

"Bitten is the new black"¹ – Why Ladies Prefer Fangs. Images of Women in Canadian and US-American Vampire Chick Lit

"Can I turn into a bat and fly home now?"
He studied me for a moment. "I'll call you a cab."²

Among the most notable vampire chick lit heroines are Sarah Dearly (from Canadian author Michelle Rowen's *Immortality Bites* series) and Elizabeth 'Betsy' Taylor (from Mary Janice Davidson's *Queen Betsy* series, set in Minneapolis).³ Both of them are women in their late twenties who struggle with the increasing demands of a society that expects the 21st-century woman to be successful in her career, happily married to Mr Right, all the while looking beautiful and fashionable. Both heroines find their lives profoundly changed by being turned into a vampire.

What is Dracula's trademark in countless (no pun intended) film adaptations is the fact that, no matter how inventive his adversaries in devising methods to defeat him, he always comes back. The same goes for the Gothic stock character of the vampire in general, though his (and her) current incarnations are as different from Bram Stoker's famous villain as Bridget Jones is from a Victorian 'angel in the house'.

Drawing on a rich tradition of literature, the female character is often the damsel in distress haunted by a mysterious vampire stranger. Bella Swan, the heroine of Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight*, is almost killed in a car crash when the vampire Edward Cullen stops the car with superhuman strength. In L.J. Smith's *Vampire Diaries*, homecoming queen Elena Gilbert is about to be raped by high school bully Tyler when the vampire Stefano Salvatore intervenes, setting the scene for the ensuing love story. Vampire fledgling Zoey Redbird, the *House of Night* protagonist created by P.C. Cast and Kristen Cast, deals with all the insecurities and shortcomings characteristic of puberty in a normal high school environment.

Although these novels are embraced by other demographics as well, Meyer, Smith and Cast create scenarios which feature teenage protagonists and have been "targeted to that demographic with the delicious specificity of a laser weapon".⁴ Between the two extremes of stereotypical teen romances and patriarchal Gothic vampire classics (in which females are either deadly or merely decorative), 21st-century adult women might not feel the need for yet another vampire story, unless it hits the nerve of their immediate concerns and life-styles, playing on gender stereotypes and (post-)modern femininities.

One of the trends in vampire fiction taking account of this target group is a crossover genre between vampire literature and chick lit.

Chick lit comprises novels such as Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary*, Lauren Weisberger's *The Devil Wears Prada* or Sophie Kinsella's *Shopaholic* series, all of which feature a wisecracking 'singleton' heroine in search for "love, job satisfaction and the perfect pair of shoes".⁵ While chick lit continues to be commercially successful with a largely female audience in their twenties and thirties, reactions are still today "divided between those who expect literature by and about women to advance the political activism of feminism [...] and offer inspiring images of strong, powerful women, and those who argue instead that it should portray the reality of young women grappling with modern life".⁶

The question whether chick lit is really advancing the cause of feminism or actually impeding its progress by drawing on outdated patriarchal myths of love and romance being the only acceptable meaning of a woman's life is still controversially disputed. By linking the

genre of chick lit – often chided for its outspoken embrace of consumer culture and its stereotypical 'happy endings' - to the subversive, taboo-breaking potential of the vampire myth, vampire chick lit successfully questions traditional notions of female identity in a humorous, both ironical and self-ironical way.

Accordingly, vampire chick lit can be defined as – "a subgenre of romantic fantasy, which nevertheless does not correspond to what the average reader understands by fantasy. These novels are too wordly and light-hearted. Typically, a lively female first-person narrator reports the bloody mess around her [...]. They feature protagonists who are very fashionable, yet slightly nerdy, dealing with solid every day problems."⁷

With her *Immortality Bites* series (2006-), set in Toronto, Michelle Rowen creates a heroine who comes across like the illegitimate daughter of Bridget Jones and Carrie Bradshaw, turned into a vampire by Leslie Nielsen's Dracula.⁸ Rowen's heroine Sarah Dearly owns the complete DVD collection of *Sex and the City*⁹ as well as a considerable number of shoes and designer clothes.

However, there is more to Sarah than shoes and shopping. The play on gender stereotypes is evident from the first chapter of *Bitten & Smitten*. When Sarah's blind date turns out to be a vampire, Sarah escapes by throwing her expensive designer stilettos after him. She bumps into a group of strangers and immediately falls back into the classical role of the damsel in distress, relying on a man to rescue her. She realizes too late that she has been turned into a vampire, and that her potential hero is actually a vampire hunter determined to kill her. Traditional perceptions of heroism and gender are no longer valid.¹⁰ In the world of vampire chick lit, one has to dig more deeply to identify the true nature of things.

By willingly adapting the role of the victim, Sarah is placed into a situation in which she actually is victimised. Sarah is rescued by the vampire Thierry de Bennicoeur by a jump from the Bloor Viaduct. Ironically, it is her rescuer who actually needs saving. Being a six-hundred year-old master vampire, he is tired of his existence and ready to commit suicide until he is drawn into Sarah's chaotic new existence.

Sarah has a female boss, who insists on being called "Ms Saunders. Not Miss, not Mrs. Ms."¹¹ Not immediately disclosing one's marital status clearly marks Ms Saunders as a type of career woman who demands the role traditionally assigned to men, while Sarah's work is the 'female' role of the assistant. However, Ms Saunders' conservatism becomes evident when she is supposed to review Sarah's work, but instead only reviews her looks:

"You mustn't miss out on your beauty sleep. A woman's looks are one of her greatest assets in the business world, you know."

My smile held, but I did glance at her desk calendar to make sure we hadn't just time-traveled back fifty years.¹²

In introducing Ms Saunders, Rowen follows the typical chick lit pattern of heroines who "both gain our sympathy by being far more humane than their selfish employers and make mistakes only in interpreting their employers' bizarre demands".¹³ However, by having Sarah comment ironically on Ms Saunders' positively medieval viewpoint on the importance of a woman's beauty, Rowen calls another stereotype of the genre into question, namely that of the heroine's constant worries about her looks, which is becoming less important for Sarah as she turns into a vampire.

Throughout the novel, stereotypes about women are presented alongside stereotypes about vampires, for example when Sarah unknowingly walks into a bar frequented by hunters and engages in a conversation with the vampire hunter Quinn. His pickup line, "So, what's a nice girl like you doing in a place like this?", is as stereotypical as his ideas about vampires:

[Quinn:] "You don't look like a vampire."
I frowned at him. "And how do you expect a vampire to look?"
"I don't know [...]. More together somehow. Maybe all dressed in black. And fangs – shouldn't you have fangs?"
I shifted to cross my legs. It's true, a sparkly Diva T-shirt and pink yoga pants didn't really scream 'creature of the night'.¹⁴

While Quinn evokes the cliché vampire, Sarah's sparkly, pink outfit appears to satisfy every stereotype about a pretty, yet unintelligent woman. When Sarah suspects the hunters have followed her to her apartment, she decides to fight them with a pie-lifter; the idea of an entirely non-threatening kitchen tool turned into a lethal weapon is humorous in itself, but it also underlines the obsolescence of the domestic woman.

What links vampires to women symbolically is the predominant image in the novel, the mirror. The vampire itself can be interpreted as a mirror of the human reader.¹⁵

While Sarah as a vampire fledgling still casts a reflection, the image in the mirror fades as the novel proceeds and she enters the process of becoming both full-fledged vampire and self-assured woman. Sarah realizes that stiletto-heeled shoes are of little use in her new life, when her existence may depend on a swift flight. Furthermore, self-esteem gained by consumerism is revealed as an illusion by Sarah's ironical comments: "I continued, trying to sound as strong and confident as the commercials for my underarm deodorant said I should feel".¹⁶ As vampires cast no reflections, Sarah's carefully maintained exterior becomes irrelevant, and it is substance rather than style that makes a difference.

It is therefore no coincidence that it is in a *woman's* washroom that Sarah first realizes her reflection is fading. Her old identity dissolves, while her new one has not been formed yet. Sarah is confused and resorts to a comfortable, 'safe' role she knows well, the damsel in distress. In the scene after her breakdown, Thierry gives her his blood, which is an integral part of the patriarchal vampire myth. In the famous literary predecessor of this highly symbolic scene which reflects the male domination over the female in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, it is the male villain who forces his vampire blood on the defenceless woman, Mina Harker. The male vampire is the sexual aggressor, while the woman remains passive. In the chick lit equivalent, Sarah craves Thierry's blood and has to be forcefully separated from him.¹⁷

Sarah's behaviour in that scene is decisive both for her development as a vampire and as a woman; it is the first time she drinks undiluted blood, which takes her a step closer to becoming a vampire. Simultaneously, discarding her mother's advice that women ought not to behave aggressively, she goes for what she wants and is portrayed as predator rather than prey. To her own surprise, it is this strategy that causes Thierry to see the woman in her rather than the damsel in distress: "I figured he would push me away from him and storm out of the room. But instead, he grabbed my shoulders and pulled me hard against him, then crushed his lips against mine, drinking me in as I'd just done him [...]. *Then* he pushed me away from him and stormed out of the room".¹⁸ This reaction illustrates how Thierry himself is torn between the attraction the self-assured, 'new' vampire Sarah holds for him, and his own inability to accept her as his equal due to his old-fashioned understanding of being both a man of a generation long since past and a master vampire who is used to calling the shots.

This conflict climaxes as Sarah refuses to submit to Thierry's authority by insisting to attend her cousin's wedding in spite of Thierry's order to part ways with her old life entirely. Sarah sums up Thierry's inner struggle:

"You just want me to obey your every command, the way everyone else around here does. Well, forget it." [...] Thierry's problem was that he was too rigid. He was black or white. [...] My problem was that I was exactly the same way. But what was I supposed to do? Bow my head and say, 'Yes, master, whatever you say, master'? Not going to happen.¹⁹

Ironically, it is Sarah's clinging to her old life by wanting to attend her cousin's wedding that reveals to her that she can never go back to being the way she was before her transformation. Returning to the Canadian small town with the tell-tale name of Abottsville,²⁰ Sarah is reminded of her reasons to leave her home, which was her former boyfriend proposing to her: "His big dream was to take over his family's pharmacy and for me to stay at home and squeeze out four kids before I was twenty-five. Some girls might find that to be the meaning of life, but I wasn't one of them".²¹

Vampire Sarah tries to blend with the human crowd, but her reflection is fading more with each passing day, which makes it necessary to avoid reflecting surfaces to hide her secret identity. Like the vampire is no longer part of the human world, the modern, urban woman can no longer pretend to be a conservative country girl. As she decides that her cousin's chosen path, to marry and spend an unexciting life with her husband, an accountant, is not her own idea of life, Sarah's fangs suddenly start sprouting, which marks her visibly as a vampire. Spending the night in her childhood room, she discovers in the mirror of her old vanity that she can no longer make out an image. Her ultimate loss of a reflection immediately following her cousin's wedding equals her loss of the identities previously forced on her by others. She has outgrown her childhood self, and with it all misconceptions of what it means to be a woman.

Significantly, it is at this point that Thierry apologizes to her and emphasises his apology with a gift – a shard, an expensive kind of magical mirror in which vampires can see their reflections. Sarah can no longer relate to her old life-style and identity, but has completed the process of transformation into something else: "I stared at my red-eyed expression in the small mirror. Wait a minute. My reflection? I watched my eyes widen *with the growing awareness*".²² Gaining a new reflection, significantly one that is red-eyed, without make-up and expensive styling accessories, is the exterior sign of Sarah's inner transformation. Although the process is painful, she has arrived at a raised awareness of who she is.

Although critics of chick lit's usual happy endings might argue that Sarah's attempt to prevent Thierry from killing himself by declaring her love for him deprives the novel of its feminist potential, it has to be considered how Rowen constructs this scene. The decisive scene in the novel's penultimate chapter takes Sarah back to the bridge where she first met Thierry. This time, it is only the male who is in trouble. Sarah declares her love in a dramatic way by stepping onto the suspension beam next to Thierry, stating: "I love you. And if that means nothing to you, if you're just going to jump off this bridge because you feel there's nothing in this life to keep you here, then go for it. Just know I'm going to be right behind you".²³

Although Sarah claims she cannot live without Thierry as her 'strong alpha male', Rowen immediately comments the stereotypical image ironically – Sarah slips and needs to be pulled up again, but when Thierry attempts to help her, both of them slip off the side of the

bridge and fall "into the ice-cold, dark water",²⁴ which adds a comic twist to an otherwise kitschy love-scene. The 'alpha male' literally loses his grip and is revealed to be as chaotic as the heroine herself.

The transformation from human woman into vampire and the ensuing identity crisis is also at the heart of Mary Janice Davidson's *Undead and Unwed*, the first novel in her *Queen Betsy* series, set in Minneapolis. The heroine is given the name of the actress Elizabeth Taylor. The name is in itself programmatic: Taylor's image oscillates between commercial Hollywood beauty – there were three Barbie dolls created with her as a model²⁵ –, and feminist icon, a reputation she acquired by refusing to surrender to the male authority of the studio bosses in terms of her image and the marketing of her name.²⁶

Davidson's heroine, 'Betsy' Taylor, carries the same degree of ambiguity. Her biggest problem when she becomes a vampire is the pink suit her step-mother made her wear for her funeral, and the Manolo Blahnik shoes she stole from her apartment.

Betsy strongly dislikes the colour pink, along with its associations with feminization and "powderpuff girls",²⁷ yet fashion provides her "with a means of expressing identity".²⁸ Although the vampires she encounters favour the colour black, Betsy has no intention of blending with the crowd. She refuses to give up her own style the same way she refuses to break with her old life and her family, as the vampire prince Nostro attempts to force her to. In spite of Nostro's preference for the old-fashioned Gothic setting of the early Hollywood vampire movies, he is soon set up as her nemesis. Unlike the master vampires in other romance novels, Nostro is not presented as handsome, or a desirable love interest for Betsy, a fact she comments sarcastically: "In the books, the vampire villain is always some super-urbane, gorgeous guy, or a stunningly beautiful woman, but old Nostro looked like a mean-spirited monk. The kind who tortured mice when the other monks were praying".²⁹ The description of Nostro along with his name will make readers think of the monstrous vampire creature of Nosferatu as portrayed by Max Schreck, a prototypical image of vampires as ghastly creatures that could be no more remote from a romance novel's hero. Nostro's repugnant, dwarfish appearance is contrasted with that of his rival, Eric Sinclair.

The fact that Sinclair is called Eric makes him no less the prototypical vampire character than Nostro, associating him with both Eric Northman, the vampire sheriff of Charlaine Harris' *Sookie Stackhouse* novels, and Erik Night, the boyfriend of Zoey Redbird in the *House of Night* series by P.C. Cast and Kristen Cast. Notably, the real name of the vampire hunter Blade³⁰ is 'Eric Brooks'. Additionally, Eric Sinclair is, like Elizabeth Taylor, a movie actor – however, considerably less famous.³¹ Thus the choice of naming the male vampire Eric Sinclair marks him as less significant than the novel's heroine Elizabeth 'Betsy' Taylor. Sinclair is presented like the cliché romance novel cover model:

He was unbelievable. Easily the most-amazing-looking man I'd seen outside of *Playgirl*. Not that I read such trash. Well, hardly ever. Tall. Very tall. At least four inches taller than me, and I'm not petite. He had thick, inky black hair that swept back from his face in lush waves. Not many men could have pulled off the Elvis hair swirl thing, but this guy had it. His features were classically handsome: strong nose, good chin, nice, broad forehead. His eyes were beautiful and frightening. Deepest black, with a hard glitter to them, like stars shining in a dark winter sky. And his mouth was saved from being tender by a cruel twist of the upper lip. He looked mean. And he looked bad. And his body! He was so broad through the shoulders I wondered how he'd fit through the door, and his arms looked thick and powerful. [...] His shoes were – wow! Were those Ferragamos? It was a rare and wonderful thing to see a properly-shoed man in an underground mausoleum.³²

Despite his unlikely handsome looks, what strikes Betsy most about Sinclair is his extravagant shoes. While in chick lit the woman's shoes, mostly high-heeled stilettos, are an integral part of the heroine's sense of fashion, a trademark of the genre,³³ and, as feminists argue, the sign of her oppression and reduction to a sexual icon,³⁴ men's shoes are given little or no attention. Setting up Sinclair as the male equivalent of a pin-up and additionally drawing attention to his shoes, which appear to hold the most attraction for Betsy, the gender roles are reversed; it is the male who becomes an object to be 'consumed' by the heroine. Through this symbolic 'male oppression' by reducing him to his body and his 'sexy' shoes, Davidson satirizes the fixation with shoes ascribed exclusively to women.

Betsy's concern about appearances is only part of her personality. She used to be a model, but gave up on the job due to an epiphany that comes unexpected in a character who first appears to be shallow:

About two years into it, I'd had enough. All at once. I was sitting in a room full of tall, blond women with long legs and hair, women with my height and coloring, and it occurred to me that the man waiting in the back to interview me didn't care that I loved steak and risotto, and scary movies [...], and my mom. They didn't care that I was a member of PETA and a registered Republican. Contrary to popular belief, the two aren't mutually exclusive. Hell, they didn't care if I was a wanted felon. The only thing they cared about was my face, and my body. I remember thinking: 'What am I doing here?' Excellent question. I got up, and walked out.³⁵

Betsy realizes that her chosen profession reduces her to her physical beauty, whereas her personality is not appreciated in the modelling business. The women who are with her at the casting look like clones who have lost all of their individuality. Rather unusual for the stereotypical chick lit character, Betsy is politically involved, both in an animal rights organization, which one would not expect of a 'chick' with an interest in make-up and fashion, and in the Republican party, which makes Betsy decidedly different from other characters of the genre, who do not normally vote for a conservative party –*Sex and the City's* Samantha Jones remarks, "I don't believe in the Republican Party or the Democratic Party. I just believe in parties"³⁶ -, while Bridget Jones in *The Edge of Reason* cheers at a Labour victory.³⁷

The light-hearted tone with which Betsy recounts her own narrative vanishes as she informs the reader of the background of her best friend Jessica, who was abused by her father when she was a teenager. The topic is also addressed as Betsy encounters the pediatricist Marc, who is resolved to jump from a building because of the violence abusive parents inflict on their children, which he witnesses on his job. Although there is no in-depth discussion nor a detailed description to evoke a strong emotional reaction on the part of the reader, Betsy's matter-of-fact account of events emphasizes that there is only one acceptable course of action: when Jessica's mother does not want to believe her daughter's accusations, Jessica defends herself against her abusive father and turns to the police for help. Marc does not end up killing himself over the despair at the children's suffering, but is rescued by Betsy. He becomes part of her team, learns to be more self-assured and to stand up for his ideals. Notably, the female character Jessica is the stronger person, as she is the one who will not be victimised and takes action against the abuser, while the male character Marc is more vulnerable and passive.³⁸

The vampire's quality of taboo-breaking is used to illustrate that taboos can only be eliminated if they are talked about and condemned openly.

In the 21st century, vampire 'chicks', like their human counterparts, might not always be confident about who they are. Yet they are no longer helpless victims, as the damsels of

Simone Broders, Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Germany
Originally published in *The Centennial Reader – Current Readings, Reading Currents*, Mount Royal University, Canada. 2011 Summer Issue. <<http://centennialreader.ca/bitten-is-the-new-black>>

Victorian vampire literature, and their identities are based neither on superficial accessories such as shoes and handbags, nor on the chase for a rich and handsome husband. They stand their ground in a world that is all too often dominated by a darkness more sinister than that of the Gothic novels. While in their readers' reality, conflicts cannot normally be solved with stilettos or wooden stakes, weapons such as self-respect, wit, loyalty and awareness are not merely available to the undead, and, as Sarah Dearly observes: "Even with potential vampire strength, I couldn't go punching out everyone who pissed me off. It would be hell on a manicure".³⁹

Bibliography

Davidson, Mary Janice. *Undead and Unwed*. London: Piatkus, 2004.

Ferriss, Suzanne and Mallory Young. "Introduction." In *Chick Lit: the New Woman's Fiction*, edited by Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young, 1-13. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Harzewski, Stephanie. "Tradition and Displacement in the New Novel of Manners." In *Chick Lit: the New Woman's Fiction*, edited by Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young, 29-46. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Harris, Charlaine. *Dead Until Dark*. New York: Penguin, 2001.

Hermes, Joke. "The Tragic Success of Feminism." In *Feminism in Popular Culture*, edited by Joanne Hollows and Rachel Moseley, 79-95. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006.

Hollinger, Veronica. "Fantasies of Absence: the postmodern vampire". In *Blood Read: the Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*, edited by Jan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger, 199-212. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

Mammoth, Carol. "Chick lit, for better or worse, is here to stay." *USA Today*, June 21, 2006. Accessed March 7, 2011. http://www.usatoday.com/life/books/news/2006-06-20-chick-lit_x.htm

Meitinger, Therese. "Vampire Chick Lit – Untot, sexy und ein bisschen bescheuert." *Süddeutsche Zeitung Online*, October 26, 2010. Accessed March 7, 2011. <http://jetzt.sueddeutsche.de/texte/anzeigen/513452>

Morley, Sheridan. *Elizabeth Taylor. A Celebration*. London: Pavilion Books, 1988.

Rowen, Michelle. *Bitten & Smitten*. New York and Boston: Warner, 2006.

Turan, Kenneth. "You wanna neck? 'Twilight' makes you wish you were a romantic teen again. And for the teens? Yeow." *LA Times MOVIE REVIEW*, November 21, 2008. Accessed March 7, 2011. <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/nov/21/entertainment/et-twilight21>

The Doll Genie, Lecanto, FL, USA. Accessed March 11th, 2011. <http://www.dollgenie.com/e/>.

"The Sandpiper". International Movie Database IMDb. Accessed March 17, 2011. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0059674/fullcredits#cast>.

Waugh, Paul. "Tories claim Bridget Jones as 'one of their own.'" *The Independent*, September 18, 2002. Accessed March 17, 2011.
<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/tories-claim-bridget-jones-as-one-of-us-607376.html>.

Wells, Juliette. "Mothers of Chick Lit? Women Writers, Readers, and Literary History". In *Chick Lit: the New Woman's Fiction*, edited by Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young, 47-70. New York: Routledge, 2006.

Notes

¹ "Bitten is the new black" is the tagline of Canadian author Michelle Rowen's third *Immortality Bites* novel featuring her heroine Sarah Dearly: Michelle Rowen, *Stakes & Stiletos* (New York and Boston: Warner, 2009).

² Michelle Rowen, *Bitten & Smitten* (New York and Boston: Warner, 2006), 28.

³ Although Charlaine Harris' *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* (adapted for television as *True Blood*) can justly be counted among the genre of vampire chick lit, this article is not going to look explicitly at the series' heroine Sookie Stackhouse as she is a human character infatuated with a vampire, not a vampire herself.

⁴ Kenneth Turan, "You wanna neck? 'Twilight' makes you wish you were a romantic teen again. And for the teens? Yeow," *LA Times MOVIE REVIEW*, November 21, 2008, accessed March 17, 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/nov/21/entertainment/et-twilight21>.

⁵ Carol Mammot, "Chick lit, for better or worse, is here to stay," *USA Today*, June 21, 2006, accessed March 17th, 2011, http://www.usatoday.com/life/books/news/2006-06-20-chick-lit_x.htm.

⁶ Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young, "Introduction," in *Chick Lit: the New Woman's Fiction*, eds. Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young (New York: Routledge, 2006), 1-13; 9.

⁷ Therese Meitinger, "Vampire Chick Lit – Untot, sexy und ein bisschen bescheuert," *Süddeutsche Zeitung Online*, October 26, 2010, accessed March 17, 2011, <http://jetzt.sueddeutsche.de/texte/anzeigen/513452>.

⁸ *Dead and Loving It*, Gaumont/Castle Rock, dir. Mel Brooks, 1995.

⁹ Candace Bushnell's *Sex and the City* is widely regarded as paving the way for chick lit as a genre: "The humour in *Sex and the City* works to redefine the tightly woven web of patriarchal notions of what being a woman really means. [...] Female humour is presented as a counterculture that invests in breaking taboos and rewriting old truths about women's bodies and sexuality". Joke Hermes, "The Tragic Success of Feminism, in *Feminism in Popular Culture*, eds. Joanne Hollows and Rachel Moseley (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006), 79-95; 80.

¹⁰ "The man who'd seemed so attractive when I'd first bumped into him, my potential hero, now was grotesquely ugly to me". Rowen, *Bitten & Smitten*, 12.

¹¹ Rowen, *Bitten & Smitten*, 34.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ Juliette Wells, "Mothers of Chick Lit? Women Writers, Readers, and Literary History," in *Chick Lit: the New Woman's Fiction*, eds. Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young (New York: Routledge, 2006), 47-70; 52.

¹⁴ Rowen, *Bitten & Smitten*, 63.

¹⁵ "We look into the mirror it provides and we see a version of ourselves. Or more accurately, keeping in mind the orthodoxy that vampires cast no mirror reflections, we look into the mirror and see nothing *but* ourselves". Veronica Hollinger, "Fantasies of Absence: the postmodern vampire," in *Blood Read: the Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*, eds. Jan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 199-212; 201.

¹⁶ Rowen, *Bitten & Smitten*, 136.

¹⁷ "Enough, Sarah." His voice was ragged. Enough? I thought. No, not yet. Just a little more. [...] He groaned as he tried to pull away, but my grip on him must have been stronger than I felt. "Enough," he said louder. He squeezed my arm and roughly brought me up to my feet. He put a hand under my chin to pry my mouth from his wrist". Rowen, *Bitten & Smitten*, 94.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Rowen, *Bitten & Smitten*, 146.

²⁰ denoting both the superior of a monastery, the epitome of rural religiosity and patriarchal traditionalism, and the American comedy duo Abbot and Costello

²¹ Rowen, *Bitten & Smitten*, 149.

²² Rowen, *Bitten & Smitten*, 186, my italics.

²³ Rowen, *Bitten & Smitten*, 365.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ According to the listing at *Dollgenie*, the three Elizabeth Taylor Barbies date from 2000 and are called Father of the Bridge, White Diamonds, and Cleopatra. *The Doll Genie*, Lecanto, FL, USA, accessed March 11th, 2011, <http://www.dollgenie.com/e/>.

²⁶ Sheridan Morley, *Elizabeth Taylor. A Celebration* (London: Pavilion Books, 1988), 22.

²⁷ Stephanie Harzewski, "Tradition and Displacement in the New Novel of Manners," in *Chick Lit: the New Woman's Fiction*, eds. Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young (New York: Routledge, 2006), 29-46; 35.

²⁸ Ferriss and Young, "Introduction", 11.

²⁹ Mary Janice Davidson, *Undead and Unwed* (London: Piatkus, 2004): 121.

³⁰ created by Marv Wolfman and Gene Colan

³¹ Taylor starred in the 1965 movie *The Sandpiper* alongside Richard Burton, while Sinclair's role as 'Beatnik' in the movie remained uncredited. Cf. "The Sandpiper," International Movie Database IMDb, accessed March 17th, 2011. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0059674/fullcredits#cast>.

³² Davidson, *Undead and Unwed*, 79.

³³ "Covers more often than not feature stylish female clothing or high heels". Harzewski, "Tradition and Displacement", 35.

³⁴ Accordingly, Germaine Greer called romance novels "more crippling than high heels" (quoted in Harzewski, "Tradition and Displacement", 36).

³⁵ Davidson, *Undead and Unwed*, 10.

³⁶ Quote from *Sex and the City*, Season 3, Episode 2, "Politically Erect".

³⁷ Strikingly, conservative politicians in Britain have claimed that Bridget's behaviour marks her as a Tory: "David Willetts, the shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, suggested that Ms Jones was 'a Tory at heart' because she wanted more than anything to settle down one day in a stable marriage with children". Paul Waugh, "Tories claim Bridget Jones as 'one of their own,'" *The Independent*, September 18, 2002, accessed March 17, 2011, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/tories-claim-bridget-jones-as-one-of-us-607376.html>

³⁸ Charlaine Harris' *Dead Until Dark* (New York: Penguin, 2001) also deals with the topic of child abuse. When the heroine Sookie Stackhouse confides in her vampire lover Bill that she was sexually abused by an uncle as a child, Bill – without her knowledge or consent - immediately avenges the deed by killing Sookie's uncle, reverting to the stereotype of the alpha male as protector of the female victim.

³⁹ Rowen, *Bitten & Smitten*, 110.