Big Uneasy”). In reality, however, the hybrid only cares for his own and his family’s well-being. Creating the illusion of granting Genevieve access to his home, Klaus uses his hospitality to deceive the woman into believing that he is genuinely interested in her and not just in her power and information necessary to gain an advantage in the continuing frictions between the factions.

As vampires’ homes need to be understood as both their resting place and their hunting ground, the creatures tend to be very territorial over their dwelling. Not granting the vampiric residents true protection, it is not uncommon that trespassing is harshly punished, oftentimes even implying an immediate death sentence. Kim Meijer-van Wijk claims that our culture tends to distrust strangers (46), those who are not part of the in-group, which, as Derrida explains, can lead to the host’s exertion of hospitality in the form of doing violence (*Of Hospitality* 55). When Genevieve betrays Klaus, she not only breaches the hospitality rule against stealing from the host, but in Klaus’s eyes, she has also outlasted her usefulness and is easily and immediately discarded. Having surreptitiously sent one of her minions to the Mikaelson Compound to steal Klaus’s mother’s witch grimoire, she is punished with Klaus presenting her with the thief’s hands neatly packaged in a box. Genevieve survives this betrayal of trust only because she is the

sole witch in town over whom Klaus has any kind of influence due to her attraction to him. Although Klaus is known for his recklessness, he reigns in his urge to kill the witch, knowing that their connection, as strained as it may be, might prove useful in the ensuing war among the communities of New Orleans. As my analysis has shown, it is essential to Klaus's reign over the city, as well as the reclamation of his home, to retaliate in such gory fashion. Klaus issues a clear warning to others who might attempt to trespass on his territory and to cross him in the future. Here, the relevance of the series' cultural work becomes obvious once more, as the hybrid's behavior is reminiscent of certain police matters or political practices which aim to deter possible imitators. One recent example of such practices is President Trump's policy to separate children from their parents at border points if they enter the United States of America illegally.

These acts of violence in the series, which operate to mark Klaus's domain and make examples of transgressors, highlight the interrelationship between the concepts of home and family. Quoting John Crowley, Antonsich explains, "[m]embership (to a group) and ownership (of a place) are the key factors in any politics of belonging (Crowley 1999, 25)" (649). For Klaus, it is therefore necessary to reclaim the one place where he and his siblings were truly a family in his eyes. Thus, turning his home into an almost sacred space, he does not shy away from keeping it safe by displaying and maintaining his power, which can be measured by the degree of hospitality granted as representative of the power and authority he wields. While in the beginning of the series as well as in prior appearances in *The Vampire Diaries*, Klaus uses the term *family* only in reference to "the original family," two additions are made to his clan which become important to his power: Hayley Marshall, the mother of his child, and the daughter she bears him at the end of Season One, whom they name Hope. Just like Marcel had to submit to Klaus's dominance for the better part of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Hayley is expected to adhere to Klaus's rules and prescriptions from the moment he discovers that she is carrying his

child. As I mentioned in Chapter 2.2.2, Hayley was initially forced to live in The Compound, so Klaus could ensure the safety of his unborn child. However, not running the risk of being daggered and put “in a box for centuries” (S01/E14, “Long Way Back From Hell”) like Elijah and Rebekah, Hayley quickly moves freely between the Crescent Pack’s territory in the bayou and the Mikaelson Compound in the French Quarter. Aside from carrying the “magical miracle baby” (S01/E01, “Always and Forever”), this free reign over the hybrid’s hospitality is what illustrates Hayley’s exceptionality. Not only is she able to stand up to Klaus and still live to defeat his dominance but, in time, she even manages to extend his hospitality to members of her werewolf pack. Ultimately becoming what Derrida refers to as “the host’s host” (*Of Hospitality* 125), Hayley reverses the power relationship between herself and Klaus. Derrida explains such instances when the traditional roles of host and guest, the exertion and reception of hospitality, are reversed in the following way:

So it is indeed the master, the one who invites, the inviting host, who becomes the hostage – and who really always has been. And the guest, the invited hostage, becomes the one who invites the one who invites, the master of the host. The guest becomes the host’s host. The guest (*hôte*) becomes the host (*hôte*) of the host (*hôte*). (125)

As this chapter argues, the possession of a home and the resulting ability to grant hospitality can be interpreted as a means of measuring power. Hayley’s ability to open Klaus’s home to outsiders, even against his wishes, foreshadows that eventually she, more than anyone else in the series, will come as close to being Klaus’s equal as anyone can.

In contrast to Klaus, who has spent the better part of his life with his siblings, Rebekah and Elijah, Hayley has mostly been on her own. Having grown up under complicated circumstances, she longs for a family and a home for herself and her daughter, just like Klaus. However, Hayley embraces her newly gained family status more easily than Klaus was able to accept his hybrid nature. A werewolf, the mother of Klaus’s child

and thus considered a member of the Mikaelson family, Hayley also eventually becomes the queen of the Crescent werewolf pack. Unlike Klaus, who appears incapable of finding peace with his hybrid nature, Hayley does not feel the need to choose one side over the other and sets out to make the best of the situation, attempting to get werewolves and vampires to coexist peacefully. Hayley's "hybrid" identity thus reflects her desire for tolerance of difference. Her death at the hands of the French Quarter witches, who kill her after she gives birth to her daughter, marks the zenith in her evolution and seals her fate, which has long been indicated. After she dies with her baby's blood in her own system, she wakes up as a true werewolf-vampire hybrid (S01/E22, "From a Cradle to a Grave"). Being one of the few existing hybrids, Hayley not only gains the same abilities as Klaus but also has a similar status amongst the wider supernatural community, which eventually enables her to participate in leading both vampire and werewolf groups. While Klaus is able to maintain his terrifying reputation through the exercise of violence, his strategizing and cunning personality does nothing to improve his standing in the vampire and werewolf communities. Although Hayley is eventually as lethal as Klaus, she gains respect and trust as a leader. This is partly due to her hospitality towards others and willingness to assist those in need. In contrast to Klaus, who exercises his hospitality only to create and maintain fear, Hayley represents the positive side of hospitality.

Although *The Originals*, especially in Season One, seems to focus its plot around the Originals' wish to reclaim their home, the series also sets a strong focus on the simultaneous discussion of assigned space and spatial segregation. With the vampires securely established in the French Quarter, Marcel – with the help of the young powerful Davina – has managed to disenfranchise the supernatural communities of witches and werewolves. Forcing the witches to occupy The Cauldron and Tremé (originally named The Faubourg Tremé), the werewolves suffer the fate of exile in the bayou, cursed to remain in wolf form except on the night of a full moon.

Both the idea of The Cauldron as a fictional residential and commercial area bordering the French Quarter as well as New Orleans' district Tremé ring a bell considering the city's history. Known for being one of the major hubs of the slave trade, "New Orleans has a unique history in both race relations and residential segregation" (Spain 82). Before the introduction of Jim Crow laws, New Orleans did not enforce the same residential segregation many other, especially northern cities, had exercised. Due to limited inhabitable space (wetland areas had to be drained in order to create livable space), the city developed what was referred to as the "'backyard' pattern" (83), which let slaves live "in close proximity to their owners, in compounds composed of the main house and slave quarters enclosed by walls" (85-86). In creating The Cauldron, a fictitious section of New Orleans, the series, I assert, deliberately reminds us of this residential pattern. Keeping the witches near Marcel's and later Klaus's power base, I argue, functions as a metaphor for the historical practice to keep one's slaves, at least the most important ones, close by. The witches, similar to slaves, are forced to bend to the respective ruler's will, ready to be used to gain an advantage in whatever political predicament or struggle arises. Similar to how the French Quarter witches can be interpreted as stand-ins for New Orleans slaves, the district Tremé has also a race-politically charged history. Said to be "America's oldest black neighborhood" ("Tremé - America's Oldest African American Neighborhood" n.pag.), Tremé was the part of New Orleans where "free persons of color and eventually those African slaves who obtained, bought, or bargained for their freedom were able to acquire and own property" ("Tremé" n.pag.). Reminiscent of the area's history, Tremé witches enjoy more independence than their French Quarter counterparts, mirroring the race-political history of this part of New Orleans.

While the witch communities in *The Originals* regularly manage to extend their power and gain more influence momentarily, the Crescent werewolf pack, however, is not granted the same, even though almost miniscule, degree of hospitality of being allowed

into the Quarter. Cursed, exiled and forbidden to even enter the city and the French Quarter in particular, werewolves remind viewers of runaway slaves who sought shelter and protection in the undergrowth of the Louisiana wilderness or of Native Americans who awaited their chance to reclaim their land after they were displaced by European settlers. For the purpose of this dissertation, I will only briefly mention the series' possible interpretation with respect to colonialism. This topic would be worth its own and more comprehensive discussion which, however, does not contribute to my argument at this point.⁴⁶

In comparison to how Klaus is treated by Marcel and how the two of them use their hospitality or its refusal to exert power over certain individuals as well as complete communities, Hayley stands out through her seemingly unconditional hospitality. However, this turns out to be an attitude she will eventually need to put to rest in order to survive. By inviting "her" people, the Crescent werewolf pack, to The Compound in times of distress, she demonstrates her authority over the original siblings who do nothing to stop her from assuming the role of mistress over their home. Hayley's exertion of power over Klaus via her continuous and growing appropriation of his home documents her progressive emancipation from his patriarchal treatment of her. This is mirrored in his previously dismissive referral to her as "little wolf," which eventually turns into a term of endearment between the two of them (S01/E02, "House of the Rising Son"). Klaus's changing perception of Hayley supports Alderman and Modlin Jr.'s interpretation of Antonsich's assessment that "[b]elonging . . . is related to the discourses and practices of sociospatial inclusion and exclusion, a means of defining membership to a group and ownership of a place" (Alderman and Modlin 9). Ultimately, Hayley establishes herself as a full-fledged family member, which is stressed in Season Three when Klaus verbally

⁴⁶ See, for example, Lush, Rebecca. "Original Sin: Frontier Horror, Gothic Anxiety and Colonial Monsters in *The Vampire Diaries*," for a detailed analysis of the disenfranchisement of Native people implied in *The Vampire Diaries*, including references to *The Originals*.

affirms Hayley's family membership and her claim to their home, saying: "Hayley, this family comes with many, many hardships, but there is at least ONE benefit – you will ALWAYS have a home here" (S02/E10, "A Ghost Along the Mississippi," emphasis added⁴⁷). Exemplifying the assertion that "[d]ominant social groups consciously define the terms of belonging as they seek to impose cultural coherence and fix the boundaries of identity of 'us' and 'them'"⁴⁸ (Alderman and Modlin 9), the hybrid's acceptance of Hayley into the family and his proclamation of her therein resulting co-ownership of their home, highlight the selectivity of hospitality and the power it grants those who are in a position to exert it. The clear-cut distinctions between who is considered to be part of the family, politically useful or simply seen as a nuisance are conveyed in the assigned habitat of the different communities. The more useful a group is, the closer it will be kept to the 'ruling class.'

As my analysis has shown, *The Originals* depicts a family connected by familial, vampiric and, eventually, hybrid supernatural blood, and demonstrates the importance of family, home and hospitality for the achievement of power, as well as the interdependence of all of these concepts. Paul Lynch et al. explain that hospitality is "a means of controlling the 'other' or 'stranger,' i.e. 'people who are essentially alien to a particular physical, economic and social environment' (Brotherton and Wood 2007: 40)" (5), which leads to this concept's usefulness as a "powerful mediating social control mechanism" (5), especially of those in the position of lesser or no power. Since New Orleans itself has an infamous history and is shown in the series as a place where the boundaries of socially acceptable conduct are blurred while the boundaries of the living space of the different communities are policed, the city makes the perfect place for Klaus and his unique family.

⁴⁷ Emphasis added to illustrate linguistic stress in spoken dialogue.

⁴⁸ Similarly to the above-mentioned examples of the establishment or attribution of membership to certain groups, Elaine L. Graham argues that this has become a recurring theme in the twenty-first century, where also "fictional robots, androids and smart computers offer us intriguing glimpses of machines transforming themselves from tools into sentient beings, with attendant questions about 'their' status in relation to 'us'" (12).

In compliance with the Crescent City's history of ethnic diversity as well as its vast variety of culturally diverse customs and traditions (e.g. Creole culture), *The Originals* depicts a society composed of human and an array of supernatural communities which mostly manage to keep their differences and disputes secret from humans or expertly sell instances of unrest as entertainment for tourists. A product of its time, *The Originals*' discussion of the interdependence between home, hospitality and identity ultimately embodies the discourse of belonging characteristic of contemporary societies and the question of spatial segregation and immigration, for example.

As I have attempted to show, New Orleans becomes the center of the search for belonging in the series. The original siblings, Marcel, the witches as well as the werewolf community all see the city as their rightful home, for which they will continue to fight. In examining the depiction of hospitality and its use to display and maintain power, it once more becomes obvious that television fulfils a substantial and influential role in the cultural politics of contemporary society. In the context of events in 2005, for instance, when Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast of the United States, the destruction it caused as well as the aftermath of this storm did not just remove the roofs of hundreds of homes, but also uncovered the unequal economic and social division of New Orleans society. While many were able to leave the city, those who remained were those who were mostly too poor to leave or simply had nowhere to go. City districts such as the Seventh Ward or the Lower Ninth Ward, which the storm damaged severely, were largely home to African American and Creole communities. While New Orleans' more wealthy neighborhoods and tourist hotspots were quickly restored, many of the residents of the Seventh and Lower Ninth Ward are to this day waiting to receive state support to rebuild their homes or have even moved away. Defining "two major analytical dimensions" of belonging, Antonsich distinguishes between "belonging as a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness) and belonging as a discursive resource which constructs,

claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging)” (645). While people in the above-mentioned districts might have still felt at home even though their actual houses and apartments had been destroyed or were severely damaged, their “place-belongingness” might have been lost once they realized that city officials as well as the U.S. government would deny adequate assistance to reclaim and restore their homes. Ultimately, experiencing a denial of hospitality by those in charge and in power, many of former New Orleans residents have found a home elsewhere. With its discussion of the granting or refusal of hospitality and the therein resulting place-belongingness or lack thereof, *The Originals* critiques the continuously practiced racially-based spatial segregation in many major American cities. Simultaneously, the series stresses the authorities’ responsibility to equally assist citizens independently and regardless of their income, gender, class, skin color or any other distinguishing factors so that a renewed and revised form of belonging can be (re-)established in America.

Hurricane Katrina uncovered the until then condoned unequal treatment of certain communities due to largely socio-economic issues. Exposures of such injustices and continuous discrimination unearth that the concepts of home and hospitality have once more gained a new and more acute meaning than they have been assigned in the Western world since the aftermath of World War II. The relevance of *The Originals*’ critique of our contemporary politics becomes particularly visible on the basis of examples such as the events in the U.S. in February 2017, when an executive order was issued, temporarily denying entry to the United States to travelers as well as green card holders from seven majority Muslim countries. Providing examples of how the notion of hospitality can be used to impose one’s power over another being, *The Originals* ultimately reveals that people in power hold other people’s lives in their hands. My analysis of *The Originals* not only attests to the prevailing validity of Derrida’s assertions that hospitality is always

conditional, but also stresses his thesis that violence and exclusion play a crucial role in its execution.

Antonsich asserts that for

an individual to lead a life that is meaningful, a life worth living, which, according to bell hooks (2009, 1) is what to find a place where we belong is all about[,] [t]he absence of this sense of place-belongingness is not exclusion,” but rather “the absence of place-belongingness is a sense of loneliness, isolation, alienation, and displacement (Dorling et al. 2008, 23; hooks 2009, 24) (649).

With the help of examples of Klaus and Hayley, this chapter has revealed that the degree of one’s might and authority is, amongst other things, displayed in the extension or refusal of hospitality towards others. The creation of a supernatural mirror image of the society of New Orleans and its diversity and the use of New Orleans as a microcosm for the American nation, *The Originals* unmask the continuously unjust socio-political situation of many U.S. American cities. Employing posthuman ideologies in that the series challenges “the basic unit of our common reference for our species, our polity and our relationship to the other inhabitants of this planet” (Braidotti 2), *The Originals* criticizes how the American soil (as one of many possible examples worldwide) continues the tradition of representing the home of certain groups of people while other communities are forced to contest this significance.

Conclusion and Outlook

As living embodiments of history, modern vampires can offer a sense of continuity with a very ancient past as well as with an expanded, international community.
(Mary Hallab, *Vampire God: The Allure of the Undead in Western Culture* 33)

This study began with the assertion that humanity can be monstrous. After all, it seems as if not a single day goes by without the reminder that our world is an arena for a myriad of political, ideological and religious conflicts, which regularly result in violent or even military disputes. However, we only hear about those issues (in newspapers, on the radio, on television or the internet) that make the news because they affect large numbers of people, communities or even whole nations. The terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, or the more recent military disputes in Syria or Iraq, which have led thousands of people to flee their home countries in search of a safer place to live, have received such media attention. What we hear less about are the countless individual acts of physical and psychological violence, which happen every day all over the world in places we occupy on a daily basis in our homes, schools, on the street, or on public transport.

Verbal abuse and bullying, domestic violence, rape, murder, mass shootings; the list of atrocities carried out by humans is long. One wonders why humans – as they themselves can be so evil – still enjoy entertaining themselves with fictional narratives about monsters, such as vampires, werewolves, or zombies who pose yet another threat to our wellbeing and existence, even if only in the world of fiction. The answer is obvious: it is easier on our minds and consciousness to displace the unspeakable horrors that happen in our world onto fictional characters than to accept that we live in a time and place where our own or other people's mental and physical health are threatened.

In Western society, television has played an almost paradoxical role in this setup of enjoying a good thrill while simultaneously displacing its possible existence far away from our lives. This binary function of television reminds us of traditional depictions of

vampires as evil creatures who used to bring distress and destruction to those who encountered them, all the while signifying a platform upon which the ills of society could be projected. Whilst television offers us an immediate and unobstructed flow of information about what is happening in the world around us, it simultaneously functions as the medium through which we negotiate our understanding and experience of these harsh realities. Yet, while television helps us to distance ourselves, it also breaches the boundaries of our safe havens, our homes. Since the invention of the television and all that it entails – the positive and negative images it broadcasts – this technology has literally moved in with us and has enabled monsters to live with and amongst us. In the twenty-first century, with the increased installation of flat screens or electronic billboards in restaurants, on buses and trains or in numerous other public spaces, Western society is exposed to an almost constant influx of information, sometimes even without consciously taking notice of it. Commenting on this medium's influence on society, Matthew Pateman states that television "cannot seek to offer answers (television is a political medium, and politics offers no answers) but the gesture, by virtue of being political engages the polis (however unaware or unwilling) in its newly articulated space of political action, its living room, or kitchen, or bedroom agora" (viii). Of course, television, just like anything else, cannot be approached with a black and white mindset. It has been recognized that it is not solely entertaining or even mind numbing as the television, as a medium of Mass Culture¹ and mass consumption, was initially criticized, especially in the 1950s and 60s.² Although, television also contributes to the light entertainment we so often seek, its political influence

¹ In his famous essay "A Theory of Mass Culture" (1968), Dwight MacDonald suggested that the Western culture consists of two clear-cut cultures: "'High Culture' – that is chronicled in the textbooks, and a 'Mass Culture' manufactured wholesale for the market" (12). MacDonald considered mass culture as "solely and directly an article for mass consumption, like chewing gum" (12).

² In his essay "Of Happiness and of Despair We Have No Measure" (1968), Ernest van den Haag, for instance, states, "All mass media in the end alienate people from personal experience and, though appearing to offset it, intensify their moral isolation from each other, from reality and from themselves. One may turn to the mass media when lonely or bored. But mass media, once they become a habit, impair the capacity for meaningful experience. Though more diffuse and not as gripping, the habit feeds on itself, establishing a vicious circle as addictions do" (5).

and cultural function cannot be denied. Television engages its audience to varying extents with social, political and cultural concerns through each different format. This relationship between medium and consumer has found acknowledgment in the international and cross-referencing work of numerous scholarly areas (beginning in the 1970s) such as television studies, cultural studies, sociology, political science, psychology and many more.

Just as television has been recognized over time for its multifaceted nature, the figure of the vampire has undergone an evolution over the past 200 years debut which has resulted in the growing social acceptance of the vampire. Since its literary introduction in the early 1800s, the vampire has created a long tradition of fascinating large audiences. However, it was not until the emergence of Joss Whedon's television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) that vampires began to have an almost uninterrupted presence on U.S. American small screens, which continues to this day.³ As mentioned before, vampires have undergone numerous changes in appearance and behavior throughout their long existence. One of the biggest changes, however, was the undeads' transformation from instinct- or blood-driven monsters to sympathetic romantic interests or more or less well-functioning members of society. As I have argued, it was the events of 11 September 2001, the ensuing war on terror and their aftermath which advanced this development of vampires becoming more human-like than ever. Ultimately questioning humanity's humanity, post-2000 vampire narratives employ posthuman ideologies that reflect "our recognition that what we naturally are cannot provide us with humanity" (Day 83). Through the close analysis of *True Blood* and *The Originals* (and reference to further post-2000 examples of vampires), I have shown how twenty-first century vampires, in order to adapt to the circumstances of their time and place, display a marked tendency to be more progressive and open-minded than their human counterparts. Comparing the traditional

³ E.g. *Van Helsing* first aired on Syfy in 2016 and the third season is currently being produced; *Preacher* is broadcast on AMC (2016-).

roles and representations of vampires and vampire hunters, Mary Hallab states that “vampires embody our fears of falling back, of degenerating entirely into mindless barbarism” (39) while “vampire hunters, in general, represent modernity, civilization, social order, and progress” (39-40). While this was arguably true for most pre-2000 depictions of the undead as evident in their representations in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or *Blade*, I have argued that the post-2000 vampires have come out of the shadows to remind us of the cornerstones of our humanity. Addressing the human discourses of family, home and hospitality, these creatures no longer appear to us as monsters who threaten human morals and values, but rather as examples of how things could be done differently, if not better. Just like their predecessors, post-2000 vampires also hold up a mirror to Western society, although in a more overt manner than before. Interpreting the vampires as posthuman figures, William Patrick Day explains that “the vampire has become an ambiguous figure in a story about the nature of humanity at a time when we are no longer sure what human nature is” (4). Thus, instead of letting us see the many ways in which humans are morally superior or more humane than vampires, post-2000 vampire versions show us the dark and monstrous sides of our own existence, for example by outshining humans with their loyalty and ability to form long-lasting relationships. This approach demonstrates *True Blood*’s and *The Originals*’ adoption of posthuman ideologies, where “[t]he posthuman condition urges us to think critically and creatively about who and what we are actually in the process of becoming” (Braidotti 12). Thus, addressing current and vital issues in today’s society such as the fight for equal rights, gender equality or the struggle to overcome continued racial discrimination, contemporary vampires no longer function as deterrents. Rather, these formerly human individuals help to direct our actions towards the recognition of what humanity needs to reassess and change in order to make the world a more considerate place of peaceful coexistence.

Of course, these modern vampires are far from perfect and, although they are significantly humanized, they remain othered. Robin Wood explains that “[t]he concept of Otherness” (*Hollywood* 66) and “its psychological significance resides in the fact that it functions not simply as something external to the culture or to the self, but also as what is repressed (though never destroyed) in the self and projected outward in order to be hated and disowned” (66). Having seen the light, the vampires in *True Blood* and *The Originals*, just like humans in the real world, are able to suppress some of their more monstrous urges but are ultimately incapable of truly overcoming them. Kristy Butler confirms this assertion, saying that although vampires have been recast “as characters that move freely within society” (45) and who are “no longer outsiders but have assimilated into Western culture in manner and dress” (45), they continue to be “pretenders in their efforts to blend in with the crowd and continue their inhuman and undead practices despite relocating within the accepted norms of the society they inhabit” (45). Hence, maintaining the fascinating and thrilling but simultaneously frightening and threatening nature between good and evil, these post-2000 versions of the traditional predators, as I have argued, no longer leave dead or mutilated bodies in their wake, or at least not many. Instead, they remind us of the dangerous and cruel sides of humanity: they prove their ability to adapt to their environments and communicate their hardships and desires to their audience, which creates hope that vampires and humans are able to adjust their moral compass. While it would be irrational to hope that humanity will be able to completely defeat the evil in this world such as race-related or religious zealotry or terrorism, both series suggest that relations amongst individuals, communities or nations are subject to change, and can be improved. Just like the vampires have come out of hiding and participate in society, the good in humanity will eventually be unearthed and brought into the light.

Mary Hallab declares, “the vampire reminds us, by positive or negative example, that we *live in* and will be *remembered by* (that is, *live through*) other human beings, our

families and friends, within a community of some kind as long as it persists” (38, original emphases). With this, Hallab complements William Patrick Day’s assertion that “we can look for metaphors and narratives that will help us toward understanding humanity” (4). I have argued that by recasting vampires as less threatening and more human-like following the events of 9/11, narratives such as those of *True Blood* and *The Originals* have worked towards eradicating these creatures’ outsiderdom. Instead, these series offer a way to create “a sense of continuity with a very ancient past as well as with an expanded, international community” (33), as Hallab states. Illustrating that the undead face the same essential problems and desires as humans, both series’ discussions of the discourses of family, home and hospitality depict a novel likeness between these two species.⁴ The depiction of vampires and humans finding themselves in similar situations ultimately raises the question of whether it is time to merge the long-standing and taken-for-granted categories of “us” versus “them” into a collective “we.”

True Blood and *The Originals* touch on a great breadth of crucial topics relevant to our society. Both series are rooted in an American and Southern Gothic tradition, which creates a backdrop for the discussion of societal and political issues. Their use of the traditionally Gothic horror inherent in the concepts of family and home reflects contemporary society’s fears and desires. In *True Blood* and *The Originals*, the vampires’ and humans’ actions and behavior are contrasted, as both series rely on the Gothic dichotomies rural/urban, past/present and exterior/interior. The use of these dichotomies forms a solid basis on which to critique the validity of the discourses of family, home and hospitality in the 21st century. As demonstrated in Chapter Two, *True Blood* and *The Originals* use divergent techniques to promote the necessity for more tolerance towards

⁴ Supporting my argument that the line between the human vampire and the monstrous human gets continuously blurred, Elaine L. Graham states, “[a]s refractions of the same, as evidence for the ascribed and not essential nature of human nature, monsters, aliens and others provide clues for the moral economy or ‘ontological hygiene’ by which future categories of the human/posthuman/non-human might be decided” (13).

alternative lifestyles and the achievement of gender equality. Departing from the 1950s ideal of the nuclear family and providing alternative kinship models in the discourse of family, both series advertise the adjustment of the traditional heteronormative understanding of this discourse to the contemporary demands of modern-day society. While vampires are shown to be more tolerant about the concept of family or their sexuality, the bond between makers and progenies in particular continues to entail difficulties, a fact that is true for all relationships. Revealing that the path towards more tolerance is studded with obstacles which even centuries-old vampires sometimes find hard to overcome (e.g. the positive and negative sides of kinship), both series stress that vampires have realized that for their kind to survive, it is necessary to work towards becoming more liberal and overcoming their traditionally patriarchal hierarchies and existence. This is an observation Western society is slowly realizing and attempting to put into practice.

In Chapter Three, I have argued that having a home cannot always be taken for granted. This is a fact that we all know. However, it is only in times of disaster that we fully acknowledge what we have pretended not to see so many times before but should have recognized a long time ago. We accept the fact that there are people who have no home without really thinking about the reasons for their situation. However, events such as the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 or natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina suddenly and harshly reminded Americans, for example, that homes are not truly safe.

The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were aimed at and carried out to hit iconic American structures: the terrorists did not damage private homes. Instead they targeted and destroyed work places, places where Americans worked in order to provide homes for themselves and their families. Yet, people who watched the events on television were confronted with the insecurity of their homeland and the destruction of families through live broadcasts that reached into their private domestic space. Suddenly,

also their own home did not seem safe anymore, and Americans would become more wary of the people around them in all areas of life.

In a century marked by the displacement of millions of people due to conflicts of war,⁵ the U.S. financial crisis (2007-2008) and natural catastrophes,⁶ *True Blood* and *The Originals* demonstrate what happens when people are not safe in their homes, or even lose their homes, and become dependent upon hospitality that often only people in power are able to grant. While the United States of America still celebrates itself as “a global beacon of hope for the downtrodden” (Negra 1), it has become evident that, instead of helping people to create new homes for themselves – a space where they can feel safe, where they feel they belong – laws and regulations implemented after 9/11 have continuously made it harder for individuals in need, especially for non-American citizens, to be granted hospitality.

Gideon Baker’s assertion that, where hospitality is concerned, the host experiences an innate debate between the dread of losing the self and the desire of escaping from the self (5) voices what *True Blood* and *The Originals* show on the basis of several examples. Those in power to grant hospitality, such as Bill Compton and Klaus Mikaelson, experience insecurity about who they are and how they want to be seen by others. This is, however, not only a fictional occurrence. Many of these issues continue to plague U.S. and global culture sixteen years later as evidenced by recent political policies. In February 2017, for example, President of the United States, Donald Trump, issued a travel ban for seven majority-Muslim countries, ultimately denying entry into the country also to U.S.

⁵ See, for instance, the attacks of 9/11; wars in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nigeria in the twenty-first century.

⁶ See, for example, Hurricane Katrina (2005) which “displaced more than a million people in the Gulf Coast region” (Plyer n.pag.); the tsunami in the Indian Ocean (2004) Indonesia where the tsunami and the earthquake (2004) “destroyed an estimated 141,000 houses” (Inderfurth et al. 21) in Indonesia while “100,000 homes were fully or partially destroyed in Sri Lanka” (21). Cyclone Nargis “made landfall on May 2, 2008. In total, at least . . . 3.4 million people were severely affected, and of these, 800,000 were initially displaced (John Hopkins et al. 2009, 5)” (Pontalti 150). The earthquake off the Pacific Coast of Tohoku, “which occurred on March 11, 2011” (Kazama and Noda 780) totally destroyed 128,530 and half destroyed 240,332 houses (781). In 2017, Hurricane Maria left “250,000 homes with major damage, 70,000 of those destroyed” (Viglucci n.pag.).

citizens from these countries, hence keeping them from their homes. Comparing this instance with January 2018 when he was reported to state his preference for more immigrants from Norway to those from “‘shithole’ countries” (Brenner n.pag.) in Africa, the centrality of the concepts of home and hospitality in the Western world becomes acutely evident. Yet, Trump’s enforcement of the “zero tolerance” policy at the Mexican border might be the best example for the power of hospitality. Making it a policy to separate children from their parents at border points if they “come to the border illegally and attempt to enter into this country improperly” (“Sessions” n.pag.), as U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions explained, Trump’s policy stands in strong contrast with the original image of the United States. This self-representation of America finds expression in the sonnet “The New Colossus” by Emma Lazarus from 1883, which can be found inscribed on a bronze plaque in the inside of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty and reads as follows:

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
“Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!” cries she
With silent lips. “Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

(Emma Lazarus, “The New Colossus”)

As I have shown in this dissertation, the figure of the post-2000 vampire no longer aims to portray humanity’s past mistakes and conflicts. Instead, these vampires represent our present existence, complete with contemporary issues and flaws. But they also offer possible solutions to impending dilemmas of our society, such as the necessity of more

tolerance towards alternative sexualities and lifestyles. Nina Auerbach asserts that vampires “promise escape from our dull lives and the pressure of our times, but they matter because when properly understood, they make us see that our lives are implicated in theirs and our times are inescapable” (9). As vampires were formerly human, “[t]he relationship between the living human and the undead vampire has always been one of positions on a continuum,” as Deborah Mutch asserts (“Swarm” 4). I agree with this assessment and argue that the long-standing categories of “us” versus “them,” which have been a marker or cornerstone of vampire narratives for a long time, no longer apply. In fact, I would go so far as to suggest that they have never truly applied, as it was *we* humans who created *them*, the vampires, in the first place. Post-2000 representations of vampires have finally filled the void that kept humans and vampires separate and turned both categories into a collective “we,” which also necessitates that we recognize our mistakes, own up to them and correct them. Kristy Butler explains, “[i]n becoming one of us, [vampires] retain an element of the frightening that pervades the uncanny because knowledge of their true nature and identity remains uncertain” (45). Referencing Freud (2003), Butler states that “the uncanny is a kind of manifestation of blurred perception, not only between Self and Other but also between reality and construct” (45) and “that when faced with a figure who is ambiguously real or constructed, one’s own identity becomes unstable” (Butler 45). This suggests that in the twenty-first century, it is no longer necessary to destroy vampires for the dominant Western culture to survive. No longer representing complex social issues through the figure of the vampire, humans are unable to displace the discourses of family, home and hospitality on a monstrous signifier but, instead, begin to recognize and accept flaws and failures in human behavior. As Claudia Bubke states, the contemporary figure of the vampire “creat[es] a dilemma regarding ‘sameness’ and change . . . paving the way . . . to create an awareness for potential influences in order for individuals to realize their responsibility to act on that awareness” (54). In portraying vampires to be more

progressive, tolerant and capable of learning and adjusting (although not flawlessly so), post-2000 vampire narratives such as *True Blood* and *The Originals* do substantial cultural work. Creating awareness of wrong actions from our politicians as well as our society at large, they offer us insights into societal, political and cultural ills and impending dilemmas. Simultaneously both television series advocate for the preservation of our hope for a peaceful coexistence and the improvement of humanity's humanity, ultimately demanding to break the habit of assigning individuals a membership to certain categories.

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German Summary

Zentrale Themen und Fragestellungen der Dissertation

Wichtige historische Ereignisse, politische und soziale Konflikte und andere Themen, die Menschen bewegen, werden schon lange anhand fiktionaler Charaktere in unterschiedlichen Medien problematisiert und diskutiert. Vor allem die Entwicklung der Film- und Fernsehindustrie machte es in naher Vergangenheit möglich, soziale und politische Kritik an ein großes Publikum heranzutragen und dabei neue kreative Wege in der inhaltlichen und ästhetischen Darstellung einzuschlagen. Bei der Verkörperung dieser Kritik und Ängste spielen Vampire seit langer Zeit eine tragende Rolle. Durch alle Zeiten hinweg schienen und scheinen sie ein angemessenes und wandelbares Mittel zu sein, um eine schier unendliche Menge an politischen und sozialen Mängeln sowie von der vorherrschenden Norm vorgeschriebene Verhaltensabweichungen aufzuzeigen. Mit ihrer Sonderstellung als ehemalige Menschen – Untote – sind sie vor allem im anglo-amerikanischen Raum eine der einflussreichsten Figuren in allen fiktionalen Genres und dienen häufig als Spiegelbild der derzeitig dominierenden Gesellschaftsverhältnisse.

Diese Dissertation beschäftigt sich vorrangig mit der Darstellung von Familie, Heimat und Gastfreundlichkeit in den Vampirserien *True Blood* und *The Originals*, um zu erläutern, wie sich das Bild dieser drei Konzepte während des einundzwanzigsten Jahrhunderts gewandelt hat. Im Zuge dieser Arbeit soll deutlich werden, dass die zunehmend ambivalente Darstellung der Vampire aus der Zeit nach 2000, die Grenzen zwischen den Kategorien Monster und Mensch in Frage stellt. Weniger der Vampir, sondern vielmehr der Mensch selbst stellt in diesen Narrationen die Bedrohung für Ordnung und Stabilität dar. Dies hat zur Konsequenz, dass in Serien wie *True Blood* und *The Originals* Vampire nicht mehr im selben Maße gejagt werden wie zuvor. Stattdessen werden sie als Teil dieser Welt gezeigt und akzeptiert. Die beiden Serien nutzen bekannte

Konzepte wie Heimat, Familie und Gastfreundlichkeit, um die Handlungen und Eigenschaften der Figuren an aktuelle Sorgen und Probleme aber auch Wünsche und Hoffnungen der amerikanischen Gesellschaft anzulehnen. Die Darstellung der Vampire in *True Blood* und *The Originals* zielt hierbei darauf ab, die aktuelle westliche Gesellschaft in einer zunehmend globalisierten Welt widerzuspiegeln. Beide Serien leisten fundamentale Kulturarbeit da sie, wie diese Dissertation aufzeigt, auf der Basis posthumanistischer Ideologien Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen den ehemaligen Monstern und uns Menschen hervorheben und somit für mehr Toleranz, Akzeptanz und Menschlichkeit in einer westlichen Gesellschaft nach 2000 eintreten. Durch die Darstellung der Gesellschaft mit all ihren Verfehlungen, aber auch ihren Bemühungen, setzen sich *True Blood* und *The Originals* für ein verbessertes Zusammenleben zwischen Menschen aller Ethnien, sexuellen Orientierungen und dergleichen ein. Da sich Vampire immer weiter an Menschen angleichen, scheint die binäre Aufteilung in „wir“ und „sie“ zu bröckeln und ihre Bedeutung, die sie seit der Kolonialzeit und erneut seit dem internationalen Terror innehat, zu verlieren. Darüber hinaus macht der progressivere Umgang der Vampire mit den Diskursen von Familie, Heimat und Gastfreundlichkeit das Überdenken menschlicher Verhaltensweisen unumgänglich.

Kapitelübersicht

Innerhalb der drei Kapitel dieser Dissertation werden jeweils die verschiedenen Diskurse von Familie, Heimat und Gastfreundlichkeit in Bezug auf die Menschheit und die Figur des Vampirs analysiert. Hierzu wird zu Beginn eines jeden Kapitels ein theoretischer Rahmen entwickelt, welcher mit Hilfe der Darstellung des jeweiligen Diskurses innerhalb der beiden Serien veranschaulicht wird. Abschließend geben die Kapitel Auskunft, wie die vorangegangene Analyse auf gegenwärtige Ereignisse und Entwicklungen Bezug nimmt.

Kapitel 1, „Intersected American / Southern Gothic – Post-2000 American Vampire Humanity, or Rather Human Monstrosity?“, dient als Einführung und Fundament des zentralen Themas dieser Dissertation, welches in Kapitel 2 und 3 detailliert behandelt wird. Dieses erste Kapitel zeigt, in welcher Art und Weise die Serien *True Blood* und *The Originals* aus dem Genre des American/Southern Gothic hervorgehen und sich in ihrer Darstellung von Familie, Heimat und Gastfreundlichkeit ergänzen. Beide Serien sprechen dabei nicht nur ein breit gefächertes Publikum an, sie bieten auch einen Einblick in ein breites Spektrum der aktuellen amerikanischen Gesellschaft. Zunächst liefert das erste Kapitel eine kurze Einführung in das Genre des American Gothic und die Subkategorie des Southern Gothic. Hierbei wird auch die Entwicklung der Figur des Vampirs dargelegt, die sich von gefürchteter Kreatur aus Mythen und Volkstum, über die Darstellung als zurückgezogene Aristokraten am Rande der Gesellschaft, bis hin zum heutigen sogenannten sympathischen Vampir („sympathetic vampire“) entwickelt hat. Zur Illustration der Interrelation von Familie, Heimat und Gastfreundlichkeit in Werken aus dem Genre des American und Southern Gothic werden beispielsweise das Gemälde *American Gothic* (1930) von Grant Wood, der Roman *Wieland, or the Transformation* (1798) von Charles Brockden Brown und Geschichten von E.A. Poe angeführt. Im Anschluss folgt eine Analyse der für Gothic typischen Dichotomien ländlich/urban, Vergangenheit/Gegenwart und Außenwelt/Innenwelt, wie sie in beiden Serien dargestellt werden. Die hier behandelten Serien *True Blood* und *The Originals* können somit als Weiterführung einer lang bestehenden Tradition angesehen und analysiert werden.

Kapitel 2, „Post-2000 Vampires and Family – Eternal Blessing or Eternal Curse?“, ist in drei größere Teile unterteilt. Nachdem ein theoretischer Rahmen zur Entwicklung des Konzepts der Familie abgesteckt wurde, wird aufgezeigt, auf welche Arten menschliche und nicht-vampirische Familien in beiden Serien scheitern. Anhand des Beispiels verwaister, misshandelter und geopferter Kinder stellen sowohl *True Blood* als auch *The*

Originals die Desillusionierung hinsichtlich des Verständnis von Familie und speziell der Eltern-Kind-Beziehungen als „sicherer Hafen“ dar. Des Weiteren hinterfragen beide Serien die Institution der Ehe, indem sie vor allem die glückliche, funktionierende, menschliche Ehe als Illusion darstellen. Während menschliche Ehen in *True Blood* entweder geschädigt sind oder vollkommen versagen, verbannt *The Originals* das Konzept nahezu komplett.

Auf diese Darstellung der menschlichen und nicht-vampirischen Familie folgt eine detaillierte Analyse der Vampirfamilie und der Rolle, die Blut und Blutverwandtschaft darin spielen. Genauer wird hier beispielsweise die Schöpfer-Nachkomme-Bindung („maker-progeny bond“) in *True Blood* betrachtet. Obwohl die Schöpfung eines neuen Vampirs dem Austragen eines menschlichen Kindes gleicht und somit die enge Bindung zwischen Schöpfer und Nachkomme erklärt, läuft die Beziehung zwischen beiden nicht unbedingt auf eine elterliche hinaus. So kann die Beziehung die Gestalt einer Eltern-Kind-Beziehung, einer Liebesbeziehung, einer Beziehung zwischen Geschäftspartnern und vielem mehr annehmen und zuweilen auch zwischen verschiedenen Arten alternieren. Auch in *The Originals* wird das Konzept Familie und insbesondere die menschliche/vampirische Blutsverwandtschaft untersucht. Während hier im Gegensatz zu *True Blood* keine besonders enge Bindung zwischen einem Vampir und einem von ihm/ihr abstammenden Vampir herrscht, besteht jedoch eine besondere Beziehung zwischen den blutsverwandten ursprünglichen Geschwistern („the Originals“), welche von extremer, fast blinder, Loyalität gekennzeichnet ist. Weiterhin wird in dieser Serie der Übergang von der traditionellen, fast altertümlichen, patriarchalischen Familie zu einer modernen und vorrangig emanzipierten Familie dargestellt. Diese Darstellungen des Konzepts der Familie stehen für die Entfernung von der sogenannten Kernfamilie und den Weg hin zu mehr Toleranz gegenüber Lebensentwürfen, die nicht der heteronormativen Vorstellung vieler westlicher Gesellschaften entsprechen. Im weiteren Verlauf des Kapitels wird anhand früherer oder anderer Repräsentationen von Familie in Film und Fernsehen gezeigt, dass Vampire nach

2000 loyaler und verlässlicher dargestellt werden als Menschen. Im Gegensatz zu traditionellen Darstellungen von Vampiren, in denen sie häufig als Einzelgänger erscheinen, zeigen Vampire nach 2000 eine Tendenz zur Geselligkeit und zum Auftreten in Gruppen. *True Blood* und *The Originals* stehen in diesem Zusammenhang für eine Entwicklung, die mehr Toleranz sowie die Anerkennung der positiven und negativen Aspekte von Blutsverwandtschaft fordert.

Kapitel 3, „The Power of Hospitality: (Re-)Claiming One’s Home“, untersucht die Tendenz der Vampire des einundzwanzigsten Jahrhunderts, sich ein Zuhause zu schaffen oder jenes zurückzugewinnen, das sie während ihrer Zeit als Menschen bewohnten. Wie bereits in den vorangehenden Kapiteln aufgezeigt, bedroht der Vampir nach 2000 nicht mehr das Konzept der Familie, sondern hebt die Bedeutung dieses Konzepts und der Notwendigkeit der Anpassung dieses Konzepts an heutige Gegebenheiten hervor. Demgemäß ist es einleuchtend, dass Vampire nach einem Heim streben, in dem sie sich niederlassen und jene erwähnten Beziehungen festigen können. Hierbei liegt das Hauptaugenmerk auf den Versuchen der beiden männlichen Hauptfiguren – Bill Compton und Klaus Michaelson –, ihr jeweiliges Zuhause zurückzugewinnen. Erneut wird hier aufgezeigt, wie durch die Assimilation von vampirischem Heim und menschlichem Heim die Grenzen zwischen Mensch und Monster aufgehoben werden. Im weiteren Verlauf des Kapitels wird ein Überblick über diesen Einfluss der Heimat auf die Entwicklung eines Zugehörigkeitsgefühls und die Stabilität von Selbstidentität geschaffen. Dieser Überblick ermöglicht die Analyse des soziopolitischen Effekts, den das Konzept Heimat auf deren Bewohner hat. Darauf aufbauend erläutert dieses Kapitel die Synergie der Konzepte Heimat und Gastfreundlichkeit. Hier wird die kommunikative Rolle von Gastfreundschaftlichkeit innerhalb der Dynamik von sozialer Organisation hervorgehoben, die Individuen, Kommunen und ganzen Nationen eine bemerkenswerte Menge an Macht zukommen lassen kann.

Abschließend

Wie aus den einzelnen Kapiteln der Dissertation hervorgeht bedrohen Vampire aus der Zeit nach 2000 nicht länger menschliche Moral und Werte hinsichtlich der Konzepte und Diskurse von Familie, Heimat und Gastfreundlichkeit. Während die Vampirfigur auf eine lange Tradition zurückblickt, in der diese Kreaturen als Projektionsfläche für menschliche Schwächen und Gräueltaten dienten, hat sich ihre Darstellung besonders in den post-2000er Jahren stark verändert. Obwohl es auch weiterhin traditionelle Vampirfiguren in Literatur, Film und Fernsehen gibt, fungieren sie heute mehrfach vielmehr als Beispiel für eine von der Norm abweichenden, oft sogar bessere Herangehensweise an das Zusammenleben. Sie repräsentieren unsere moderne Existenz mit all ihren Problemen und Mängeln, bieten aber gleichzeitig mögliche Lösungen für unsere gegenwärtigen Dilemmata, wie beispielsweise die Notwendigkeit von mehr Toleranz und Akzeptanz gegenüber alternativen Lebensstilen. Wir leben in einem Zeitalter, in dem gerade auch die Jugend fast täglich auf die ein oder andere Weise mit Themen wie verbalem und körperlichem Missbrauch, Bullying, häuslicher Gewalt, Mord und Massenschießereien konfrontiert wird. Hier spielt das Fernsehen eine große Rolle, das heutzutage in fast jedem Haushalt zu finden ist und als kommerzielles und politisches Medium (z.B. elektronische Reklametafeln) auch an Orten wie beispielsweise Bahnhöfen oder öffentlichen Plätzen eine breite Masse erreicht. Fernsehserien wie *True Blood* und *The Originals* machen das Publikum auf solche sozialen, politischen und kulturellen Anliegen aufmerksam und eröffnen Wege, diese anhand von fiktiven Charakteren zu diskutieren. Durch das Aufzeigen der zunehmend zahlreichen Gemeinsamkeiten zwischen Vampiren und Menschen wird die Grenze zwischen vermenschlichten Monstern und monströsen Menschen letztlich derart verwischt, dass der Zustand der Menschlichkeit im 21. Jahrhundert hinterfragt wird. Dies heißt letztendlich, dass die lang bestehende

Gegenüberstellung von „uns“ versus „sie“ auf den Prüfstand gestellt wird und in Zukunft nur eine Zusammenfassung unter einem kollektiven „wir“ folgerichtig sein kann.