EVERY GENERATION GETS THE VAMPIRE IT DESERVES[1]: CHANGE IN VAMPIRE IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY SUPERNATURAL FICTION

Dönemsel Kaygılar; Dönemsel Kimlikler: Vampir Kimliğinin Çağımızdaki Değişim

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the change in vampire identity in contemporary supernatural fiction. As Auerbach (1995) has stated, vampires are personifications of their age and thus, their appeal is generational. Vampires are strong metaphors that tell a lot about national fears and traumatic past of one society. This fascinating dark image talks about ideological and generational spirit of a culture. Earlier, vampires have been literary characters that point to otherness and the fears of one culture. Vampire was an outsider, a threatening stranger with fangs and old-fashioned clothes, living on the outskirts of the town and who killed for a reason behind. However, the monster image has been changed so far. Not to forget their monster nature all together, vampires with leading roles represented in contemporary supernatural fiction have become mainstream, civilized, tamed, vulnerable and almost human in many ways. In order to exemplify this argument, two narratives are chosen: The *Twilight* series by Stephenie Meyer (*Twilight* 2005, *New Moon* 2006, *Eclipse* 2007, *Breaking Dawn* 2008) and *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* (2001-2010) -aka *True Blood*- by Charlaine Harris. Their evolution or rather demystification of their true vampire nature can be explained in terms of globalization of consumer capitalism, postmodernity and audience reception theory. Additionally, purpose of this study is to discuss the change in contemporary representation of the vampire from "anti-Christ to sympathetic next-door neighbor" (Zanger, 1997) as reflected in the texts, *Twilight Saga* and *True Blood*.

Key Words: *Vampire, Domestication, Globalization, Consumer Capitalism, Postmodernity, Audience Reception.*

Özet

Bu çalışma, çağımızdaki değişen vampir algısını tartışmayı hedeflemektedir. Bu konudaki araştırmalarıyla tanınan Profesör Nina Auerbach'ın belirttiği gibi, vampir kimliği dönemsel kaygılarla şekillenen, yaratıldıkları çağın sosyo-politik ve ideolojik tutumunu ortaya koyan güçlü metaforlardır. Edebiyattaki vampir kimliği, bir kültürün korku ve travmatik geçmişine ilişkin çok şey ifade eder. On dokuzuncu yüzyıldan bu yana Batı yazınındaki vampir temsili çoğunlukla ürkütücü, yalnız, toplumdan uzak yaşayan bir aristokrat olarak çizilmiştir ama çağımızda, özellikle 2000'lerden bu yana, bu algı çok değişmiştir. Yeni vampir, kapı komşumuz kadar bize yakın yaşayan içimizden biri, sevimli, insani, medeni ve duygusal bir kimliğe bürünmüştür. Kısacası vampir kimliği bir evrim geçirerek, bozulmuş, oynanmış, değiştirilmiştir. İfade ettiği *ötekilik durumundan* eser kalmamıştır. Bunun sebepleri çeşitlidir ama bu çalışmada değişen vampir kimliğinin nedenleri olarak, kapitalist tüketim toplumu ve değerlerinin pompalandığı küreselleşme olgusu, post-modernite ve okuyucu algısı üzerinde durulacaktır. Bu nedenlerin örneklenecek olduğu yazınsal metinler ise, Stephenie Meyer'in tüm dünyada büyük yankı uyandıran beş kitaplı *Alacakaranlık* serisi (2005-2008) ile Charlaine Harris'in televizyona uyarlanan ve genellikle *True Blood* ismiyle bilinen 13 serilik romanlarıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Vampir, Küreselleşme, Tüketim Kültürü, Postmodernite, Okuyucu Algısı.*

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[1] From Nina Auerbach's *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, 1995.
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1. Introduction

Following Nina Auerbach (1995), who considers vampires as "personifications of their age" and their appeal as "generational," it is possible to treat vampires in contemporary supernatural fiction as the representation of modern man in a globalized, consumer-capitalist society. In other words, contemporary vampire identity reflects the Zeitgeist of 2000s. In order to exemplify this argument, two narratives are chosen: The Twilight series by Stephenie Meyer (Twilight 2005, New Moon 2006, Eclipse 2007, Breaking Dawn 2008) and The Southern Vampire Mysteries (2001-2010) -aka True Blood- by Charlaine Harris. Not to forget their monster nature all together, leading vampires represented in these narratives have become mainstream, civilized, tamed, vulnerable and almost human in many ways. Their evolution or rather demystification of their true vampire nature can be explained in terms of globalization of consumer capitalism, postmodernity and audience reception theory. Additionally, purpose of this study is to discuss the change in contemporary representation of the vampire from "anti-Christ to sympathetic next-door neighbor" (Zanger, 1997) as reflected in the texts, Twilight Saga and True Blood.

The domestication of vampire identity is not new. Readers familiar with the genre will remember "the almost human Varney" in Varney, the Vampire (1845), the humanist Louis of Interview with the Vampire (1976), Nick in Forever Knight (1992-1996), Angel and Spike from Buffy, the Vampire Slayer (1997-2003) and many others. Yet, all these vamps are quite different than that of contemporary ones because as Auerbach claims, every generation is remembered for its own type of vampire, which is unique. Twilight and True Blood vampires, in this sense, are successful deconstructions of monstrosity in our time with their emphasis on family life, patriarchy, heterosexuality, urbanization, and consumption practices. As Jeremy J. Cohen (1996) argues, monster exists only to be read because it is an embodiment of a certain cultural movement of a time, a feeling and a place. The monster tells a lot about one society and one nation. For instance, according to Moretti (1986), the monster Frankenstein and the vampire Dracula are the two faces of Western civilization. Through them, one can read generational fears, collective traumas, and remnants of a culture. The vampires of earlier times metaphorically pointed to repressed sexuality, xenophobia, illness and war in Western society. In the case of 2000s, the new vampire identity tells a lot about the globalized image of the individual who has become cosmopolitan, urban, self-centered, eclectic, hedonist and pragmatic.

Earlier, back in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century the vampire was more like an outsider, a threatening stranger with fangs and old-fashioned clothes, living on the outskirts of the town and who killed for a reason behind. They were distinguished by their monstrosity, aristocratic life style, alienation from society, elitist/anachronistic tastes of clothing and living, high tastes of art, literature and music, erotic/blood lust for both sexes, interest in purchase of land/real estate. The monster image has been changed so far. As Twitchell (1981) states, "vampires are now rude, boring, hopelessly adolescent. In fact, a century ago, they were quite sophisticated, used in works by artists such as William Blake, Edgar Allan Poe, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the Brontes, P.B. Shelley and John Keats to explain aspects of interpersonal relations" (ix). Auerbach (1995) in a similar way considers the change in vampire identity as rather dull and banal. Commenting on the vampire representation of the 1980s, she stresses her distaste with them and she looks forward to more radical, powerful, threatening ones to come as in the shape of minority voices like queers and post-feminists in a society.

According to Kindinger, "the most important feature of the new vampire is that he is represented as less Other and more as Self. He is less aristocratic, more democratic and

communal" (Kindinger, 2011: 12). More than fangs, cloaks and coffins, vampires of our time are identified with cell-phones, sport cars and home sweet homes. Why? The reasons are varied, however in the scope of this study the transformation of vampire identity will be explained in terms of a generational spirit, mainly influenced by globalization of consumer capitalism, postmodernity and audience reception theory.

2. Domestication of the Literary Vampire

In this section, categorization of True Blood and Twilight vampires will be given through their domestication and change. To begin with, it is helpful to see the new vampire features as listed in the table below. Detailed explanation related to each feature will be provided in the following part.

• New vampires are more human than evil. If evil is a part of them, that is just fine and acceptable (Earlier, the vampire was completely Evil, whom one has to fight against).

a. The vampires of True Blood have become mainstream among humans which means that they do not have to hide their vampire natures anymore. Bill and Eric in True Blood are a combination of good and evil at the same time. They help old and poor folks of the town; work in favor of human community; care for the woman they love; yet they can hurt their love interests, kill and harm people when they mean to. Humans rarely criticize or hate them; on the contrary they either make good friends with vampires or stay neutral.

b. The vampires of Twilight still hide their true natures. The Cullens family in Twilight is famous for their gentle and civilized manners like the father Carlisle Cullen who works as a doctor in the town. They almost kill no humans. They become violent only when they have to fight against evil vampires. Mostly, they are known and favored for their polite and cool manners in the public.

• New vampires are ordinary characters from contemporary, everyday life (Earlier, vampires looked antique and lived antique when compared to their contemporaries. However, the new vampire is just anyone without any striking features. They do not sleep in coffins. They are not afraid of crucifix or garlic. They mostly do not fear of sunlight; on the contrary they sparkle in daylight. They have become standard in many ways and they have adapted to our time albeit continuing a part of their cultural/family heritage.)

a. The Cullens live in a nicely decorated house in American suburbia. They wear fashionable clothes, drive sport cars, listen to popular/classical music, go shopping, do exercise, study for classes, work and cook, love and hate as humans do. Moreover, they shine like diamonds in sunlight.

b. Likewise, True Blood vampires live in good houses, drive good cars, wear fashionable clothes, work outside and come home tired. They are past garlic and crucifix however, they are fearful of silver and sunlight.

• New vampire represents the middle-class individual who is white, educated, professional, Christian, heterosexual, young, healthy and fashionable with an interest in fame/cash money (Earlier, the vampire was a foreigner or a stranger in town. He was an educated aristocrat with elitist tastes. He was interested in the purchase of real estate or land rather than fame or cash money. He was a decaying figure of past times however always young. The old vampire was popular for his homosexual or bisexual choices).

a. The Cullens are typically middle class Americans who are white, Christian, heterosexual, educated, young and healthy. Their fame is based on their good looks, consumption of cars and clothes.

b. True Blood vamps mainly Bill and Eric are white, heterosexual, middle class Americans who are professional and educated. They are good at commerce either with the vampire community or with humans. Investing on money is what matters for them. Far from being aristocrats, they represent the new bourgeoisie.

• New vampires are keen on social ties that bind them together and to humans (Earlier, the vampire was usually an isolated being that rarely communicated either with his kin or with humans. More than dialogue and compromise, old vampires preferred confrontation or rather no communication at all).

a. True Blood vamps like to get socialized with humans anytime anywhere, mostly at night clubs and diners. They prefer living a family life with their loved ones, either with partners or children. They value dialogue and communication.

b. The Cullens emphasize on dynamic family life. They value marriage and long-time relationships. They like to get socialized with towns' folk or friends at school however; they hide their real vampire identities unlike True Blood vamps who openly celebrate their true natures.

• New vampires are "vegetarians" who abstain from preying on human blood. They do not kill for blood. If they kill, they kill for fun (Earlier, blood was life source for vampires; they killed with a reason behind; they chose their preys in attentive courtesy and did not waste a drop).

a. True Blood vampires feed on artificial blood. Although human blood makes them stronger, they prefer not to drink it. They do not kill humans for their blood. They kill either for fun or out of dislike.

b. Twilight vampires abstain from drinking human blood. They prefer animal blood.

• New vampires are hedonist, eclectic and pragmatic.

a. True Blood vampires are hedonist beings who like to have it when they want it. They are pragmatic and handy at times of conflict and difficulty. They are eclectic because they can adapt to different circumstances whilst keeping a part of their early human heritage and vampire natures.

b. Likewise, the Cullens are pragmatic and eclectic beings who can change as time changes. They often move from one state to another across the United States and live in different parts of the world at different epochs like the Victorian or Obama times. Hedonism is a vampire feature that never changes.

• New vampires are urban and cosmopolitan (Earlier, vampires were more rural than urban. They were adaptable to different conditions and life styles but definitely not a citizen of the world. They looked antique or rather grotesque and funny with their preferences, life style, clothing, and etc)

a. The Cullens live in Forks, Washington located somewhere close to Seattle. They live in American suburbia but they are not small town people. They are a citizen of the world with their popular tastes and American way of life. They can appeal to anyone because they lack sharp character features that categorize them. In that sense, they represent a global identity with globalized interests.

b. True Blood vampires emphasize on locality as they live in the small town of fictional Bon Temps, located in Louisiana. Vampire Bill represents the values of the Old South, and Eric represents Nordic heritage however; in a larger picture Bill and Eric portray the American way of life diffusing middle class values. As a result of their ability to adapt to different times and places, they are beyond racial, local, linguistic boundaries that confine them to a specific spot. They represent a multi-cultural identity feeding on both past and present times.

3. Reasons for the Change in Vampire Identity

One reason for domestication of vampire identity is globalization of consumer capitalism. The spirit of 2000s, among many other labels, is globalism stressing on the world-wide circulation and integration of people and ideas, going beyond locality and national boundaries in the name of consumer capitalism (Barker, 1999: 111-118, McGrew, 1992: 61-65, Jameson, 1991: par.5). Globalization puts the emphasis on transnational, which makes inner dynamics of one culture (such as societal norms, public conventions and national interests) meet on a common ground with that of other cultures' so that cultural distinctions will be softened or transformed, if not melted into air. That is to say, confrontation between the local and the transnational will form an ambiguous pattern in a society's system of codes, where sharp distinctions related to ideology and ethnicity can be simplified or modified in the name of larger narratives, that is to say capitalism. Globalization or as many critics would rather name, "the cultural imperialism of consumer capitalism" has created an international consciousness that can hail anyone on earth. Of course, the result is not altogether liberating. In the post-industrial period, transformation of a culture and its system of norms is revealed within the merits of consumer capitalism, which is perceived as Americanization (Barker, 1999: 113-118) or Westernization. So, globalization can be articulated as the attempt to establish sameness in terms of custom, fashion and way of life.

Globalization of consumer capitalism and Americanization work on two levels in the scope of vampire identity. Firstly, by promoting middle class values and secondly by determining social manners and communication. Albeit multi-racial and multi-cultural representations of vampire identity in Twilight Saga and True Blood (usually these vamps are minor characters without leading roles), the focus is mostly on the protagonist vampire who is a true manifestation of American middle-class individual and his values: white, heterosexual, professional, educated, suburban, independent individual. Twilight is popular because it sells the ethics of middle-class individual through the impossible love affair between a vampire and a human. Similarly True Blood, via affairs between humans and vampires, centers on how vampires of contemporary time have come out of the closet/coffin by adapting to American way of life. Both in Twilight and True Blood, privileged white middle class individual is embodied in the leading vampire identity and white trash is represented by humans. In that way, audience is more likely to identify with the promoted vampire image than human characters.

Twilight and True Blood vampires provide the picture for such categorization as reflected in the characterization of the Cullens family and Bill/Eric:

a. The Cullens of Twilight are typically representative of middle class American values with their emphasis on patriarchy, family life, heterosexuality, education and consumption. They are nestled in a family of close ties that underline masculine strength and protection as well as feminine tenderness and devotion. Their heterosexual choices are a matter of patriarchal authority which is further developed through Edward's insistence on marring Bella. The family members' emphasis on college education is a reasonable end that legitimizes their existence among humans. Consumption becomes them as they try to find a plausible way to manage their existence through the items they consume rather than consuming blood. Via Bella and Edward, Twilight wants its audience to believe in the make-believe world by paying homage to nuclear family, family ties, heterosexual marriage, education and consumer practices among many others. It is not only middle class values that globalization pumps through the Cullens. Globalization also works for creating a global identity that is overwhelmingly self-centered, hedonist, pragmatic and urban as reflected via the Cullens.

b. In the case of True Blood vampires, emphasis on patriarchal structure, family life, heterosexuality and consumer ethics are again remarkable features triggered by Americanization. Mainly considering Bill, Eric and Sookie, conformist and domestic American way of life is bombarded at audiences. These characters privilege family life and marriage. Their homes are their nests. Those vamps go to work, socialize at clubs and come back home. Cooking pies with grandma recipes, watching TV, volunteering in town's gatherings, etc are among everyday realities of their lives. Money and consumer goods are tickets for belonging and acceptance. In terms of gender roles, True Blood is perceived to be far liberating than Twilight with its emphasis on homosexuality and mainly on Sookie as a strong, self-sufficient woman however submissive female portrayal and over-protective male authority are important to notice in general. In other words, True Blood vamps with leading roles are intensively mainstream, hardly the other.

Additionally, both texts appeal to a wider audience because protagonists are everyman who catches up with contemporary values of Western culture. In both texts, vampire is a standard, common man, fragile to the mesmerizing power of goods, who loves to consume/ be consumed. As it is stated, "he is someone who fears that his average ethics can be subverted by a power beyond him, yet restrained to go beyond his merits and challenge the system." In Milly Williamson's words, vampire is like a middle-class bourgeoisie who has been criticized mostly for his banality, narrow-mindedness, materialism, consumerism and hedonism. The vampire, "like the bourgeoisie, is an average man who does not accept to remain as he is and who, lacking the strength for the conquest of essential values –those of spirit- opts for material ones, for appearances" (Paravese, 1939: 51-70).

Apart from promoting Westernization/Americanization, globalization emphasizes on inter-connection among people, and that means every individual depends on one another for survival. Such community ties have determined the way contemporary vampire identity has been constructed in recent supernatural fiction. In a global world, no one can live, produce or consume in a disconnected way. The interactions are what you have in this world. In this respect:

a. The Cullens family of Twilight is a success in communication with humans and non-humans. The members of the family privilege negotiation and compromise rather than fighting with others such as the aristocratic Volturi or the nomadic wolf pack. They either do not kill or kill only when too necessary. In addition to that, the most striking sign of the Cullens is that, they are vegetarians (they only drink animal blood). Abstinence from

human blood is the essential factor in their evolution from "the cold-blooded monster to the domesticated next-door neighbor." The vegetarian Cullens like to get socially acquainted with other vampires who refrain from feeding on humans, because for them, refrain from human blood is a sign of self-control and civilization (Stanescue 2012). Moreover, they disguise their real identities not only because it is a vampire rule, but because they are fearful of losing their ties that bind them to human society. They do not want to be alienated as the contemporary time demands integration.

b. Similar to Twilight, the vampires of True Blood are keen on communication, perhaps they are extremely social. Main vampires Bill and Eric are popular for their polite manners and rationality. Moreover, they do not have to prey on humans for survival as they can feed on synthetic blood which is sold at supermarkets. In True Blood, nutrition on synthetic blood is just another positive factor that helps legitimizing their existence in the human world. Abstinence from human blood is important because it gives them a chance to be recognized socially and politically in the human world.

As it is exemplified, Twilight and True Blood vampires have mostly subverted the clichés of the vampire myth in the name of getting accepted to the community they live in; in other words, the image of contemporary vampire has been tamed. The tamed image of the vampire is shaped by the generational spirit of our time. As one cannot free fictional characters from the milieu and time they are constructed in, domesticated vampire identity is definitely a feedback of what our time has been offering to its monsters: Extremely self-centered, flat individuals with average values and eclectic tastes.

Other than globalization of consumer capitalism, postmodernity is an effective factor in demystification of vampire identity. Among many of its features, postmodernity makes an emphasis on subversion of objective truths and co-existence of different cultures with an interest on the local/particular (Thompson, 1992: 229, Harvey, 1992: 256-270). Postmodernity as a world view is liberating in its emphasis on "the other" that speaks for any subtexts. In the frame of contemporary supernatural fiction, vampire may not be the so-called other as it used to be, yet still some part of this fascinating image is evil. However, perception of evil has changed in our time and so did the vampire image.

Earlier examples of the literary vampire were more like a monster, seducer, anti-Christ figure such as Lord Ruthven, Carmilla, Count Dracula and even Lestat to some extent, because they were products of a milieu and time when the West was able to define evil as a monolithic structure and was able to fight against it through the monsters it had created. Thus, the West displayed its fear of the other in the embodiment of a monster that threatened its hegemony. Idea was to show that the world was unsafe and uncertain. So, the purpose was to reset patriarchy and social order. In that sense, vampire was used as a metaphor to indicate fear and the necessity to fight against it.

We have come a long way now, and the vampire of our time is still the product of the West; however from a postmodernist perspective, the good and evil are far from being separated concepts, moreover; the acceptance of otherness is welcomed in our time. In other words, vampires of our time have transgressed physical, cultural, racial and socio-political boundaries that label them as the other. As Stacey Abbott in her Celluloid Vampires (2007) claims, "the vampire of the twenty-first century has undergone a final liberation. The vampire of our time has been freed finally from national boundaries beside spatial ones and the confinements of the body as well. In addition, it has become global" (10). The vampire can be many things at one time, speaking a universal language. In this

respect, the polymorphous nature of the vampire makes it an infinite artifact, something global, beyond time, place, body and mind.

The vampires of Twilight and True Blood are past the separation of evil and goodness. As it is stated by Gordon and Hollinger (1997), evil is a part of us, and it is not surprising anymore. A non-human nature full of vices and virtues is what makes this monster come closer and be familiar to humans; they can err like humans do; they are additionally just one of us. However, the domestication of the vampire may eventually become a burden. As Jules Zanger (1997:22) contemplates, this is ironic in the sense that, the more they are domesticated and socialized, the weaker they get. Vampires become vulnerable as they are exposed to humans. As they learn to empathize with humans, understand, protect and feel sorry for them, the vampires ironically age, suffer and lose. The vampire, himself becomes the other in itself:

a. In Twilight, when Edward Cullen gets to know Bella closer, his monster nature is revealed as he can almost not stop himself from killing her and drinking her blood, he starts to hate himself and therefore alienates himself from his community and try to leave her as a means of self-punishment.

b. Likewise in True Blood, the vampire Bill empathizes not only with the woman -Sookie- he loves, but also with the folks of the town, trying to help them financially or emotionally; however, as a result of too much empathy with humans, he can never embrace his true nature as a vampire and feels constant pain for knowing that he can never go back to his earlier life. The more they (Edward Cullen and Bill Compton) are humanized, the worst tragic they get.

At this point, it is necessary to point to the parallelism between new vampires of contemporary time and the vampires of an earlier narrative, a vampire classic, Interview with the Vampire (1976). In the novel, the vampires Lestat and Louis complain about their tragic existence of inbetweenness, neither belonging to the world of the dead, nor to the living; thus always feeling the pain of alienation due to human compassion and monster violence, in other words, the feeling of otherness.

There are also other circumstances where the sense of otherness does not always become a burden. In a postmodernist frame, the vampire as a cultural icon in mainstream American media portrays one culture's attempt to renovate and transgress itself. Thus, perception of monstrosity and otherness is liberated through postmodernist world view that highlights minority voices and differences in a society:

a. For instance, True Blood's emphasis is essentially on otherness as the opening billboard of the TV show suggests, "God Hates Fangs." This billboard title is open to interpretation but in the context of the show it is usually read as "God Hates Gays" or knowing that the setting is the Deep South, it can be contemplated as "God Hates Blacks". Apart from that, vampires becoming mainstream and their recognition by humans in society may point to justification of homosexual marriages or rising of black consciousness in the US. In any case, the narrative underlines the fact that if humans and others want to live together in harmony, it will be realized only through tolerance and recognition.

b. Twilight handles "otherness" through vampires' interaction with other non-human identities like the wolf pack, Quileutes which symbolize Native Americans. The conflict between vampire Edward Cullen and wolf leader Jacob is a fight to win the love of Bella

however, it also points to the historical conflict between the Palefaces and Redskins. The Twilight saga ends in a happily ever after mood with the marriage of Bella and Edward – Paleface gets the girl-, plus the birth of their daughter, who is supposed to get married with Jacob soon. The ending message –in a way- indicates that fighting or war is meaningless; moreover, living together and sharing the same world is possible only when different races or cultures acknowledge and recognize the existence of the other.

As it is argued above, the vampires exemplified in this section handle otherness from different angles. First, the vampire can be the other in itself and it turns out to be a burden for the vampire's true nature; secondly, vampires metaphorically enlighten counter-discourses between the margin and center in one society. So, the new vampire image exists both as marvelous and monstrous.

Audience reception is the last factor determining new vampire identity and it works on two levels as reader feedback and media manipulation. Audience reception theory mainly focuses on the bond between the reader and the text which is open to multiple versions of other, new forms of becoming either on a textual or virtual level. As Jenkins (2006) claims, convergence culture points to the flow of content across multiple media platforms, media industries and media audiences (2). This convergence relies on the active participation of an audience willing to go far beyond the initial source to find and engage in a wealth of additional content. In this new, participatory culture consumers have a greater role to play in the content we absorb and thus in the content corporations produce (Anyiwo, 2012: 158).

For instance, several internet platforms created by True Blood or Twilight fans provide a realm for new editions of the sequels. Fans' re-writing of the novels' end and additional character dimensions discussed on the web determine the way sequels are created by authors. As dominant ideology in a text is usually given through the leading characters with which readers are likely to identify with, success of the series in a way depends on how and to what extent major characters are absorbed by the readers. However as one reader's individual background and personal expectation determine the perception of the message, the text turns out to be a site for multiple interpretations to come into being. For instance, a reader who does not know that writer of Twilight series is a Mormon, may not be able to recognize Mormon messages in the text and thus, will interpret the text in his/her own frame of reference. Or, knowing that Allan Ball, the creator of True Blood television series is a homosexual, will enhance the use of vampire metaphor as the silenced other in the text. In both cases, the domesticated image of the vampire (who is modern, urban, cosmopolitan, self-centered, eclectic, etc) in multiple media helps audience digest the proposed vampire identity in an easier way as it can appeal to a wider audience whose prominent features parallel the fictional vampire identity.

Secondly, media manipulation works on a larger level widening narratives' popularity in public and determining casting and stylization of the main body of works in possible movie adaptations and on other levels like blogs, fan fashion and etc. Mostly, texts are under the influence of media corporations with which producers work for and this is a huge sea of marketing where greatest financial return is expected (Anyiwo 162). For instance, the vampire image in a text is further developed into other categories and absorbed in the everyday life of fans in the form of commodified products. In a way, vampire as a fictional character transcends its identity and serves as a lifestyle in the form of vampire/gothic fashion, subaltern music and cult behavior that offer difference and authenticity for its audience. An example for such categorization can be the Fangtasia True Blood Vampire Club located in London, UK. The place being a

verisimilitude of the vampire pub in True Blood, is an example for indicating how vampire texts/fictional identities go beyond their meanings and point to commodification.

Other than commodification, domesticated image of the vampire, that is to say, the flat vampire identity which lacks depth and sharp characteristic features like everyman Edward, ordinary Bella, hedonist and pragmatic Bill&Eric can be absorbed by multiple audiences and then modified in varied forms. Unlike Dracula of the nineteenth century who represents mainly one side of the monster or Nosferatu who is a terrifying outcast with its monster appearance, the new vampire of our time provides as a global identity that can offer many things to different people. For example, Twilight series are translated into more than 30 languages. Although the novels rank as teen romance, they are read by audiences like housewives, academics and teens whose ages change from 18 to 38. As for the audience of True Blood, it is even implied that both the novel sequels and TV show appeal to larger audiences when compared to Twilight saga.

As it is argued, reception theory considers the text as an active body of work depending on varied reader interpretations and thus it is also related to "loss of self" which takes place during the process of impersonation that ultimately gives rise to new identities, resulting in the expansion and unfolding of self (Hills 2002). As Mellins (2012) states, it is only by passing through moments of self-absence that our sense of self can be re-narrated and expanded (qtd from Ricoeur 1984 in Hills 2002). In this frame, domesticated image of the vampire helps audiences absorb the fictional identity in a fast and easier way; it also allows the audience to create alternative selves.

4. Conclusion

True Blood and Twilight, though with flaws in style and technique, rank as popular works centering on the vampire as a metaphor, which reflects the dynamics of contemporary American society, family life and individual of our time. The texts offer meaning to contemporary audiences, whether teen or adult, by letting them empathize with vampires rather than humans as the contemporary image of the vampire is less threatening and much more human than ever. Vampires are transformed from monolithic identities with snobbish tastes to eclectic, pragmatic beings with consumerist desires. In addition to their eclecticism, multi-layered vampire identity in both texts is also liberating. As they can transgress time and space, their identity becomes a balance between the old-world traditions and the new-world norms. The diversity of past and present makes them polymorphous. Through the process of renewal, as the cultural codes change, their identity becomes a reflection of this instability, borrowing from many styles. Their racial identities are eventually generational identities, which is also a mixture of power and weakness.

The new vampire or in other words, New Age vampires prefer intimacy and cooperation. They choose to compromise with the enemy rather than going into conflict. They adapt to middle class conformity with the typical nuclear family at the heart of suburbia rather than alienating themselves in the castles of aristocratic elite. Thus, readers' identification with everyman Edward and next-door neighbor Bill Compton operates at two different levels: Firstly, from a postmodern point of view, the subversion of the opposites becomes successful in revealing who we are (Gordon and Hollinger, 1997: 200) and secondly, the domestication process becomes an end in the globalization of consumer capitalism. Such domestication or in other words, the demystification of the unknown, has transformed the so-called anti-Christ into a much mundane identity (Zanger, 1997: 20-25).

Who says vampires have no reflection, is mistaken. Vamps are reflections of our modern man and society, mirroring who we are and what we lack. Vampires are helpful in reading history and culture. To conclude with a last word from Auerbach (1995), vampire texts are perceived as multicultural constructs eventually helping one society rewrite history, long back from past out into future times:

An alien nocturnal species, sleeping in coffins, living in shadows, drinking our lives in secrecy; vampires are easy to stereotype, but it is their variety that makes them survivors. They may look marginal, feeding on human history from some limbo of their own, but for me, they have always been central: what vampires are in any given generation is a part of what I am and what my times have become. (Those texts) is a history of Anglo-American culture through its mutating characters. (1)

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