

“IS IT MY FAULT MY FANGS COME OUT WHEN I’M TURNED ON?”  
A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF PAM AND JESSICA’S VAMPIRE SEXUALITY IN  
THE HBO TELEVISION SERIES *TRUE BLOOD*

by

Ashley Anderson

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters  
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Master of Arts

Florida Atlantic University

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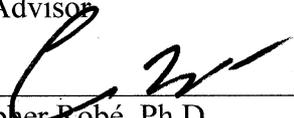
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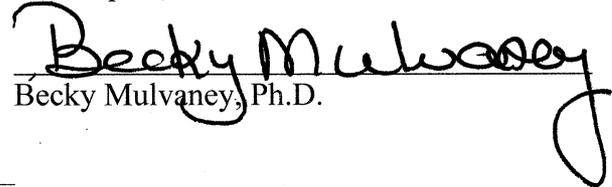
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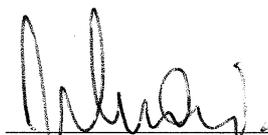


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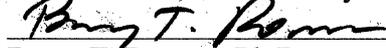
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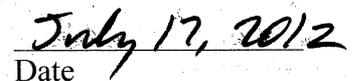
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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis analyzes Pamela Swynford De Beaufort and Jessica Hamby from the provocative HBO series, *True Blood*, in order to determine what hegemonic ideologies are reinforced through their sexual representation in the series. Through analysis based on concepts of the “*vagina dentata*” and “monstrous feminine,” and in determining whether they fall victim to the Madonna/whore dichotomy, the question of Pam and Jessica’s autonomous existence falls under scrutiny—particularly in regards to their sexuality. Feminist scholarship is vital to this research in order to examine the often fetishized and marginalized sexuality of women who dare to exhibit transgressive behaviors. This thesis concentrates on Seasons One through Four of the series, and also utilizes meta-text from the official website related to each character in order to help answer the posed research questions.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

*“Well I ain’t gonna just sit pretty for him. I’ve never been that way and I never will be.”*

#### Background and Justification

For centuries, the vampire has been a mythical creature that flooded literature and folklore, serving as a metaphor to describe people’s fears of colonization and the fear of counter- hegemonic discourses they viewed as the Other--who was presented as mostly female and/or homosexual in nature. Within the last century, vampires have moved from literature and folklore to films and, more recently, TV. With the help of film, vampires have shifted from the frightening imagery of F.W. Murnau’s *Nosferatu* (1922) and the ever symbolic, quintessential Dracula of Tod Browning’s *Dracula* (1931), starring Bela Lugosi to the “bad boy” vampire of the 1990s and the millennial “pretty boy” vampire, with women vampires serving as mostly sexual objects or representations of a feared sexual woman. Most vampire films up until the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century held true to the notions of what made a believable, entertaining vampire: male, gory and evil. These vampires are usually defeated by another (usually white) heterosexual male who brings hegemonic order back to the world. With the evolution of vampire stories in our society, it is necessary to analyze what ideologies are being reinforced and challenged, as

vampires are a known metaphor of society's subconscious<sup>1</sup>. In other words, what messages are these metaphors signaling to viewers, particularly concerning women?

Vampires have been discussed at great length in the literature, media and folklore worlds. Discussions of vampire metaphors have shown how these mythical creatures are in fact important to analyze and discuss as they serve to express humanity's repressed fears and desires. As Nina Auerbach confirms in *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, we each get the vampire we desire. This means that depending on what political and societal anxieties are prevalent at the time, the vampire that becomes popular for that era will illustrate these fears through characteristics displayed in films, books, and TV shows. An example of this projection can be shown through the political discourse of the early-to-mid 1990s, when films such as *The Lost Boys* (1987), *Interview with a Vampire* (1994) and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997) all expressed the "bad boy" vampire—the vampire Other as a threat to the social order—an ideology that encompassed that era of horror film. The political arena of the 1990s was filled with in-house invaders—in other words, terror by Americans done to Americans. The image of the happy nuclear family from decades past had been replaced with the fear of the kid next door and who/what might disrupt the quiet, safe neighborhood. Feeling safe while in public spaces was fleeting as the decade passed. Not being able to "recognize" the enemy—as decades earlier was illustrated so well for Americans, such as in World War II propaganda—was creating a universal fear, and this showed in the popular culture of the time. The image of vampires during the

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<sup>1</sup> According to scholars such as Nina Auerbach, Carol J. Clover, Peter Day, Bram Dijkstra and Vera Dika, to name a few.

1980s/1990s illustrated this fear of the unknown by looking like “normal” human beings, and thus being able to penetrate into our “safe” spaces undetected.

Although perhaps not the most recognizable film in terms of creating vampires as “normal” human beings, *Interview with a Vampire* (1994)—a widely successful box office hit—played to the audience’s fears of the unknown enemy. It did this by placing the audience in the mindset of the characters’ turn of the century world, thus allowing the audience to believe that it was in fact living in this turn of the century world, where these Others (or vampires) were allowed to enter into the audience’s subconscious safely—for the time being. In other words, through the power of film narrative, audience members were able to accept Louis (Brad Pitt) as a troubled vampire attempting to escape the life he once lived (a metaphor for the anxiety many Americans faced at this time politically). They were also able to identify the danger of Lestat (Tom Cruise) as an “unrecognized” enemy (in the sense of looking similar to the “hero”) and sympathize with Louis—as Daniel Mallory (Christian Slater) did.

In the current state of affairs, most vampires have lost their “tough guy” appeal and have softened up to a gentler, kinder, relatable vampire. This does not necessarily mean that the threat of the 1990’s enemy no longer carries over, but the shift is rather interesting to note. Vampires for centuries have become metaphors for not only society’s fears but they stood for political anxiety as well. As the shift from older, unrecognizable vampires to kinder more personable vampires makes its full circle, it can be argued that this shift in ideology or attraction can speak for this generation’s new interpretation of fear. Since these new vampires are more attractive, younger and appear to be “normal” in

form, this speaks to the level of trust younger generations feel towards the older generation. These “enemies” or adults that this new generation has pointed to seem to be replicated throughout popular vampire culture (see, for examples, *Twilight*, 2008; *Vampire Diaries*, 2009- ; *Blood: The Last Vampire*, 2000/09; *Hellsing*, 2001). These films/TV shows send a similar ideological message: if you can be my parent or grandparent, odds are I cannot trust you, and nor do you know anything about my needs as a young adult. Or, in other words, typical teenage angst is exploited within these film/TV shows. In them, the child vampires or younger vampires have the focus throughout the narrative whereas, years before, children held smaller roles or did not appear. The dramatic shift of younger actors cast as main characters in these vampire films/shows is symptomatic of new vampire folklore and discourse.

To illustrate this in popular culture, the *Twilight*<sup>2</sup> series (both books and films), creates vastly different vampire characters which play to the generational changes described earlier. *Twilight* can be argued as pioneering the young vampire craze of today. In order to establish a timeline of events with regard to the beginning of this vampire craze, *Twilight* cannot be ignored. The main vampire character, Edward Cullen (Robert Pattinson), is the dark, deep, passionate, romantic, dangerous vampire that teenage girls (and some of their mothers) lust for. He is caring, mysterious and handsome, although still dangerous, which creates a troubling storyline for Bella Swan (Kristin Stewart), Edward’s obsessive girlfriend. Throughout the *Twilight* series, Bella proves repeatedly that she “doesn’t care” what Edward might do to her (either sexually or violently), that

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<sup>2</sup> *Twilight* (2008) directed by Catherine Hardwicke, *New Moon* (2009) directed by Chris Weitz, *Eclipse* (2010) directed by David Slade. *Twilight* (book series) written by Stephenie Meyer, 2005-2008.

she trusts him and wants whatever happens. This is a rather problematic discourse for feminist viewers, as Bella's attitude serves as a guide for young female viewers, who want to be like her and have a boyfriend like Edward. *Twilight* research with regard to feminist discourses and Bella—although the books and films are important to analyze—will not be an aspect of this thesis.

Moving away from film and entering into TV, *True Blood* (HBO, 2008- ), created by Alan Ball—one of the most provocative vampire shows to date—investigates multiple taboos and explores society's hidden and deep desires. The series is based on Charlaine Harris' *Sookie Stackhouse* novels.<sup>4</sup> *True Blood*, which is set in modern day Louisiana, mainly takes the perspective of Sookie Stackhouse (played by Anna Paquin), the main character, and her life in the slow town of Bon Temps. Although the show takes place in present time, it uses flashbacks to gain access to particular character's backstory. Sookie encounters many mythical creatures in what she thought was her otherwise normal town, such as a vampire she falls in love with—Bill Compton (played by Stephen Moyer)—and those with whom she shares rollercoaster rides of emotions, such as Eric Northman (played by Alexander Skarsgård). Throughout Sookie's adventures to either stand up for vampire rights (a parallel to LGBT and civil rights based on race), or to save Bill and subsequently herself from danger, she meets many supernaturals along her way.

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<sup>4</sup> Sookie Stackhouse novels: *Dead Until Dark* (2001), *Living Dead in Dallas* (2002), *Club Dead* (2003), *Dead to the World* (2004 ), *Dead as a Doornail* (2005), *Definitely Dead* (2006), *All Together Dead* (2007), *From Dead to Worse* (2008), *Dead and Gone* (2009), *Dead in the Family* (2010), *Dead Reckoning* (2011).

In the *True Blood* diegesis vampires have recently “come out of the coffin”—again an allusion to LGBT rights—and are now attempting to “mainstream”<sup>5</sup>. Bill Compton is one of the mainstreaming vampires that Sookie Stackhouse encounters and falls in love with. The series follows their relationship as well as incorporating Eric Northman—a vampire who does not agree with mainstreaming—and his protégé Pam, another non-mainstreamer. Sookie later discovers that she is more than “just a waitress” and understands her existence is “sunscreen” for vampires.

As the *True Blood* craze exploded, Sookie has become the center of recent feminist discussion, particularly concerning her interaction with characters in the *True Blood* world and her dynamic with Bill (Nelson 2005; Boyles 2009; Robichaud 2010). However, this research will not discuss feminist qualities or representations of Sookie Stackhouse; nor will it explore the melodramatic nature of *True Blood*—as doing so is outside its scope. It is important to note that *True Blood* can be viewed as melodrama, which is often seen as a “woman’s genre,” a notion *True Blood* does not ignore.. However, in the context of viewing the series in line with the horror genre, it will bring attention to two distinct female vampires in the series—Jessica, a young “virgin” made vampire forcibly by Bill Compton in the first season, and Pam, the highly provocative and fashion forward vampire protégé of Eric Northman. Jessica is understood through the series to be a “good girl,” as she was a devoted Christian farm girl prior to transformation. Pam displays highly sexual and demeaning characteristics toward

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<sup>5</sup> Mainstreaming is a concept of the Sookie Stackhouse novels, which indicates that vampires can now live amongst humans thanks to the creation of synthetic blood called “Tru Blood.” The concept is not widely accepted by most vampires, who feel that humans are food first, but organizations such as the American Vampire League fight to protect vampire-human relationships as well as encourage vampires to not feed on humans and humans to not fear vampires.

everyone she encounters other than Eric—her maker. She is highly sexual and also subtly displays lesbian deviantness. These two female vampires display rather obvious oppositions toward each other. For that reason, the choice to analyze these two creates more provocative discourse for feminist analysis. The research aims to bring to light not only what metaphors that these vampires represent in the series, contrasting one to the other, but also whether one, both or neither reflect feminist attributes.

### Issues to be Addressed

At a time when vampires are in the limelight again, it is important to understand what is going on with popular culture's depiction of women and their sexuality represented in vampire TV series and/or films. Using concepts drawn from psychoanalytic feminism such as the virgin/whore dichotomy, the gaze, and the monstrous-feminine (*vagina dentata*), society's repressed desires, fears or prejudices can be revealed. This research attempts to determine whether *True Blood* represents a provocative feminist series, or falls into traditional sexist representations. This analysis mainly examines Jessica and Pam's sexuality through a feminist ideological lens. Identifying issues of reinforced gender hegemonic discourses, this research will question what these representations symbolize in society and what *True Blood* communicates metaphorically through its provocative narratives. The extensive deconstruction of the series can light the way to understanding the shifts female vampire representations are signaling in today's world. It poses questions such as: Does the *vagina dentata* and monstrous feminine attributes not allow for challenging hegemonic discourse? Do the

characters gain sexual autonomy? Does their rhetoric challenge or reinforce these assumed attributes of themselves? Although not the first indication of such vampire phenomena, *True Blood* is a great series with which to utilize feminist scholarship as it establishes itself as a provocative and challenging TV show when it comes to notions of gender hegemonic discourse.

Understanding that television can reinforce sexist hegemonic ideologies of representation—consider MTV’s *The Jersey Shore* (2009) , AMC’s *Mad Men* (2007), HBO’s *The Sopranos* (1999-2007) and *Sex and the City* (1998-2004)—it can be considered that television and other forms of media will continue to objectify and marginalize women and maintain their status as the Other, especially in regards to their sexuality. According to feminist scholar Catherine MacKinnon, one way a woman gains autonomy is through her ownership of her sexuality (257). Do Jessica and Pam gain autonomy by expressing and owning their sexual identities? How do other *True Blood* characters within the narrative’s diagesis view Jessica and Pam in regards to their sexual autonomy? Do Jessica and/or does Pam fall into the sexual dichotomy of the virgin and the whore? What does their sexuality represent through a feminist lens and does this challenge or reinforce hegemonic ideology?

This research, again, will aim to establish the sexual representations of both Jessica and Pam within the series *True Blood*. The reason for feminist discourse within the study helps bring to light what it means to expose and celebrate female sexuality and through this exposure what this says about society’s repressed feelings/thoughts. A common analysis of the female vampire (in particular) is to analyze her as to whether she

is a monstrous figure, a beast of sexual aggression or, in other words, a monstrous-feminine creature. Creed's concept of the monstrous-feminine is directly parallel to the *vagina dentata* (explained in detail later in this chapter), a current issue within feminist scholarship which calls for continuing analysis. Can Jessica or Pam express herself sexually without being labeled a *whore*? Is Jessica bound to this *virgin* claim indefinitely? Must Pam maintain that "bad girl" attitude in order to be respected and feared? What do both characters represent in the subconscious?

### Literature Review

#### Vampires in Contemporary Media and Culture

Although stories and legends have existed of vampires prior to the quintessential Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the image of the vampire has shifted from the pale, ugly and scary to pale, sexy and trustworthy. As we shifted to a more sexual and romanticized vampire, our "old world" images of white, heterosexual males came with it (*Twilight*, 2008; *Interview with a Vampire* 1994; *Vampire Diaries* (2009- ). In *The Element Encyclopedia of Vampires* (2009), Theresa Cheung describes what the vampire's basic blueprint is for both men and women vampires. It is particularly interesting to note the clear difference between male and female vampires in terms of their overall persona and existence [emphasis mine]:

The male vampire is typically presented as a hypnotic and attractive *aristocrat* dressed in Victorian-style black evening wear with polished,

black leather shoes...Female vampires are stereotyped as *beautiful*, deadly pale, *irresistible* women, often dressed in *white*. (29)

As noted, the male vampire, while deadly, just the same as his counter-part, is emphasized as being sharply dressed and smart, primarily among the upper class. However, the female vampire—and a reason for scholarly discourse—is emphasized as being beautiful and sexually available and not at all associated with intelligence or upper class society in any fashion. The emphasis on the color of white, as mentioned in the excerpt, is ironic in nature as it is associated with purity and cleanliness (weddings, doctor coats and christenings); however the vampire—and in this case the female vampire—is understood to symbolize the opposite (explicit sexuality, dirtiness, unholiness, taboo). These images translate particular fears, metaphors, and reinforce ideologies into society's minds by way of TV and film, as it did centuries ago through language and stories. Vampire representation and culture have been examined on multiple levels over the years through multiple mediums (Williamson 2005; Tyree 2009; Auerbach 1995; Day 2006; McCabe 2008). The subject matter of vampires in the media brings up a multitude of available resources. However for the purposes of time and for this specific research topic, sources will be limited primarily to those mentioned in this Literature Review.

Some important texts this research uses to analyze vampires and the media's relation to women's sexuality are Bram Dijkstra's *Evil Sisters: The Threat of Female Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Culture* (1996), Milly Williamson's *The Lure of the Vampire: Gender, Fiction and Fandom from Bram Stoker to Buffy* (2005), and Joan

Gordon & Veronica Hollinger's *Blood Read: The Vampire As Metaphor in Contemporary Culture* (2007). Looking closely at these foundational texts, parallels can be drawn between their analyses and this research of Jessica and Pam of *True Blood*. Within Dijkstra's *Evil Sisters*, the hint of a *vagina dentata* takes form within the analysis of early female vampires in cinema having an absolute erotic power over men and that their kiss was in essence raping a man (11). This parallel of the toothed vagina to the teeth of the vampire's mouth are in direct correlation to the danger men (and patriarchal society) feel towards a sexual woman taking ownership of their sexuality. Dijkstra's text analyzes men overcoming and triumphing over female sexual temptation, revealing primitive creatures standing in the way of male advancement (23): "Every woman, this new generation argued, contained within herself the destructive potential of the woman-vampire, the sexual woman, or the woman of death, who had allowed the animal inside her womb to roam free and become a devouring *vagina dentata*" (64). He also argues that all vampires represent the female body in a distorted and monstrous form. He mentions that Western culture simultaneously hates, fears and fetishizes the female body and he suggests we should reject the 'mass media's lure of "evil sister" stereotyping (443).

These accusations relate to this research by showcasing just how old world doctrine continues into new world (media) order. *True Blood* does not hide the notion of a dangerous monstrous-feminine either; the main logo of the series (Figure 1) showcases a woman vampire's mouth licking blood, and when shifting this image sideways (Figure 2), the *vagina dentata* is evident with the tongue illustrated as a severed penis—more than likely done on purpose to illustrate castration anxiety.

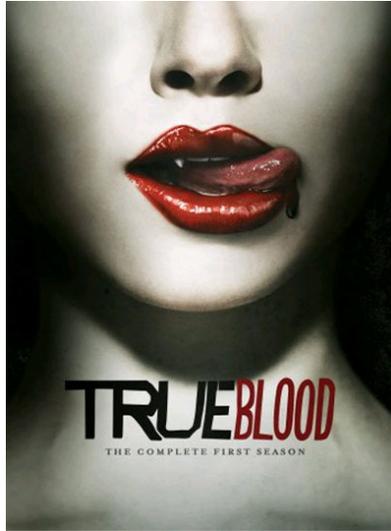


Figure 1



Figure 2

Williamson's *The Lure of the Vampire* approaches vampire culture and media from a different perspective—the fans. Although this research does not analyze fan reaction of other fan texts, it is important to take into account how fans are reacting to a series or film. Williamson's text not only examines fan culture and interpretation of vampire culture, but it also develops a platform by which to understand counter-reference interactions within the *True Blood* world.

Williamson begins with a brief introduction of vampires and their origin in terms of film and literature. Within a section titled, "Sex and the Vampire: Femininity," she explains that the novel of *Dracula* causes for feminist discourse around what the central theme of the novel actually is. Feminists argue that it is *femininity* itself that constitutes the novel's anxiety. From this perspective, what men really fear is active female sexuality and the vampires in *Dracula* symbolize that fear (11). Williamson continues by illustrating different scholars and feminists who compare society's anxiety towards sexual women with the vampire and the *vagina dentata*. Her text relates to this research

by not only providing excerpts from many different scholars' writings on similar subjects but also provides a brief overview to better compare Jessica and Pam with which allow for a better illustrated comparison.

Gordon & Hollinger's *Blood Read* provides one of the most important resources of this analysis by outlining metaphors by which the vampire—and specifically the woman vampire—are known to represent in society's subconscious. This anthology provides research and theory to address avenues not widely taken within considerations of female vampire sexuality in media. Miriam Jones' essay entitled, "The Gilda Stories: Revealing the Monsters at the Margins," suggests vampires serve as metaphors for whiteness, fears of the Anglo-American imperial decline, sexualized lesbian women, intersectionality, and many others (153-4). She states within the story of *Carmilla* (1872)—a well-known pioneer story about a lesbian vampire that actually consists of loving relationships between women—the texts function as a metaphor for the alienation of the lesbian (or gay man) in a world that is compulsorily heterosexual (160). This correlation to deviantness is the exact view society takes when demonizing sexually aggressive women either homo- or heterosexual, both attributes found in either Pam or Jessica.

The vampire and female vampire in particular are connected to obvious metaphors in society relating to the hegemonic Other—more so than any other horror monster (Creed 59): "The nature of how a vampire feeds and lures in their victims is performed in rather arousing and erotic ways—another distinctive quality of the vampire in relation to other horror monsters" (59). The image of one of the most extreme

Others—the lesbian vampire—can cause the viewer to again marginalize and demonize the woman vampire further for not only being a woman, but for being a lesbian as well. This subject has been the topic of many feminist and film theorists' discourses, in terms of what anxieties these fears play within the patriarchal culture, specifically relating to notions of gender hegemonic discourse. This research aims to bring to light such doctrines by illustrating these problematic notions through a detailed analysis of Pam and Jessica of *True Blood*.

### Feminist Theory and Research

To investigate the representations of Pam and Jessica's sexual discourse through a feminist lens, a foundation must be established in order to compare and contrast their sexualities as representational ideologies. Through a feminist lens we look first at feminist perspectives related to sexuality such as the virgin/whore dichotomy, *vagina dentata*, the monstrous-feminine and the male gaze and second at feminist perspectives on women and representation through the media. Texts such as *Virgin: The Untouched History* (2007), *Theorizing Feminisms* (2006), *The Second Sex* (1949), and *Full Frontal Feminism: A Young Woman's Guide to Why Feminism Matters* (2007) help establish a feminist discourse and ideological groundwork needed for this type of analysis.

Hanne Blank's *Virgin: The Untouched History*, provides a fundamental framework to understand the origins and development of virginity. As Blank describes in her opening to the text, "virginity is as distinctively human a notion as philanthropy. We invented it. We developed it. We disseminated the idea throughout our cultures, religions, legal systems, bodies of art, and works of scientific knowledge" (5). Her text is rather

important in analyzing Jessica and Pam, to “measure” one in relation to the other in terms of characteristics that reinforce or challenge gender hegemony. Blank goes into the history of the word “virgin” and as a “natural progression enters the world of religious leaders and theologians through whom the word went into practice throughout the centuries as a way to define a woman’s worth” (11). Her work, quoted throughout both analyses, showcases just how abstract and dangerous this concept is to women, as no tangible definition of male virginity is to this day understood to exist. Within her text, she lays out the history of the term/concept from ancient to contemporary times and how this currently affects woman and the dangers associated with it. In describing the history of virginity in society, Blank uncovers the writings of Freud’s “The Taboo of Virginity” inside his *The Psychology of Love*, that speak about the “natural progression” of women losing their virginity to their husbands and how this assures the man’s lasting and undisturbed possession of her and makes her able to withstand new impressions and temptations from without (108). Such a claim made by Freud, as well as many others such as St. Augustine, St. Jerome and the apostle Paul are all mentioned in Blank’s text as part of the origins of today’s ideology of virginity. Blank’s text—although mostly used in the analysis of Jessica—is an excellent source for deconstructing the concept of virginity.

Elizabeth Hackett and Sally Haslanger’s *Theorizing Feminisms* is a collection of feminist scholars writing on particular subjects important to feminist discourse and study. Authors Carol P. Christ and Catherine MacKinnon speak on specific topics that are related to either Jessica or Pam and their feminist attributes. Christ writes in her essay,

“Why Women Need the Goddess: Phenomenological, Psychological, and Political Reflections,” that “the misogynist antibody tradition in Western thought is symbolized in the myth of Eve who is traditionally viewed as a sexual temptress, the epitome of women’s carnal nature” (214). Christ’s divine rhetoric creates another parallel to women’s sexuality—or lack thereof—with the concept of virginity. In her text she speaks about virginity and particularly about the Virgin Mary and taboos surrounding women and their bodies. This is directly related to Jessica and Pam by analyzing not just how they view and speak about themselves as monstrous figures, but how other characters and the audience likely translates these motifs. These claims to virginity and purity as well as dirtiness and shame all center on the concept of what makes a woman a virgin and what doesn’t—a description originated in Sigmund Freud’s *The Psychology of Love* (1905), as mentioned by Hanne Blank earlier.

Freud attempts to explain the psychological implications placed in our subconscious minds when dealing with erotic life. In the chapter titled, “The Virginity Taboo,” his belief about women, virginity and women’s sexuality has become the groundwork on which all claims to virginity and sexual repression are based. He states that the requirement for a woman to not bring memory of sexual intercourse from another man into a marriage is the essence of monogamy and the one true ideal quality in a woman. Freud places high priority on the idea of an obedient virgin woman and goes on to say that any woman not a virgin prior to marriage destroys the civil union that marriage represents (263). He continues to compare the taboo of virginity with the taboo of blood. “The taboo of virginity is allied with the almost universal taboo on

menstruation. Primitive men cannot separate...monthly blood flow from sadistic ideas” (265). Freud’s problematic discourse continues with the taboo of women in general:

Woman is not only taboo in particular situations deriving from her sexual life—menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and confinement. Even outside of these situations, intercourse with a woman is subject to prohibitions so serious and so numerous that we have every reason to doubt the supposed sexual freedom of primitive people. (267)

On the other end of the spectrum, MacKinnon’s text, “Desire and Power” speaks about women gaining ownership or autonomy of their sexuality without the need or use of pornography, which is argued to be produced, directed and distributed mainly for the pleasures of heterosexual men. MacKinnon claims that “sexuality is to feminism as work is to Marxism, socially constructed and at the same time constructing” (258). She also claims that “it is far less damaging and dangerous to accept a lifetime of simulated satisfaction, than to hold out for the real thing” (263). This is a direct result of hegemonic control over women and specifically women’s sexuality. The purpose of including MacKinnon’s work in this analysis helps provide a framework for studying Jessica and Pam’s sexual choices. By using this source as a reference to compare Jessica and Pam to, it can help determine whether they are able to gain sexual autonomy or if perhaps they stick to the claim that Mackinnon makes of subjecting our own personal desires for the sake of safety.

Simone De Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* is a widely accepted and celebrated feminist text. Her analysis on culture and women, which states that femininity is made,

not born, provides this research with the groundwork needed to understand women's roles throughout the decades and today. She serves as a foundation for feminist scholarship on the subject of women and sexuality as well as a fundamental text for understanding the virgin/whore ideology—the underlining analysis throughout this research—which will go into more specifics later in this chapter. Her writings will help illustrate the attributes Jessica and Pam possess within the series as well as describe possible societal perceptions of women's sexuality as she explains where and why oppression has happened and continues to happen in our world. As she writes about Freudian concepts of women's sexuality, “women who attain orgasm are “viriloid” women; the sexual impulse is “in one direction” and woman is only halfway along the road...the libido is constantly and regularly male in essence, whether it appears in man or in woman” (39). De Beauvoir believes that “it is not nature that defines a woman; it is she who defines herself by dealing with nature on her own account in her emotional life” (38). Her philosophy of woman and women's sexuality help formulate this research to interrogate the autonomous nature of Jessica and Pam.

Jessica Valenti's *Full Frontal Feminism: A Young Woman's Guide to Why Feminism Matters* (2007) gives a brief overview of pressing feminist issues that today's woman should re-examine in order to understand why feminism is still important in today's world. Within her text, she speaks, of course, of the recurring issue in this research, virginity, as well as on other problematic ideologies such as victimization, controlling partners and what it means to be a woman. These particular issues are important for this research in terms of Pam and Jessica's feminist attributes by giving

examples of problematic discourses in society and comparing those issues with whether Pam and Jessica suffer under these same ideologies. The issue of virginity is obvious at this juncture of the research and its usefulness. However, perhaps victimization and what it means to be a woman might get lost in translation, preventing an understanding of its full function. Valenti describes the problem with victimization as the “blame (and shame) game.” She says: “[E]verything in the patriarchal culture tells men that women are there for *them*, there for sex, and constantly available. It breeds a society where rape is expected and practically okayed” (62). What she is describing is that since our culture places such pressure on not only men to be “masculine” and desire women and not only desire but *require* women, they are pressured into getting what they are told is rightfully theirs. Because of this pressure, women are in turn faced with the fact that if they don’t comply willingly they risk the chance of having it taken against their will—which is clearly a huge ideological problem. On the same notion, if they do comply they are seen as easy and less of a person—a whore. Therefore any man wanting sex from a woman is expected to take it, since she has already made herself open for business.

Without speaking to the obvious notions of why Valenti’s scholarship is important to this research, it becomes interesting to take her claims of victimization and controlling partners to the analysis of Pam and her relationship with Eric Northman. Valenti illustrates a few main characteristics of controlling and abusive partners in her chapter, “The Blame (and Shame) Game.” In relation to the analysis on Jessica, Valenti speaks rather extensively about what it means to be a woman and she criticizes the notion that “real” women have babies (151). This ideology that Valenti brings to light is relevant

to Jessica's critique to illustrate hegemonic ideology within the home and within heterosexual relationships—which Jessica attempts to be in. Valenti's text provides excellent current examples of how feminism continues to matter and how its absence in the modern world—or unpopularity—is damaging to women of all ages.

### Women and Sexuality in the Media

This subject provides a plethora of available texts by which to cross-reference as well. Particularly important concepts are found in Barry Keith Grant's *The Dread of Difference* (1996) and Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (1993). Creed illustrates what the "monstrous-feminine" is and what it entails, stating: "Freud's linking the sight of the Medusa to the equally horrifying sight of the mother's genitals, for the concept of the monstrous-feminine, as constructed within and by a patriarchal and phallogentric ideology, is related intimately to the problem of sexual difference and castration" (2). Creed's "monstrous-feminine" applies directly to Pam and Jessica by distinguishing how monstrous a character society views them to be, as well as how other characters within the diagesis react to their *monstrous* ways. She mentions that women and the horror genre are often divided up based on the virgin/whore dichotomy, which is a result of the *vagina dentata* or "toothed vagina." The *vagina dentata* has origins in Greek mythology as a sexually aggressive woman that might devour a partner during sex, hence the teeth located within the vagina. Although, the term "*vagina dentata*" was not used until centuries later by Freud, it can be said that the character Medusa symbolized the *vagina dentata* as her mouth being the opening of the

vagina and the snakes' heads which contained teeth were the teeth that devoured the unlucky male she encountered: "Visions of a gaping, hungry vagina lined with rows of sharp teeth have been predominant throughout especially patriarchal societies; representing the fear the destructive man has of being conquered by what he seeks to oppress" (Walker 1034). It is easy to notice the parallels of the *vagina dentata* to the female vampire, she most closely illustrates this very concept and the reason for societal fear of the sexual woman. This fear of the sexual woman is a central role of analysis within this research as there would be no real fear of a toothed vagina had there not been a dichotomy by which to place women under.

Feminist scholars have employed psychoanalytic theory to identify and explain how gender inequality and heterosexuality structure cinema. Laura Mulvey (1975), Teresa De Lauretis (1984; 1994), Barbara Creed (2005), Carol Clover (1992), and Linda Williams (1989) have all contributed substantial and influential research in regards to feminist film theory and analysis. "Through psychoanalytic feminist theory, these scholars have built on Freud's theories of gender and sexuality as intrinsically oppressive of women, relegating them to subordinate family roles" (Lorber 160).

Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze (see also Lorber)—the cultural creation of women as the objects of men's sexual fantasies, fears as well as desires by way of the camera, text and audience interruption—revolutionized the way film theory and feminist film theory is deconstructed and analyzed. Mulvey's work "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975; see also 1999) has contributed to a plethora of textual film analyses. Teresa De Lauretis built on Mulvey's concept of the problematic discourse by which

women are viewed on and off screen as objects of the male gaze. Through the gaze, women are unable and disallowed to identify with women on screen by way of the camera identification, unless it is in torture scenes, where the woman on-screen has a direct correlation with the subconscious minds of the women in the audience. De Lauretis contributed works such as *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (1984) and *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (1994) that speak about the identification of women on-screen as lovers and how the lesbian woman challenges Mulvey's concept of the male gaze.

Linda Williams utilizes key concepts in Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure" text to describe what happens in a classical narrative cinema when a woman looks back. Like the female spectator, the female protagonist often fails to return the gaze of the male who desires her. In classical narrative cinema, to see is to desire. "It comes as no surprise, then, that many of the "good girl" heroines of the silent screen were often figuratively, or even literally, blind" (Williams 15). Williams also mentions—as does Mary Ann Doane's *Re-Vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism*—that when the woman on-screen looks back at the male counterpart or the audience, she is in fact participating in her own victimization. Williams later explains how women are further victims of their own gaze as well as the identification with the monstrous:

The woman's gaze is punished, in other words, by narrative processes that transform curiosity and desire into masochistic fantasy. The horror film offers a particularly interesting example of this punishment in the woman's terrified look at the horrible body of the monster. (17)

There is other scholarship in the area of female sexuality and how it translates and relates to society's fears of more aggressively sexual women. With this in mind, paying particular attention to women vampirism creates a provocative appeal for western society. According to feminist scholar Gayle S. Rubin, in Western culture people, especially women, have been taught to suppress their sexuality, as it is dirty and sinful (529). Sexuality as a sinful act is nothing new, especially since sexuality has been tainted to the anti-feminist opposition of pornography and sexual abuse. As Audre Lorde states in "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," "for women, this [sexuality] has meant a suppression of the erotic as a considered source of power...we have been taught to suspect this resource, vilified, abused, and devalued within western society" (189). Furthermore, women who are not married and are sexually active are seen as whores or "bad girls," and the virgins are deemed "wife worthy" and "good girls." Through this type of critique, this analysis will determine whether Pam and Jessica's representations through the discourse of the series can translated to have direct connotations to society's fears or desires.

#### The Virgin/Whore Dichotomy in Horror Film, TV and Society

Fundamentally examined within the Freudian/psychoanalytical tradition of Western thought the concept of the virgin/whore—from a feminist perspective—stems from the power and prejudice of men over women. According to feminist scholar and theologian Carol P. Christ, "patriarchal religion has enforced the view that female initiative and will are evil through the juxtaposition of Eve and Mary" (217). This sexual double standard states that a "respected" and "pure" woman is what traditional

Abrahamic religions would call a woman who is a virgin. In addition to this ideology, when you look up the word “virgin” in the dictionary definitions such as “unmarried girl or woman” and “religious woman, esp. a saint” come up, with no talk or mention about men or boys (Merriam-Webster.com). This indication is a clear sign of hegemonic ideologies placed on women and their notions of sexuality—by way of objectification and fetishization.

Mary Daly’s *Beyond God the Father* (1973) contains fundamental resources for what the virgin/whore dichotomy stems from and stands for. Throughout Daly’s text she explains the origins of the concept of the “virgin” and how it transcended decades of rhetoric to continue to become the dichotomy that places women in problematic ideologies, yet still holds no space for men of similar sexual “deviantness.” Daly illustrates the Catholic origins of this word—of its traditional meaning—and how this concept is not only dangerous to women but restores a belief in a patriarchal world that worships a male god (85). She says:

Sexual caste is hidden by ideologies that bestow false identifies up in women and men. Patriarchal religion has served to perpetuate all of those dynamics of delusion, naming them “natural” and bestowing its supernatural blessings upon them. The system has been advertised as “according to the divine plan.” (3)

To illustrate the other side of this paradigm, the whore is the woman who is the opposite of the virgin: sexually promiscuous, outwardly sexual either in behavior or in vocabulary and has sex before marriage (if she marries at all), and can also explore

homosexuality. This woman is often shown as the “entertainer” for the men—the stripper, the porn star, prostitute or the “lesbian”: “The prostitute is a scapegoat; man vents his turpitude upon her, and rejects her” (De Beauvoir 555). Valenti also mentions, “Whether it’s actual porn or mythologized purity, the end goal is to be desirable to men, and what women may actually want for themselves, sexually or otherwise, is lost” (91). A double standard is recognized when analyzing women in terms of this dichotomy within patriarchal culture. Women either can be wives or whores, but never both and the choice is usually more often than not, not their own. The double standard, examined in later chapters, will illustrate how both Pam and Jessica suffer from this dichotomy through interactions with *True Blood* characters.

#### *True Blood*, Textual Analysis, and Sexual Discourse

Though scholarly texts have been written about the TV series in regard to feminist discourse and sexuality (see Norés; Ryan; Sundstrom; Mathews; Tyree), few seem to address the issue of the female vampire discourse—aside from Mathews and Sundstrom who addressed the issue briefly, yet with little academic insight. Utilizing not only the series as a text, but incorporating internet based sources as additive texts, such as Jessica Hamby’s blog titled, “BabyVamp Jessica,” one is able to dive into the mind of Jessica and some of the unspoken intentions of producers. This helps to create insightful knowledge on the actual subtext of the series. These additive texts are part of HBO’s promotional web materials for the series. Such texts are in accordance with Henry Jenkins’ *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (2006), in which he says that “convergence culture is the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the

cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behavior of media audiences who will go almost anywhere in search of the kind of entertainment experiences they want” (1). Additive comprehension is the extra understanding audiences have by consulting these meta-texts (127). Other sources for additive textual analysis include DVD extra features and the HBO website for special interviews and videos of the mentioned characters.

This research addresses particular issues regarding these characters and analyzes their representations, sexual discourse, choices they make and their interactions with other *True Blood* characters—particularly the men in the series. What this analysis shows is what characteristics Jessica and Pam possess and through this understanding, it is able to identify if their sexuality will place them in the sexual virgin/whore dichotomy, or if they are able to escape their projected monstrous feminine.

### Methodological Design

The theoretical framework utilizes the concepts and works highlighted in the previous literature review, particularly the theories of the gaze, virginity, and the monstrous-feminine and related aspects. A review and careful visual and narrative analysis was conducted watching Seasons One through Four of the series *True Blood*. Notes were taken, paying attention to episodes and scenes showcasing Pam and/or Jessica’s particular character arcs only. Along with careful analysis of said episodes and scenes, additive comprehension by use of blogs, interviews, websites and extra features were utilized to enhance the understanding of either character. The purpose of this review

was to pay particular attention to Jessica and Pam, both as individual characters and through their interaction with other characters throughout the seasons. As mentioned earlier, additive texts help deconstruct these characters through the official HBO website (<http://www.hbo.com/true-blood/index.html>)--specifically, *True Blood* extra features, blogs and interviews that can further the analysis. The available season DVDs were also utilized for extra features and commentary when needed. It is also important to note that any and all websites, videos, blogs and most interviews were conducted with the assistance of HBO writers. Except for interviews, they are not understood as the thoughts or beliefs of actors.

### Chapter Preview

Chapter Two of this research identifies Pamela Swynford De Beaufort's role in the *True Blood* world as well as her role within a patriarchal society. Critical analysis occurs on her in relation to other characters—particularly her interactions with Eric and Jessica—as well as what her attributes as a violent female vampire, and how this might shape the ideologies of the audience/society. Within that analysis, questions of the validity of her sexual autonomy, feminist characteristics, and discourse are scrutinized in order to critique *True Blood*'s attempt at situating female sexuality. Texts from Barbara Creed's *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis* (1993) and Jessica Valenti's *Full Frontal Feminism: A Young Woman's Guide to Why Feminism Matters* (2007), aid in structuring an analysis that sets a trajectory for further feminist scholarship.

Chapter Three, consists of the analysis on Jessica Hamby—the “baby vampire.” Jessica’s analysis looks at her role in the *True Blood* world as well as her interactions with, specifically, Pam and Hoyt—as well as her attributes as a “virgin” sexual vampire and what those characteristics say about the validity of the ideology of virginity—both in regards to Jessica’s character and within our hegemonic society. The analysis also critiques whether Jessica—through her sexual discourse—gains autonomy in terms of her sexuality, as well as questioning any feminist attributes she might possess. Primary texts for Jessica’s analysis include Hanne Blank’s *Virgin: The Untouched History* (2007) and Simone De Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* (1989), both of which examine in great detail the constructs and hegemonic ideology of virginity in our culture.

Chapter Four concludes with comparisons made between Pam and Jessica as well as remarks in relation to the stated research questions. This chapter also includes comments and suggestions for further research aimed at advancing feminist scholarship related to the subject—particularly in terms of the *True Blood* series and its other characters.

## CHAPTER TWO

### TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF PAMELA SWYNFORD DE BEAUFORT

*“Pieces of me are falling off! I’m pissed!”*

#### Introduction

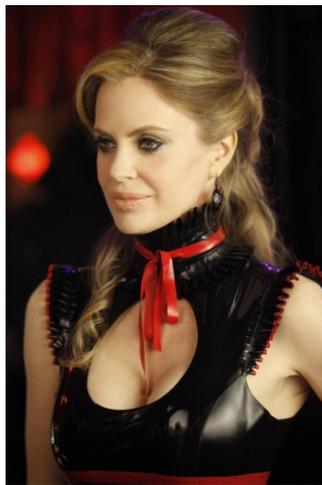
*True Blood* as a series deals with the most primal elements of human (or supernatural) behavior—sex. The taboo nature of sex and sexuality plays a large role in the character of Pam (played by Kristin Bauer), as well as the audience’s perception of her. Pam is a known threat to the *True Blood* world, especially to those who are not vampires. She is also known within the series to be aggressive as well as sneaky, all the while upholding her elitist persona. Throughout the series, Pam is the female vampire who is the most sexually promiscuous and non-apologetic character. This aspect of Pam’s existence is provocative in contrast to the normal progression for characters—especially women. They end up “punished” or killed off quickly in order to restore the hegemonic ideology of the nuclear family.<sup>7</sup> Pam is a violent, demanding, and sexual vampire with remarkable good looks to appeal to almost any viewer demographic (see Figure 3).

If films and dreams are connections to our subconscious mind and the horror film is an extreme of this (Wood 78), then *True Blood’s* Pam displays many qualities of the repression and desires subsumed within society’s subconscious. She is ostracized more than most of the vampires in *True Blood*.

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<sup>7</sup> As mentioned in Carol Clover’s “Final Girl” section in *Men, Women and Chainsaws*

She encompasses more marginalized qualities than any other character in the entire series—female, sexual, older, lesbian, vampire and outspoken. Pam’s character is a great subject by which to compare/contrast feminist qualities. Although not likely to sway one way or the other indefinitely, this analysis will pull to the forefront exactly what/whom Pam stands for. The way in which she interacts with other characters within the series as well as how she’s perceived within the series can play a large role in determining what Pam’s character says about society’s projections onto the Other. Pam is often portrayed as the sexual deviant of the series as she’s usually dressed in sexual tight clothing, makes sexual remarks and often smiles or raises an eyebrow to sexual advances.



**Figure 3**

She also voices concerns about living life according to human (or sexist) ideology (S4E1 “She’s Not There”), which follows gender hegemonic concepts of domesticity. Other characters in the series fear her (Tara, Lafayette, Jason, etc.), and those that do not fear her utilize her for their individual needs (Eric, Bill and Sookie).

Pam, a prostitute, was made vampire in 1905 by Eric Northman while being forced into sexual interactions. The male vampire has been used to suggest that

heterosexuality is sometimes indistinguishable from rape (Zimmerman 381). Pam's sexuality flowers once she is made vampire; prior to this, no real history is developed concerning her sexuality, other than her choice of occupation. This background knowledge of her allows for parallels to what feminists refer to as the "rape myth"<sup>8</sup>; since she was a sexually promiscuous character before (i.e. prostitute) she somehow might have *deserved* the vampirism that Eric forced onto her (paralleling the rape myth of "wrong place, wrong time"). It comes into question whether Pam's history and her current acceptance of and devoted love for Eric is, in a way, how she subconsciously *punishes* herself for being a prostitute. Since Pam was a prostitute—like many jobs that require sexual extroversion: stripping, modeling, escorting, etc.—the myth of "wrong place, wrong time" is more widely accepted by society. As Jessica Valenti explains, this becomes very problematic when attempting to understand a victim's story: "If you don't fit into the "good girl" standard—or if people can convince others that you don't—you're in real trouble [when it comes to reporting rape]. If you're a stripper, prepare to be disbelieved. If you're a prostitute, forget it" [Interjection mine] (Valenti 69). Pam's choice of work—prostitution—is demonized and contains what Valenti refers to as victim blaming/shaming. Such rhetoric of victim blaming includes wearing a skirt that equals open for business, which is "the idea that girls just want to have fun or that a woman's judgment is impaired and thus cannot be trusted with making decisions, or the idea that if there is no hymen then there is no rape" (if you are not a virgin, then you can't be raped because you wanted it and women should know better) (Valenti 66-70). Using

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<sup>8</sup> As mentioned in Jane Caputi's *Goddess and Monsters: Women, Myth, Power, and Popular Culture*. Bell hooks' *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations*. Jessica Valenti's *Full Frontal Feminism: A Young Woman's Guide to Feminism*. Andrea Dworkin's *Intercourse*.

this same concept, the audience would see this as Pam getting what she deserved—vampirism—and forced to live out her existence as an outcast, demon or hegemonic Other for being sexually promiscuous in her human life.

This acceptance by society creates problematic discourse around rape victims. Since Pam was a prostitute and later became an outwardly sexual vampire, most would react to this transformation with “that makes sense,” which only reinforces what feminists widely understand to be a part of “rape culture” (Caputi, Valenti, Dworkin, hooks). In her provocative text, *Goddess and Monsters: Women, Myth, Power, and Popular Culture*, Jane Caputi, writes about how “rape culture” extends even beyond the violation of individual female sovereignty and into a sexualized attack on all that is perceived or can be projected as feminine—a subordinated man, a stigmatized ethnic group and culture, a colonized land and people (395). Pam’s character encompasses this notion of “rape culture” through the interactions of other characters with Pam in their demonizing rhetoric towards her. There are no characters in the *True Blood* diegesis that sympathize or protect/admire Pam for all that she is or was. Eric and Jessica are the only characters that, arguably, are not afraid of Pam, and who only celebrate Pam’s character when it suits either one of them best. A quick example of this is that Eric uses Pam to do his “dirty work” and as an “attack dog” of sorts, while Jessica only admires Pam’s assertiveness when it comes to sexuality and only when it is used to help Jessica understand her own sexuality. Pam is stigmatized as the whore and, thus, is treated as such in the *True Blood* world, both literally and metaphorically.

This element of her back-story becomes important to consider when deconstructing Pam as a sexually autonomous character. As Bram Dijkstra explains in his text, *Evil Sisters*, to get involved with a sexual woman was equivalent to death itself (11). This relates to Pam specifically, in that she was a prostitute, and so the risk of disease, even in the early 1900s, was likely. Pam as a vampire exploits this ideology to those that cross her or threaten to outsmart her. She is not only deadly in person, but to them her soul is consumed by the devil and thus she should be avoided or made an example of.

Throughout the series, Pam is devoted entirely to Eric and is 100 percent loyal to him in every way. This is displayed both visually, in how she is shown standing side by side with Eric, and rhetorically, through her actions to unconditionally defend Eric no matter what. In an interview done by HBO with Kristin Bauer, she explains how Pam's life changed once she met Eric: "I [Pam] met Eric and my world split apart. Eric likes to joke and say, 'so did my legs. Haha!'" (S3:33 "Everything is Broken"). Kristin's light-heartedness about Eric's sexual joke is disturbing when comparing it to rape myths or ideologies surrounding rape myths, as mentioned earlier. She is finding her abuse just as laughable or light-hearted as Eric—a situation many rape victims actually face. Pam feels responsible in part for her vampirism/rape since her job was not "safe" for a woman to do. She should know better, as mentioned in Valenti's text of victim blaming. Thus, this is her only way to deal with the ideology, especially facing the fact that she is forever a part of Eric. She is his pet, his toy. *He* calls on her; rarely can *she* call on him. Despite Eric's victimization of Pam, she still loves him and proves that her devotion is to him regardless of his control over her. This relationship becomes more problematic as Pam's

character and personality are displayed through the episodes. In the same interview, Kristin explains how Pam's devotion to Eric is the one and only definite characteristic that continues through all the seasons: "We find out where her heart-and her vulnerability-lies, which is with Eric" (S3:33 "Everything is Broken").

To better understand why Pam feels the attachment to Eric as she does, a foundation on the relationship between "maker" and "progeny" is essential.

In *True Blood*, the relationship between a vampire and what is called his/her "maker" is much like a parent/child relationship. As Nina Auerbach describes within vampire lore, "the relationship between the vampire and its victim was not to do with power, but instead it was a bond between companions that is shared and chosen" (14). This relates to a maker and her/his progeny. There is a great bond felt between maker and progeny that include knowing when the other is hurt and when they need you. This connection is displayed multiple times between not only Pam and Eric but Jessica and Bill throughout the series. These "connections" are illustrated by sudden frozen faces, tingles in the body, sudden head turns or immediate stiffness of their body while whispering their other's name. It is also interesting to note that in *True Blood* the vast majority of vampires that are classified as "makers" are male—noblemen to be exact. The remaining women who are "makers" are either cast aside in the story's narrative (Sophie-Anne), their progeny ends up rejecting their "sexual" and "violent" lifestyle (Bill and Lorena), or they never speak of their progeny (Pam). Pam fits into one of these categories herself—rejection of her progeny. She glorifies Eric for being a maker within the series, but never mentions herself as a maker, nor does she believe herself to be a good one. In a

video blog done on HBO's website, as a form of meta-text, Pam explains her ideologies with being a maker to the audience of *True Blood*:

Sentimental vampires—and yes they do exist—will tell you there's no more rewarding experience than becoming a maker. I tried it, in 1906 just a year after I had been made myself. His name was Colin... I'll admit it was a diversion at first, taking a boy at his sexual prime...having command after his every move. The glow wore off, as it always does. And I cut him loose. He wasn't happy about it, but whatever.

(*True Blood*: "Pam and her progeny Colin", S2 Extra Features).

Comparing makers to one another, Eric was a direct descendant of a noble Viking king, and therefore of noble blood. Bill—another maker—was a soldier in the Civil War, and therefore honorable, regardless of what side he fought on. He is celebrated in the *True Blood* world as being a war hero and soldier, and one that is never demonized but only celebrated as a brave and honorable. Pam, on the other hand, was a prostitute—hardly a job that receives celebration or credit for nobility.

In *True Blood*, the ritual that takes place in order for bonding of maker and progeny to take place is an act rather taboo in nature. The main technique of making another vampire is to drain the victim of their blood to the point of death, then replace the victim's blood with his/her maker's. This is done by forcing the victim to drink his/her maker's blood for the rebirthing process to begin. This loss and recuperation of bodily secretions are what Kristeva describes as a taboo or abject (40). The act of sucking is at once a perversion of sexual intercourse, and of lactation as well (Dika 392), both

understood to be areas of taboo that the vampire film explores, especially with regards to the female vampire. Blood as a taboo object within religion is central to the vampire film as well as the horror film (Kristeva 41). In connection to what Kristeva describes as abjection, Barbara Creed also mentions this as a parallel to the monstrous-feminine—what most female vampires seem too often represent:

[D]efinitions of the monstrous as constructed in the modern horror text are grounded in ancient religious and historical notions of abjection—particularly in relation to the following religious “abominations”: sexual immortality and perversions; corporeal alteration, decay, and death; human sacrifice; murder; the corpse; bodily waste; the feminine body; and incest. (37)

Pam displays most of these abominations in her daily activity. This can also be another reason why she is viewed as such a threat, not only to humans but to vampires as well. If her lack of concern for what is holy or “virtuous” is grounds for demonizing Pam, then with that same logic she would be labeled an abomination--or in other words, the whore or devil woman. Does Pam honestly display no love, concern or care in her body/soul? Already this is proven false, as she clearly displays all those “virtuous” qualities towards Eric. She possesses virtuous qualities, and therefore she cannot be labeled the whore or demonized vampire. Or can she?

An example of how Pam displays her love and appreciative behavior for Eric, she informs Sookie in Season Four, Episode Two that Eric is the only man Sookie should surround herself with. Since Eric desires Sookie’s attention/affection, Pam will help Eric

succeed by giving Sookie reasons to allow Eric to drink her blood, so that then she can “be his”<sup>9</sup>: “Eric is handsome, rich and in his own way he cares about you. He really does” (S4E2 “You Smell Like Dinner”). After Sookie rejects this, stating she will never be Eric’s puppet, Pam replies with: “Shame for you then. He really pulls good string”.

However, how does Eric stand up to the qualities Pam describes in him? Eric can be characterized as an abusive partner or parental figure, since the lines between vampire/maker are blurred. In Valenti’s text, she describes the characteristics that might apply to partners who are victimizing their significant others: “Control: This is the key; it’s all about control. Abusers control their partners’ ability to come and go, to spend money, to make decisions. They want to control everything” (74). Eric may not seem abusive at first glance, but hidden within the subtext of their dialogue lies the elements of control Eric has over Pam. She is not able to do, say or follow through with any task or idea without first getting Eric’s approval—especially in regards to the club *Fangtasia*. Ultimately, Eric has final say on most things Pam does within the *True Blood* world. This love Pam has for Eric parallels, again, the problems many rape victims have with their assailants. Instead of feeling abuse was done to them, they feel loved or as if they deserved the abuse. Pam further explains how becoming a vampire (in this argument, being raped) was the best thing to happen to her, as she came from a life that held women under endless limitations (S3:33 “Everything is Broken”). Her rhetoric exemplifies the

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<sup>9</sup> In the series, the idea of vampires controlling or “owning” humans as property or as a commodity is referred to as the human “belonging to” whichever vampire shared their blood with said human. A vampire makes this claim to other vampires to indicate that no other vampire can feed on that human. Only the vampire that “owns” him/her is allowed to do this. When vampires exchange blood with humans and do not turn them, the vampire can then feel when their human is in trouble or needs them. (much like a maker/progeny relationship).

larger problem of “wrong place, wrong time” by glorifying and justifying abuse in terms of becoming something good and better than before.

Although much about her past life is not heavily discussed within the series, it is highly understood that she was, is and will always be, a sexualized creature of desire. Pam openly engages in lesbian sexual play and because she was not a lesbian in her mortal life, this could be attributable to her “abuse,” as she only “toys” with men as a vampire and never engages in sexual interaction with them.<sup>10</sup> She has control over men and seems to use it in order to gain a sense of autonomy and strength. Since her abuser was male, she then seeks the pleasure and sexual release from women—something she finds non-threatening and which she can control (S3E3 “It Hurts Me Too”).

Another element of Pam’s sexual “deviation,” that may have led her to seek women for sexual release could be her devoted love and passion for Eric. He is her only man—the only man she will ever love or need. In order not to betray him, she does not entertain the thought of sexually being with another man, unless to metaphorically have sex with him, by way of feeding. Since the act of feeding is the most intimate moment between vampire and victim, Pam manages to keep all emotion out of her life when it comes to relationships of any kind. She remains “coldhearted,” as Eric describes her—an attribute he finds appealing. She shuts off all “feminine” attributes to be more “like the guys” in order to maintain the control and power she needs to help Eric and to become closer to him (S3E11 “Fresh Blood”). She simply looks at other vampires as either tools

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<sup>10</sup> This reference and statement is not to assume or definitively state that lesbianism results from abuse but, rather, the statement refers to Pam’s unique characteristics. She was not believed to be lesbian in her mortal life but, once transformed, she preferred the sexual company of women.

or puppets. She has complete disregard for humans and prefers to never have any kind of relationship with them unless it is to benefit her in some way.

The best way to examine Pam from a feminist perspective is to showcase particular episodes where her essential character is displayed. Season One is her introduction, in which her cares, concerns, personality and desires all surface. In Season Two, Pam's devotion to and strict alliance with Eric is shown, as well as her attempt to become a teacher to others. In Season Three Pam becomes more prevalent in the series, which leads to the complete decline of the Pam and Eric alliance that follows in Season Four. Through this complete character arc, Pam's true form and character is revealed.

#### Season One/Two: An Introduction to Devotion

Pam is introduced in Season One, Episode Five, where she is the right hand woman to Eric Northman—*Fangtasia*'s club owner and another known vicious vampire. A tracking shot flows through the club to showcase both Eric and Pam as the authority within the club. Pam is kept in mostly shadows while Eric is displayed as a king or dominant figure of the two. This image parallels many paintings created for medieval kings in order to display their power over their kingdom. Pam's identity doesn't become known to the viewer until episode seven, in which Jason Stackhouse—Sookie's brother—walks into *Fangtasia* for the first time looking to score some Vampire Blood, or "V," as it's simply referred to in the series. Pam is standing out front the entrance of *Fangtasia* greeting and scanning the guests that walk into her club. The camera immediately displays a smooth, tracking shot that pauses to hold a low, inferior angle which displays

Pam as the authority over any and all humans that enter the building. With her hands on her hips and dressed in all black, she displays the common characteristics of what might be described as a dominatrix (also see Figure 3).

Although the series at this point has yet to confirm Pam's vampirism, her appearance, demeanor and rhetoric all contribute to the understanding of her being. Dark shadows cast heavy contrast onto her face which creates a skeletal appearance—another element of her vampire being. She may seem fierce and domineering, but she upholds a very powerful and beautiful elegance that could be described as her tool to lure people into her “lair”—a common symbol of how the woman/lesbian vampire threatens the existence of heterosexual unions. The symbolic element that Pam, in particular, represents as a lesbian vampire parallels this threat to patriarchy and the threat to the ritual communion of a man and woman (Zimmerman 382; Wood 72, Creed 63). As Jason enters the club, Pam—after already showing her authority by *glamorizing*<sup>11</sup> him to give the details of his visit—ends the scene with a very dominant stance provided by the inferior camera angle making Pam appear dominant over Jason, as well as dark high contrast of shadowing, an image displaying Pam as the *femme fatale* often seen in many *films noirs* of the 1930s and 1940s. The camera work alone in this short scene shows the immediate dominance and personality of Pam. This camera work and often the lighting are utilized almost every time Pam is in a scene, unless she shares the scene with Eric, when she becomes immediately inferior and dwarfed within the shot.

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<sup>11</sup> A technique used by vampires only—it hypnotizes their victims into providing information that otherwise might be kept a secret, or to make them calm. It is the vampire's way of reading minds.

In S1 E11 “To Love Is To Bury,” in which Jessica is made a vampire, Pam explains to Bill how she really feels about him, humans, and the idea of keeping a human for a companion or “pet”—as she refers to Sookie. Her rhetoric exclaims just how much she values vampire “life” over human life and especially the importance of becoming a maker (Pam compares every vampire she encounters to Eric and deeply feels no other vampire comes close). Bill refers to turning Jessica as murder and Pam quickly corrects him, telling him that there was no murder, just an exchange. Bill tries to get Pam to leave him during the transformation of Jessica, but she explains that she will not leave because he can’t be trusted alone—in that he may not allow the transformation to happen. Instead he might just let her die. She also explains her real thoughts on Bill being a maker, and Eric:

Pam: You’re romantic, sentimental. You just might do something to keep that little blood bank from joining our ranks. I *won’t* let you stake her before you go to ground!

Bill: I’m not going to stake her, I’m going to set her free.”

Pam: You’ve already set her free, just like Eric freed me.... You’ve given that pathetic lump of temporary flesh the ultimate gift! You’re a maker!

You’re a hero. (S1E11)

In this short scene, a lot is discovered about who Pam is and how she is seen in the *True Blood* world. The camera and lighting alone show Pam’s dominance in the scene, even over Bill, a vampire twice her age who would normally be seen as a vampire more powerful than her. Her dominance is quite literally showcased as she is above

ground looking down at the body of Jessica, and at Bill who is underground preparing for the transformation. Bill's reaction to Pam and her opinions also show how she is viewed by others in *Bon Temps*. Bill finds her to be dangerous, blindly loyal to Eric and a threat which he either feels he needs to control or stand clear of.

When other characters within the series look or interact with Pam, they often express fear or show this through their demeanor. This is especially central to Lafayette's character (the African-American gay line cook at Merlotte's) and Tara (Sookie's African-American best friend), both of whom had personal encounters with Pam and Eric. They either cower away from her or try to stand up to Pam, but only to be more shaky than confident in their words. This fear of Pam parallels what Robin Wood describes in his essay, "The American Nightmare," as the repression of homosexuals within a patriarchal society: "[A] crucial aspect of the repression of bisexuality [or homosexuality] is the denial to women of drives culturally associated with masculinity: activeness, aggression, self-assertion, organizational power, creativity itself" [interjection mine] (72).

Pam's character contains all of these ascribed attributes of the Other. To continue with this comparison, Pam's character both prior to vampirism and after fits with the subconscious allegory of a patriarchal society. She was in the most extreme way, prior to transformation, the quintessential sexist hegemonic "Other." She was a prostitute, a woman, and outspoken—to add insult to injury. She was already marginalized for her overt sexual behavior as well as being a woman in a time where—as Pam puts it—"women were under endless limitations" (S3:33 "Everything is Broken"). Her

transformation into vampire only confirms allegorical expectations to what Pam has become. Wood again explains this allegory simply:

Otherness represents that which bourgeois ideology cannot recognize or accept but must deal with 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. (73)

Society rejected her prostitution by marginalizing her as a sexual woman. However, once she was made vampire—although feared—she was much more respected, primarily due to this fear within the confines of the *True Blood* world as opposed to her old world life.

Characters and possibly viewers of *True Blood* have a particular love/hate relationship with Pam. Characters often, as mentioned before, will fear her but also gaze at her or admire her from a distance. The camera and, consequently, the audience often gaze at Pam as she walks away—a safe perspective to have, and a characteristic that seems to follow the ideology of what is repressed in the Self and projected on to the Other. In other words, it is the repression/projection of our fears and desires onto the Other. To the extent that the monster is constructed as feminine, the horror film (or show) thus expresses female desire only to show how monstrous it is (Clover 47). Our gaze is fixed on Pam either from an inferior point of view or as she exits a scene, and whereas that particular gaze is not entirely objectifying as Laura Mulvey would insinuate, it is, however, fixating desire, pleasure and fear within our subconscious. We do not want to become this monstrous woman that represents multiple taboos for fear of societal

rejection, but we admire, desire and perhaps see ourselves in her beauty, poise and assertiveness. In Seasons One and Two, Pam is shown as a monstrous, taboo figure. As the seasons continue, this understanding and display of Pam as a dangerous, unrelenting vampire woman shifts.

### Seasons Three/Four: Love and Betrayal

Pam's origins aren't discovered within the series, at least by the audience, until season three, episode one, in which she explains to Lafayette, after he calls her a hooker, that that lifestyle for her was "a long, long time ago"(S3E1 "Bad Blood"). By this rhetoric, she does not deny her past which creates a very strong demeanor for Pam. Unlike other vampires in the series—women vampires in particular—Pam does not deny what she was nor does she seem to escape it. She is autonomous in her sexuality in this respect. Her personal autonomy is challenged, however, when her strong feelings and allegiance to Eric is put up to the test by the Vampire Authority. Pam's relationship to Eric becomes public in the series when Pam is kidnapped by the Vampire Authority for selling Vampire Blood in their bar. The Authority know the special bond between a maker and their progeny and therefore torture Pam in order to get to Eric and information behind the selling of vampire blood, or V.

In Episode Four, and carried on to Episode Seven of Season Three, Pam is tortured in a very sadistic way, which creates a problematic display of the gaze, objectification and violence toward women. The first scene shows Pam chained and suspended in the air with her top opened to display her bra and stomach. During this

display, Pam is repeatedly receiving burns to her chest and stomach region with a silver cane by the head authority figure—the Majestor. The Majestor is successful in summoning Eric through the call of Pam’s cries, as Eric arrives shortly after the injuries have been inflicted. Pam’s suffering is not only displayed for Eric and the Authority’s view (of whom all are white men), but this display is presented for the audience’s view as well. Pam’s body is opened to expose her “life force”—the womb—and her extension of nourishment for life—her breasts—and these elements of her body are immediately burned or cut open. As Barbara Creed mentions, the horror film is obsessed with blood and especially with women:

[H]er body is transformed into the “gaping wound”, suggests that castration anxiety is a central concern of the horror film—particularly the slasher subgenre. Woman’s body is slashed and mutilated, not only to signify her own castrated state, but also the possibility of castration for the male. (44)

Pam’s burns are inflicted on her by the Majestor’s cane that contains a silver point. If it is understood that weapons such as guns, swords, knives, spears, axes, picks, needles, etc are phallic, depending on their usage, then the Majestor’s cane can be classified alongside as a phallic weapon of choice. The Majestor is displaying his dominance over Pam and the situation. He has the power to manipulate and all this is at the mercy of Pam’s body and life.

The connection this has to Pam and her sadistic display is that using Wood’s concept of allegory, there seems to be no moment in the scene or the series in which

Pam's pain is avenged. Her punishment and torture can be argued to represent how patriarchy regularly punishes and tortures women directly or indirectly for straying outside the confines of the nuclear family ideology. She is lesbian, sexually active and a vampire—a monster. Her existence is one to be stopped or punished for her wrongdoings. The camera fixates on Pam's suffering (see Figure 4) much like a sadistic gaze and although Pam gets rescued by Eric a few episodes later, he is not the one to avenge Pam, nor is anyone else. Pam's agony and suffering go essentially unnoticed by other characters.



**Figure 4**

It is also important to note that this scene is yet another gendered stereotype of popular culture that insists on “handicapping” women and not allowing for their own ability to “rescue” themselves. Pam would have died in the care of the Majestor, unless Eric—the white, handsome, strong male—came to her rescue. Repeatedly the “damsel in distress” is a horrible display of female dependency and of glorifying the perpetrator for his ability to stop the female threat and put her in her place. However, the rescuer gets his

reward as well—the girl. She is the object—the prize that needs to be kept in restricted quarters.

The gaze on Pam continues later as the Majestor removes Pam from suspension and places her on a torture board with her arms, legs and neck, tied down with silver chains which burn into her skin. The mere touch of silver to a vampire weakens them tremendously; therefore this amount of silver on Pam has caused her to bleed out of her ears and nose—or what *True Blood* vampires refer to as “the bleeds.” This further illustrates the seemingly unnecessary brutality done to women. As Barbara Creed mentions in “An Imaginary Abjection”: “[bodily disfigurement] is also central to the slash movie, particularly those in which women are slashed, the mark of a sign of her ‘difference,’ her impurity” (41). Pam’s disfigurement and torture are signs and signifiers of her disobedience and alliance to the Authority by hiding the fact that *Fangtasia* was selling Vampire Blood. The woman’s body is slashed and mutilated, not only to signify her own castrated state, but also the possibility of castration for the male. In the guise of a “madman,” the Majestor enacts on her body the one act he most fears for himself—transforming her entire body into a bleeding wound (Creed 44). She is made an example of in front of the other guards and, most importantly, Eric.

It is interesting to note that although Pam was found at the club when the raid happened, she ultimately did not play a large part in selling the product. She enlisted Lafayette to do the selling for them. Eric was the main conductor of the selling and distribution of the product—both him and the Queen Sophie-Anne. Taking a step back from the main issue in this scene, Pam is a pawn in the grand scheme. However, she is

the only one to suffer any form of punishment immediately given by the Authority. Not even the Queen receives her punishment as well as Pam—since she too is a lesbian, deviant woman—but not until much later in Season Four does the audience get their wish. This fact and sadistic illustration of Pam’s punishment further shows how demonized Pam is to not only the *True Blood* world but in terms of the subconscious subjectivity of viewers, who presumably identify with the male gaze in the sadistic punishment of Pam.

Throughout Season Three, Pam and Eric share emotional and touching moments that display their care for each other. However, it always seems to be Pam who is more in love with Eric than he with her. Eric, in an attempt to get rid of a vampire threat that may cost him his life, starts to write his will—an action that does not please Pam at all (S3E10 “I Smell A Rat”). She attempts to plead with him to come up with a plan instead, but gets shut down aggressively by Eric who continues through with the will, which leaves everything Eric owns to Pam. This scene highlights Pam’s true anxiety and fear on the possibility of losing Eric, as she is pacing the entire time behind him and refusing to be silent. Leaving his estate and money to Pam, in the event he faces the true death, shows his care for Pam. He wants her to live well and carry on. Eric is rather cold in his emotions about it, as he is focused more on the logical elements of his possible fate and not the emotional elements of it. He is clearly separate emotionally from Pam. After the will is signed, she yells at Eric for being a bastard and storms off.

Pam later encounters Sookie again, who is discovered at this time, to be a human/fairy hybrid—a very hot commodity<sup>12</sup> for any vampire—(S3E10). As Sookie and Eric talk, Pam leaves the room, only to come back a few minutes later to find them nearly nose to nose after just having a makeout session. Pam’s abrupt arrival back into the room and her expression indicate she is becoming aware of Sookie’s influence on Eric—a threat Pam does not take well. Eric’s demeanor towards Pam’s interruption is met with hostility as well. In episodes past, if Pam were to interrupt he would respond with “Yes?” However, this time she is met with “What?” To which, Pam replies, “Blah, blah vampire emergency, blah.” Clearly, her rhetoric displays anxiety about what Sookie and Eric were doing in the office and she is determined to stop it.

This shift in the power dynamic, Pam and Eric to Sookie and Eric, can be argued to illustrate the bad “overcome” by good—in other words, a display of the virgin/whore dichotomy. Sookie—usually dressed in white or light colors—is known to most in the *True Blood* series (at this point) to be a fairy, a creature of goodness. She is “taking” Eric—a known “bad” creature—from the dark side or evil side, which is also an attribute of Pam, to the light or good side. Pam’s characteristics, as mentioned before, encompass most stereotypical elements of the monstrous Other or “whore” in this comparison. Sookie, on the other hand, encompasses most elements of the righteous. Although not virgin, she is “*virginized*” in the sense of being on the side of good, the side of patriarchy and “normalness.” Sookie’s actions throughout the entire series have been of forgiveness,

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<sup>12</sup> Fairies in the series are understood to be a dying almost extinct breed due to vampires nearly wiping them out of existence. Fairy blood is known to smell and taste incredible to vampires and the biggest prize for them is that it allows for vampires to walk in the sun for a short amount of time (depending on how much fairy blood they consume).

love, caring and fighting for good. Pam's actions throughout the series thus far have been for self-righteousness, self-satisfaction, greed, lust, pride and bitterness. She in essence inhabits most of the seven deadly sins—greed, lust, pride, wrath and envy. Let us not forget her past profession—a hooker—which further demonizes and marginalizes her into the “whore” paradigm. Sookie, on the other hand, does not possess any of the deadly sins—another attribute to her “virginness.” This battle of good versus evil is very prevalent in the series, but it displays itself the most when there are vampires present, especially Pam or Eric. When Pam interrupts Sookie and Eric her gaze is hard on Sookie, and although the lighting is very dark, there is still a strong hard glare given by Pam to Sookie—another element of her wrath towards anyone she deems a threat.

As Pam and Eric leave the room, Eric's disconnection to Pam is even further displayed as he remarks to her that her interruption “better be good.” Pam's dissatisfaction with what she didn't witness is clearly illustrated in her dialogue to Eric: “You're too busy signing Wills and making out with the solution instead of using her!” After back and forth dialogue with Pam telling Eric to give Sookie up to Russell (a higher authority vampire) and Eric refuses, Pam gets teary-eyed: “You're choosing a human over yourself, Eric? Over me?” (S3E11 “Fresh Blood”). The camera holds on her devastated face and tears in her eyes for a moment, before it cuts to Eric's cold reaction, in which he tells Pam that her best quality is her lack of sentiment and for her to not disappoint him now. Pam attempts to stand up to Eric's harsh words, but only seems to break her stance before running off. Eric commands Pam's emotions and reactions and expects her to follow through. Another interaction with Pam and Eric happens within

Episode Eleven in which Eric is attempting to use Sookie's blood in order to trick Russell into walking in the sun. The trick will put Eric's life in danger, and Pam is incredibly fearful of this. She confronts him with tears in her eyes, pleading for him to not go through with it. This time Eric has a softer demeanor to his voice and tells her that he loves her more when she's cold and heartless—in other words, more like a man. Pam quickly obliges Eric's request and attempts to withhold emotion.

Eric's view of Pam is not of sexual desire or passion, but similar to that of a brother, friend or gender equal. Another illustration of this dynamic is when Pam interacts with other female dancers at the club, particularly with a foreign dancer named Yvetta. Pam and Eric are both intrigued with Yvetta, as both gaze sexually at her both off and on the stage. When Eric is away, Pam has sex with Yvetta as well; she is reinforcing the idea of disposable women, as both Pam and Eric use Yvetta for nothing more than pleasure and entertainment, a concept deeply problematic within feminist discourse. Eric finds Pam's lesbianism completely unthreatening unless it's directed towards Sookie. Sookie represents heterosexual normalcy, by first being a heterosexual woman and second being a heterosexual, white "good" girl. Pam's action of attempting to destroy Sookie (in S4E11 "Soul of Fire") is an illustration of Pam attempting to disrupt the heterosexual union of Sookie and Eric. As Zimmerman notes, "lesbianism—love between women—must be vampirism; elements of violence, compulsion, hypnosis, paralysis, and the supernatural must be present...sexual attraction between women can threaten the authority of the male-dominated society" (382). Pam's character holds society's constant implications for female sexuality and specifically for lesbian sexuality. Taking a step

back to observe seasons prior and the interaction between Eric and Pam, it is very clear that Eric simply does view Pam as nothing more than a good friend or daughter. Pam becomes the “doer” and Eric is clearly the “planner.” Pam is arguably nothing more than Eric’s pawn.

Human men fear her fangs and her power to consume them and “spit their bones out” (S4E3 “If You Love Me, Why Am I Dyin’?”)—in other words, her *vagina dentata*. The idea behind the *vagina dentata*—the “toothed vagina”—raises rather obvious comparisons in regards to female sexuality and the fear of castration. As mentioned first by Freud, who stated that when the male child becomes aware of differences between male and female he assumes that the female's penis has been removed, and becomes anxious that his penis will be cut off by his father as punishment for desiring the mother.<sup>13</sup> The addition of the teeth as a weapon used to threaten and dismember men, also plays into the fear of the vagina—bleeding vagina—that patriarchal societies have placed shame upon. [See Figure 1 and 2 in Chapter One for illustration].

Vampires are the best and closest metaphor to the repressed human subconscious because they are the most like humans—far closer than any other monster of horror. They are the “Othered” form of humans; they think, look, and act for the most part just like humans. The only telltale sign that they are vampires, at least within the narrative of *True Blood*, lies in their teeth. The phallic symbol of power over humans, this symbol of authority is true also within vampires; the oldest vampires and therefore the most powerful have longer, bolder teeth. Those that are “babies” or younger vampires have smaller or less pronounced fangs. This pronounced form of classism exists not only

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<sup>13</sup> Sigmund Freud’s *Three Essays On The Theory of Sexuality*(1975)

within the human world (our world), but also within the *True Blood* world that situates and characterizes the audience's subconscious.

Going back to Pam's character development, she is transformed from the monstrous vampire to the grotesque and putrid "zombie" figure in Episode Five "Me and the Devil", when Marnie the witch casts a spell on Pam, which causes her skin to rot off. The subconscious connection through this zombie spell is rather telling of the allegory placed not only on Pam herself but also what she stands for. Pam, as mentioned earlier, is a character of aggression, and sexual deviation, all characteristics that mark her to be the hegemonic Other. Her character traits do not go unpunished, as mentioned before with her problematic relationship with Eric. However, her punishment does not stop there; the zombie curse that causes her skin to rot consequently causes her to rot from the inside out, a direct punishment for her attributes. She is rotten inside to the core—violent, conceited, one who cares for no one other than Eric. Her obsession with all things that denote fashion and looks gets destroyed by her very skin falling off and rotting away (see Figure 5). Marnie represents our ambition and anxiety towards the Other—or towards Pam. Marnie, through this scene, is attempting to rid the world of all vampires, to rid the world of the threat of the Other and restore species and heterosexual normality.



**Figure 5**

In Episode Eleven, “Soul of Fire,” Pam sees the threat of Sookie to Pam and Eric’s relationship and attempts to rid the world of this “precious fairy vagina” (S4E12 “And When I Die”). Pam approaches Eric to ask why he would choose the true death in order to save Sookie’s life. The camera, for the first time in a while, shows Pam as visually inferior and lost. Dark heavy shadows are cast on her face/body to show her loss and to illustrate the darkness that has taken over her; she slowly backs away and runs off. Her world as she knows it is over. Eric has chosen Sookie over her and has broken the bond between maker and progeny. Pam’s deviant nature and monstrous figure have received the ultimate punishment outside the true death—rejection of a lover and the rejection of themselves.

The final episode of the season, “And When I Die,” shows Pam at her most vulnerable. These last few episodes truly display Pam as a creature that possesses emotions and feelings, contrary to what she has displayed in the series thus far. In Episode Twelve, Pam is shown running into Fangtasia looking for Eric (it is understood that time has passed since they last had encountered each other), when their aide at the

club tells Pam she hasn't seen him. Pam begins to drop to the ground and cry. It is at this moment that Pam's monstrous character is shown in the most human way. She is physically and mentally destroyed by Eric's banishment of her from his life as she talks about all the good times she has had with him: "I've been with Eric over 100 years! I watched him seduce super models and princesses and spit out their bones when he's finished! How can someone named Sookie take him away from me?" (S4E12). She at first rejects the embrace of the club's aide, but in her moment of despair holds onto her arm. Pam's character has reached the lowest point and by her actions and rhetoric, it can be understood that she feels alone, empty and beyond devastated over the "loss" of Eric.

Pam's character reflects the allegorical projection of a torn soul. She is demonized in the *True Blood* world, illustrated by the only form of comfort that Pam is able to receive is that of Fangtasia's air-headed, walking blood bank—Ginger—someone who Pam cares little for. The audience's lack of compassion for Pam is reinforced through the camera's point of view, which places Pam in a very inferior stance; she is literally crouched down on the floor weeping while the camera is above her viewing her pain. Her deviant sexual behavior that can be closely identified as the hegemonic Other (whore), and her aggressive nature, places Pam within the ostracized subconscious of the audience's mind. She possesses all the characteristics of the whore paradigm and creator Alan Ball feeds this visual image of her to the audience. Sexual women, as mentioned in the first chapter, remain marginalized within patriarchal society. Analyzing the sexual woman within the confines of patriarchy creates an ideology that is not only problematic but also reinforced through popular culture/media. This illustration in the *True Blood*

series, with particular attention to Pam, does not provide a safe place with which sexual women viewers can identify. Instead, it reinforces the ideology of the whore paradigm and glorifies the punishment placed on Pam (i.e. Eric's banishment, Marnie's curse, the Magister's punishment, lesbian sexual desires that are unfulfilling and Pam's overall transformation into vampirism).

In Western culture, people—especially women—have been taught to suppress their sexuality as dirty and sinful (Rubin 529). Because Pam does not follow these rules of patriarchal culture, she is projected as evil and then later shown as punished for her deviant behavior. The message that this sends to the audience is clear: if you stray outside the lines, you will be punished. In addition, there is no real future for you and you will never achieve happiness as long as you deviate from the norm.

Does Pam contain any feminist qualities? Whereas she contains characteristics that feminist scholars might celebrate, overall she possesses little to challenge the hegemony that takes place in the *True Blood* series. Most if not all her actions are done through the allowance of Eric. She states in more than one episode how Eric outweighs any and all vampires and she defends him even when it risks her own life. She uses human women, in particular, for her own personal pleasure and entertainment. This is a display that not only threatens the heterosexual union within patriarchal hegemony, but also places fear into the minds of women watching and noticing that Pam is a threat. Pam also outwardly expresses her disrespect for human women (she is clearly taking a side, vampire women over human women, of which she prefers the “deviant”), and feminism.

While speaking to Sookie at Fangtasia about the whereabouts of Eric, Pam

(looking very agitated and not interested in what Sookie has to say) asks Sookie why she thinks that she would just open up and bond with her? Pam asks, “Did I miss something? Are we girls now? Did we join a book club and read some queer chic-lit memoirs and now we’re bonded by estrogen or sisterhood or some other feminist dribble?” After Sookie explains that she doesn’t do book clubs, Pam responds: “Neither do I. Eric is my maker, Sookie, did you really think I would side with you on this?” In that same scene, Pam tries to convince Sookie to allow Eric to be “hers,” and Sookie states that she will never be Eric’s puppet, to which Pam replies: “Too bad... he really pulls good strings” (S4E2 “You Smell Like Dinner”). Pam’s delight and desire to be Eric’s “puppet” creates a problematic discourse which negates most if any of Pam’s feminist attributes.

It is clear through her characteristics in *True Blood*, that Pam is neither a character of feminist ideology nor a character by which to challenge the whore paradigm. She—and arguably Alan Ball and Charlaine Harris as well—reinforce the paradigm that victimizes many women characters of popular culture. It is also important to note that although Pam may not be the ideal model for feminism in popular culture’s media, there are other characters that could challenge the paradigm more, or as much as they *physically* can, however, they seem to also fall short. Stepping away from Pam’s troubling discourse and moving towards Jessica’s analysis, it can be argued that both of these characters create concerns for feminist scholarship when it comes to the area of depictions of female sexuality.

## CHAPTER THREE

### TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF JESSICA HAMBY

*“It sounds weird, but I never felt so alive in my life.”*

*-Jessica Hamby*

#### Introduction

Virgin (n): “unmarried woman devoted to religion, an absolutely chaste young woman, an unmarried woman or girl.”<sup>14</sup> Within our culture, much research has been done on the fetishization of virginity in terms of the origins, paradigms associated with and the damaging effects it has for women. As the well-known feminist scholar, Jessica Valenti, states in her text *The Purity Myth*, “the relationship between sexual purity and women—how they’re either virgins or not virgins—makes the very concept of virginity so dangerous and necessary to do away with” (21). She further illustrates the damaging effects that the virgin myth places on women by illustrating the ideology of their sexuality as a source of ownership and as a commodity for men. Women who had sex were (and still are, at times) referred to as “damaged goods,” because they were literally just that—something to be owned, traded, bought, and sold (Valenti 23). In other words, Valenti argues that the fetishization and commodification of virginity is dangerous to women of all ages and calls for a challenge to this ideology. Hanne Blank writes: “[A]cross centuries and cultures the common dominator in determining virginity was the

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/virgin>

insertion of a penis into a vagina. That being said, it is safe to argue that virginity is exclusively heterosexual” (9-10), and that homosexuality or any other sexual act—whether hetero- or homosexual—has not been defined or associated with sex or sex that actually matters in terms of a woman’s virginity. How this relates to an analysis of Jessica Hamby (played by Deborah Ann Woll)—*True Blood’s* “baby” vampire—centers on the core element of Jessica’s taboo existence: she’s a “virgin” vampire.

Jessica Hamby can be the symbolic figure of the sexist hegemonic ideology of women’s sexuality and, in contrast, Pam is the immediate threat to that ideology. This ideology—for which Jessica is a symbol—is damaging and dangerous to women for the obvious reason that it is ignorance towards a woman’s multifaceted worth and any control she has over her own body. It is also important to note that throughout this analysis, gender specific rhetoric is used to emphasize the dichotomy women are forced into with regards to virginity. As Blank also mentions, virginity has never mattered in regard to the way men are valued, or whether they were considered it to marry or to be permitted to survive (Blank 10). Jessica’s “perma-virgin”<sup>15</sup> status leads to an analysis with heavy interpretation and room for multiple discussions; however this analysis will focus mainly on only a few areas. This does not however, attempt to close the book on further research and discussion of this particular area, but rather conjure up discourse on the subject and allow more people to surround themselves with “virgin” awareness. This analysis identifies the problematic discourse centered around the concept of virginity and women—particularly related to Jessica Hamby—and also investigates areas of feminist

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<sup>15</sup> Every time Jessica is “deflowered” she feels pain, which is the male’s consistent power over her. Thus giving name to her permanent “virgin” vagina.

concern related to Jessica's sexual awareness: her *vagina dentata* and the contribution of the gaze as a reinforcer of hegemonic limitations on women.

Season One/Two: "Is it my fault my fangs come out when I'm turned on?"

Jessica Hamby, as mentioned earlier, is a 17 year old (in human years), virgin, and red-headed baby vampire (see Figure 6). Jessica's transformation into a vampire is an illustration of rebellion and a punishment of women who attempt to challenge hegemonic discourse. The extreme conditions of her religious family caused Jessica to sneak out at night to experience a form of life that was unknown to her. This is her rebellion against restraint and control. However, immediately after being outside of her "safe" house, Jessica is kidnapped by vampires and it is then that her ultimate punishment is played out. This parallels other plot conventions, such as those of early cinema, such as *Birth of a Nation* (1915) and *Traffic in Souls* (1913). Once Jessica is made a vampire, she welcomes the transformation and immediately wants to "do bad things" (S1E11 "To Love is to Bury"). She no longer wants to be held down by anyone, especially those who act as paternal figures to her, as Bill tries to do as her maker/father. Jessica is again controlled by patriarchy for her attempt at deviation and is lectured to on what specific rules she must now follow as a vampire. While Bill is explaining the "rules" of being a vampire to Jessica in "To Love is to Bury," Jessica replies with: "Crap on your rules! Crap! Crap! Crap! I can say anything I want now.... Shit! Shit! Shit! Damn! Hell! Fuck!! (Gasp) Oh! Fuck! That's a bad one! Fuck! Fuck!" (S1E11).

Jessica's immediate dismissal and disinterest in any regulations governing her in her new life is obvious. She wants to be deviant and live a deviant life. However, this comes with consequences, as Jessica soon finds out how patriarchy "gets the last laugh" in her "deviant" existence.



Figure 6

Jessica's immediate dismissal and disinterest in any regulations governing her in her new life is obvious. She wants to be deviant and live a deviant life. However, this comes with consequences, as Jessica soon finds out how patriarchy "gets the last laugh" in her "deviant" existence. It is revealed later that when Jessica has sex, she soon realizes that her "power" over patriarchy is more of an illusion. Her vampire state, or the transgressive aspect of her *vagina dentata*, is dismissed once she has sex with a male and experiences the pain associated with virgin sex that, due to her regenerating hymen, recurs every time. Her once feared "teeth" are less a fear for men, as she cannot castrate the male as Pam can.<sup>16</sup> Instead, the ability to inflict pain on Jessica empowers the male.

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<sup>16</sup> As referenced in Freud's *The Psychology of Love (1905)*.

Therefore, Jessica's "bad girl," transgressive element isn't as prevalent as with other vampires in the series.

Jessica's "virgin-ness" is illustrated throughout the series by her white skin, compassion, and religious upbringing—all of which are reminders to the audience of her purity. However, she challenges these attributes and labels with the contrast of her violent, independent nature that results from being a vampire. The first sign of her challenging that good girl appeal comes when she tells Bill that she can "kill anyone she wants and that there's an awful lot of people she wants to kill" (S1E11). Her overall attitude and disappointment in the news that she cannot kill anyone she wants, and that she will mainstream as Bill did, provides deep insight into Jessica's character. She desires a life that opposes the one she used to live during her human life. She wants to be free and experience the world that she was unable to live in before. She wants autonomy and independence from any and all rules. However, Bill seems to be determined to keep her under some form of regulation—much like a mother or father would their child. Bill's control and regulation over Jessica's vampire life illustrates the tight reign patriarchy has on women who wish to be independent and free of social restraints. Bill will not allow for her deviant nature to roam free or, in other words, he will contain her already lessened *vagina dentata* from consuming others. In essence, she cannot do anything prior to asking Bill—a troubling parallel to women's history under patriarchy.

Jessica's virgin state and childish ways are repeated throughout the series; however, a closer look at her character reveals that she is in fact a sexual being and desires sexual autonomy. For women to be sexual beings, as earlier analysis suggested,

often means slipping into either one or the other within the sexual paradigm of the virgin/whore. Jessica is first introduced to a life of “sin” and sexual desire when she’s made vampire in Episode Eleven of Season One “To Love Is To Bury”, when Eric Northman and Pam adopt her for a few days to help Bill in “training her” to be more obedient. While at Fangtasia, Jessica is seen in a close-up shot gazing into the nightclub from Eric’s office. This is the first time the camera gazes at Jessica so closely and then reverses the gaze to show her point-of-view shot of the nightclub, with her eyes fixated on the nightlife interactions of the patrons. She exclaims to both Eric and Bill that she “wants to go to the bar,” and “be one of the dancers.” While in that dialogue, Bill tries to convince Eric to take her and explains that he is having a hard time teaching her obedience. Jessica hears this and interjects: “I don’t obey anyone Mister! Those days are over!”

Jessica is allowed the gaze of the audience (male) for just a few seconds in which she is watching the erotic female dancer thrust on the dance pole before she is called back inside the office and thus under a male gaze once more. This quick reversal of the male gaze is what Linda Williams refers to in her essay, “When the Woman Looks”: “[T]he woman’s exercise of an active investigating gaze can only be simultaneous with her own victimization. The woman’s gaze is punished, in other words, by narrative processes that transform curiosity and desire into masochistic fantasy” (qtd. in Doane, Mellencamp, & Williams 85). Jessica tries to challenge the ideology of being placed under regulation and control by expressing desire to be part of the sexual world these vampires belong to or, in other words, to be “one of the guys.” This is still problematic from a feminist lens, as this

ideology does not provide a platform which celebrates women and their autonomy free of male influence. Eric then sternly raises his voice, telling her to sit down and shut up, but not before she is to shut the door to the office. Jessica follows suit of Eric's demands, an action that clearly counteracts her rebellious nature beforehand and the quick control of the camera's gaze goes back to its original owner—the audience (male).

Eric's rhetoric towards Bill is problematic and telling of how patriarchy keeps women "in their place": "You see, you have to be tough with them or they'll walk all over you." He may be specifically talking about baby vampires, but Eric, being a white male of authority, is saying something more with this phrase. He is making a statement in regards to allowing women full control or autonomy over their own actions, and that if you are not stern with them they will walk all over you. Judging by Eric's demeanor that is not something he will ever allow—nor other white men, for that matter.

Jessica's interest in becoming a dancer and interacting with the other deviant vampires indicates that she feels sexually curious and, thus, her *vagina dentata* asserts power to the male patrons. Eric exclaiming that Bill needs to have better control of her and be more stern is a very clear indication of the fear associated with her *vagina dentata* or its metaphorical cousin—the fear of castration. The violent element seen in the need to control Jessica's vagina is parallel to the attempt to control sexual women and institute fear into women if they were to become sexual beings outside the objectification placed on them by men and their fantasies.

Jessica's desires both as a woman and as a vampire woman are convoluted simply due to her physical state of virginity. As Hanne Blank argues through a wide array of

facts, virginity is not black and white nor is it easily measured (Blank 18). Blogs such as *Adventures of a Young Feminist* argue that virginity doesn't even exist and this argument is illustrated by Jessica's disappearing/reappearing hymen (Sundstrom 2009). If it is understood that she is forever a "virgin" in her physical state, but she acts on sexual needs, can she still remain a virgin? Or what do we understand "virgin" to mean—"understanding" being used loosely? This is rather provocative in discussing the issue of Jessica's lack of a "true" *vagina dentata*, and the understanding of her "virginology." Pain is not felt by the men she has sex with but rather by her, as mentioned earlier in the analysis. Therefore, it would seem that Jessica is always being dominated and controlled by the male gaze of camera, text, and viewer.

Her vampire state is nothing in comparison to that of other vampires in the series. Jessica's defense mechanism is her vampirism and, although it is deadly and fetishized, once there is male interest or persuasion, he ultimately controls her monstrous form by giving that pain back to her through sexual intercourse. It would be reason to wonder why, then, would *True Blood* create a character whose existence would mock the monstrous-feminine's metaphorical meaning but discourage counter-hegemonic discourse?<sup>17</sup> The answer could be in the reinforcement of patriarchy regarding women's sexuality—the illusion of sexual freedom but under the control of the male's regulatory gaze.

The meaning of Jessica's virginity centers on the discussion and understanding of the hymen, as Blank also mentions also in her book on virginity. She goes into detail

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<sup>17</sup> Jessica's character was one of a few main characters that was not originally in the Charlaine Harris books and was created entirely for the series.

about the evolution of the hymen in other mammals in contrast to how humans view the hymen. She contends that the human hymen does not play an important role in comparison to other mammals like whales, seals, and manatees, which have theirs to prevent water and foreign substances from entering the vagina (Blank 23). She continues to explain that the human hymen does not even protect the vagina from sexual intrusion—like the guinea pig’s does. These other animals also have hymens that re-grow and re-seal—a physical attribute that would defy all logic of Catholic doctrine placed on the *virginology* of women. Blank concludes in her history and examination of the purpose of the hymen, that out of all these mammals that possess a hymen, humans are the only ones that actually become aware of it. However, this awareness was not put into religious and social understanding until 1544 (Blank 23/24). This acknowledgement of a piece of tissue is the defining element in whether or not a woman is a virgin, since men do not possess hymen. If virginity is based on the presence or absence of a hymen and Jessica’s grows back with ever sexual encounter, what validity does this give to the concept of being labeled a “virgin”?

As Jessica’s character rises within the series, “she” creates a blog—a creation of the HBO website—by which to communicate to other “babies” and mature vampires out in the world in order to help her and guide her through her confusing existence. She titles the blog *Baby Vamp Jessica*, another display of her innocence and purity—the connection of her existence to that of a child. In this blog, Jessica speaks about the complications of being a virgin forever and in a few entries displays just how bothered she is over this. In the first entry is entitled, “Is Anyone Out There?” she embarrassingly

talks about the elements of being a vampire that she was unaware of, such as how everything heals. “And I mean *everything*...yeah, I didn’t know either” (babyvamp-jessica.com, June 2010). In “Bloodsucking: The Pros and Cons,” the second item on the list is her virginity. She labels it as not only a “con” but as “tragic” (babyvamp-jessica.com, Aug 2010). Through her blog, she explains that most of what she was taught as a child are ideologies she wishes not to hold in her vampire life. Again, in her blog entry titled, “Is Anyone Out There?,” she talks about her family’s ideologies and that through re-examining her life as a vampire and reflecting on her life as a human, she discovered that most of her family’s teachings—particularly those of her father—were wrong: “My parents thought technology would bring sin into our lives. But since I was made vampire, I’m learning there’s a lot of sin out there...and maybe it isn’t all that bad” (babyvamp-jessica.com, June 2010). This statement is interesting in the fact that not only is she denouncing that all sin is bad, as her parents have reinforced in her, but that technology was looked upon as bringing evil into their lives and now she is currently using it to showcase her personal feelings, thoughts and sexuality. She is allowing technology to remove the “evil” she has trapped inside her, or the hegemonic ideology.

She also speaks about her feelings on other issues surrounding her vampire existence in the series. She openly expresses in her blogs that she wants to not be afraid of living (August 2011). While she ventures out to “live a little,” she stops into the local hangout bar, Merlotte’s. Upon walking in, Jessica becomes a sexualized figure for everyone at the bar as they gaze on her with lust. Although her initial intentions may be to find someone and consume them—a parallel hard to ignore with Marcy Playground’s

“Sex and Candy” playing in the background—as Jessica, almost verbatim, displays visually what the lyrics are saying:

Hangin' round downtown by myself. And I had so much time to sit and think about myself. And then there she was. Like double cherry pie. Yeah there she was. Like disco superfly. I smell sex and candy here. Who's that lounging in my chair? Who's that casting devious stares In my direction? Mama this surely is a dream, Yeah mama this surely is a dream.

(S2E3 “Scratches”)

The camera shifts gazes from the male gaze on Jessica’s face/teeth—a visual to remind the audience of Jessica’s monstrous form—and her body, which reminds the audience again that she is young and sexualized, and then to the gaze that Jessica projects onto the patrons of Merlotte’s. Her gaze is met with matching gazes from men at the bar, reinstating the objectification that Jessica is placed under while performing under the male gaze. Her counter-gaze illustrates nothing more than the objectification she is receiving from not only the patrons at the bar, but the audience as well; she is objectified in her own masochism.

While at the bar, she meets Hoyt, her soon-to-be boyfriend and “good guy.” Jessica’s real intentions become obvious later in the episode, when Jessica brings Hoyt home—the obviousness is not necessarily in terms of bringing him home but, rather, in terms of what happens when she kisses Hoyt. As she’s having a rather impulsive make-out session with Hoyt, her fangs are drawn—an impulse she realizes she cannot control—and she immediately hides them. Another illustration of the shame placed on sexualized

women to cover up or deny their sexuality openly is in the parallel to an erection. If she were only interested in Hoyt for feeding and/or for sex, the impulse would not be a physical condition she would hide, although it is still not celebrated because she is a woman consuming a male in violation of a patriarchal culture.

Later, after Bill and Sookie walk in on Jessica atop Hoyt, she remarks to Bill: “I wasn’t going to bite him I swear!” Jessica’s exclamation reaffirms that she was not going to “castrate” Hoyt or allow her monstrous teeth to penetrate him, which would be an obvious physical illustration of dominance. She is quick to make sure Bill is aware of her intentions so as to not be punished by him—or by the audience. It seems that Jessica has already established her “place” or position in the *True Blood* diegesis, which creates problematic discourse through a feminist lens. Her monstrous form would be cause for immediate interpretation of her *vagina dentata* and how this interpretation places her within the series. However, due to her permanent state of virginity, Jessica is still monstrous and still threatens the idea of the *vagina dentata*, as it is the male that with every sexual encounter “castrates” Jessica’s hymen, thus, causing an immediate challenge to Jessica’s threatening form, which again questions the validity of her *vagina dentata*.

After struggling in a monogamous relationship with Hoyt—meaning only drinking his blood—Jessica becomes frustrated and goes out to the city to release her sexual “hunger.” She finds a trucker at a bar that is willing to buy her a drink and take her to his truck for sex (Season Two DVD extra features). It is at this moment—in the truck—that Jessica’s *vagina dentata* metaphor becomes most apparent. Although she never has sex with the trucker, her fangs devour him by which she drains him dead. This

moment of violence is Jessica's single most autonomous act, arguably, in the series thus far. It is not without consequence, however, as her actions are punished by being made to keep the dead body in her sleeping quarters for weeks before needing the assistance of another male vampire. It should be noted that men seem to always come save her from her deviant ways and clean her slate for her, or put her back in her place. The constant recurrence of Jessica being punished for every deviant act she does is heavy throughout *True Blood*.

Jessica can't seem to use and throw out humans like trash, which goes against her dangerous vampire appeal. She either feels horrible about it because it's accidental (the trucker situation towards the end of Season Two), or she seems to care too much about their feelings in the matter to follow through with her own needs/wants (Hoyt). Therefore, her punishment here is that she is faced with consequences that place her under the aid and abuse of men—particularly men that are immediately affected by her actions. Pam, for the most part is able to avoid immediate punishment as she is already understood to be deviant and possess a true *vagina dentata*. Therefore, no man can “castrate” her, only she to them. Jessica lives the exact life a vampire is thought to live—tortured. She is tortured in more ways than just her ideology. Her *vagina dentata* creates the foundation for such torment, which allows for male dominance over her sexuality/body no matter how transgressive she attempts to be. She wrestles with the ideology of Bill—who, as her maker/father represents patriarchal hegemony—and with Pam's and Eric's ideology, which represents that of the hegemonic Other. Seasons One and Two become Jessica's crash course into vampirism and into her personality as a vampire. She learns not only

about what it means to be a vampire, but what meanings she will pull from that and how she will mold these new understandings and realities into the woman vampire she is to become.

Season Three/Four: “I’m not stupid, I’m just unfaithful”

One of the many life lessons Jessica learns throughout her vampire journey is essentially how to be a vampire. Her maker or, arguably, her father, Bill, does not want Jessica to feed on humans; instead, he attempts to teach her how to survive on Tru Blood and good intentions, all mentioned earlier in Season One. The life Bill wants Jessica to live—which is displayed by the relationship Bill and Sookie share—is vastly different than the life Eric and Pam encourage. Jessica again seems to be caught in the crossfire of which life is best suited for her. Bill and Sookie display, practice and symbolize heterosexual normativity while Eric and Pam display, practice and symbolize the hegemonic Other. It is through her blog and rhetoric that she becomes very self-aware and reflective to what others say about her and what they think of her, particularly when it comes to her “role” as a woman and vampire. In her entry, “A House Is Not A Home,” she explains how she’s horrible at cooking and she’s no “homemaker,” and nor does she want to be (babyvamp-jessica.com, June 2010). She seems to reject the idea of being a “housewife/mom” and does not feel she should be subjected to that kind of lifestyle. It would seem that Jessica feels the need to be a “wife” figure for Hoyt but does not feel she “measures up”—a discourse often felt by women that is placed on them by hegemonic ideology. To Jessica, it seems her vampire life will be a repeat of her human life—something she refuses to be part of ever again. Through her stages of “growing up” she

seems to desperately long for the attention, guidance and friendship from any vampire that she feels is “bad” or experienced. When looking back at her life as a human, this could mean anything that challenges her sheltered existence. Therefore, Jessica clings to the vampire guidance of Pam and Eric.

Jessica’s desire to experience “life” or venture into the Other side becomes more apparent, if only for fleeting moments, during Season Three. When Pam and Jessica converse for longer than 30 seconds about Jessica’s unintentional trucker murder, it is obvious she feels horrible for the accident and does not want to repeat the offense. Therefore, she goes to Pam for guidance on how to deal with the situation, as a vampire should. Within the Episode Two “Beautifully Broken”, Jessica is visually dwarfed by Pam in the episode by use of contrast lighting, which places Jessica in dark shadows, hiding her figure, and inferior camera angles, which places the camera above Jessica, giving the sense that the audience (camera) is looking down at her, almost to scold. She is also narratively inferior to Pam within the series, as Pam is hundreds of years older than Jessica, thus creating Pam’s superior quality.

In asking Pam how to stop from killing someone when feeding on them, Pam’s first response is to think of babies (motherhood) and then parasites such as maggots. Pam is clear about her distaste for anything “gender specific”—except for fashion and makeup—and expresses deviant joy when Jessica asks what to do if you accidentally kill someone. Jessica, at this point, is sitting lower than Pam on a bench inside the bathroom and displayed using inferior camera angles. Along with this camera angle the anxiety is reinforced by utilizing a telephoto lens on Jessica’s face. While keeping her head low and

eyes upward in shame, Jessica's overall embarrassment is felt through the camera. Had Jessica been more like Pam—more deviant and violent—there would be no problem, since the mere thought of babies and maggots would immediately repulse any desire to continue feeding. Pam parallels motherhood with death which causes her to not kill someone when feeding. The comparison is telling of the demonization placed on women, especially mothers—that to be a mother is seen as the sexual equivalent to death. What this [the virgin/whore dichotomy] comparison is saying is you cannot be both a mother *and* be sexy, you must choose. However, for the mere fact that Jessica feels any bit of remorse or guilt for her actions indicates that Jessica is not the deviant, violent Other that many vampires are represented as. But, because she actually desires blood, sex and possesses a *vagina dentata*, she cannot be the pure angel character either.

Jessica seems to reject the concept of the woman vampire as a sexual monster—predatory, wanton, requiring performance and satisfaction from her partner (Dika 394), although, her taste for human blood is parallel to the connection to menstrual blood and the abject that this signifies to the audience. This is not to suggest that Jessica desires menstrual blood because she desires human blood, but rather that her biological sex is that of a woman. She signifies the menstruation taboo simply because she is a monstrous figure that bleeds (or bled); she is sexual and she is a woman, which speaks to the male's subconscious fears of menstruation and the monstrous feminine, according to the disgust of the unclean and abject that people fear and are repulsed by (Creed 61-63; Kristeva 71-72).

While confronting Hoyt over an argument stemming from Hoyt's mother, in which she calls Jessica a demon and "no good," Jessica explains to Hoyt how she's not the good girl that he seems to think she is (S3E2 "Beautifully Broken"). Relating the trucker situation, Jessica is still very bothered by her actions and this is what causes her to feel remorse and to address Hoyt's mother's name-calling. Immediately, Jessica is falling back on the metaphors and sexist hegemonic pressure of society by reluctantly accepting this vampire lifestyle that Pam and Eric celebrate. She slowly realizes that a vampire is not what Bill is but what Pam is. Her attempts at trying to be what Bill (or his allegorical representation) wants her to be are not "in her nature." Her nature, as she states to Hoyt, is nothing he will ever understand because it's not in his nature to be deviant. He declares to her that the reason things got so messed up was because he didn't take care of her well enough. He wasn't "the man." Jessica retorts sternly, what it's really like to be a vampire: "Biting people. Getting so mad that I do bad things by accident...it's in my...it's in my nature" (S3E2). His response is for the both of them to blend their "natures" together in order to be happy and reunited. He is trying to control Jessica's impulses, her desire to celebrate the Otherness in her.

However, in Episode Eight "Night On The Sun", Jessica explains to Bill how she can no longer be with Hoyt: "I love Hoyt. But he's so good and sweet. He deserves to be with somebody who deserves him.... It sucks" (S3E8). Through her passion and deep love for Hoyt, she is letting Hoyt go because she feels she isn't good enough for him. She believes in the metaphors that not only the *True Blood* world place upon her, but society

as well. She is a symbol of evil, and a monstrous woman that toys with men and women for satisfying sexual needs. She is to be feared for her sexual desires and actions.

Perhaps not a professional in the *vagina dentata* category, Jessica truly feels that she is very capable of allowing this metaphor to become truth—similar to Pam. In following that logic, Jessica later helps Bill defend off werewolves that have come to kill Sookie. In doing so, she fights and feeds on a werewolf in his human form. The werewolf is lying naked in his human form, covered in blood and begging for his life. Jessica is also covered in blood and feeding on him while delighting in the act, as well as moaning and creating audible suckling sounds. This display illustrates the many metaphors and stories of vampire women as monstrous sexual beings. Creed observes: “Sucking blood from a victim’s neck places the vampire and victim in an intimate relationship. Unlike other horror-film monsters, the vampire enfolds the victim in an apparent or real erotic embrace” (59). Clover concurs: “Knives and needles, like teeth, beaks, fangs, and claws, are personal extensions of the body that bring attacker and attacked into primitive, animalistic embrace” (32). Jessica is illustrating to the *True Blood* world, and mainly the audience, what she really is and how she will eternally struggle with the notion of her instincts not matching up with her heart. She is a tortured soul, made to live out her days with this torment.

However, one cannot dismiss the fact that Jessica did not choose to live the vampire life, but it was chosen for her, could that be the very reason why she not only is a physical contradiction as well as a metaphorical one? Her physical state of virginhood contradicts her physical display for most things sexual (within the heterosexual sphere),

as well as her “instinctive” nature to do harm, kill and deceive acting against her morale to do well and have compassion towards others. She is a rather troubled soul, to say the least, and her *vagina dentata* creates a discourse that is even more problematic in terms of her feminist attributes. Jessica’s character seems to just reinforce hegemonic ideology placed on sexualized women, which is through domination and shame. Jessica often feels shame and it is not until Season Four where she starts to be “okay” with the notion of her sexuality. But due to how her character is physically created, she will never be able to gain complete autonomy in her sexuality as long as she engages only in heterosexual intercourse—a notion that Alan Ball has created and seems to play right into the objectification of most of the vampire women in the series.

In Episode Eleven “Fresh Blood,” Jessica tells Hoyt that she not only killed a man because she drained him, but that she likes human blood and will not stop drinking it. This declaration illustrates not only that Jessica is embracing her vampire being and thus embracing the idea of Creed’s monstrous feminine—as a positive attribute towards her recognition of autonomy, but she also is firm on the fact that she will not cover up or pretend to be someone she’s not by drinking Tru Blood and hiding the fact that she’s a vampire. Although not a very independently strong character, Jessica in this moment is being arguably the most secure and autonomous she has ever been. It is from this point forward that we see another side to Jessica and see her embrace more feminist qualities, in that she gains autonomy in a small moment of declaration.

It is also noteworthy to mention that when Jessica is not with Hoyt she is more in control of herself and what she wants. When she stays with him (as later episodes will

show), she gets back into the domestic lifestyle that she ideally does not want as a symbol of how heterosexual unions may not be the answer to all of life's problems. Although Jessica is not a lesbian nor does she seem to embrace bisexuality, she is a sexual deviant simply because she is vampire—a natural threat to the gender hegemonic norms of society. By being with Hoyt, someone she has already mentioned is “too good for her,” she is allowing herself to recreate and relive those feelings of not measuring up. She will be reminded of how different she and Hoyt, who represents gender hegemonic ideology, really are.

In Season Four Jessica transforms from the scared little vampire to the strong dangerous vampire woman she knows she can be. She seeks more council from Pam—her deviant opposite—than from Bill, who attempts over and over again to restrain Jessica from becoming like Pam and Eric (this will manifest itself rather literally towards the end of the season). In Episode Two “You Smell Like Dinner,” after having a fight with Hoyt over her blood being, in his terms, “shit,” Jessica decides to head to Fangtasia to feed. Hoyt's remark about Jessica's blood can be paralleled to the discourse Creed mentions in speaking about the monstrous mother holding a phallogocentric ideology over the male. “The creature is the mother's phallus, attributed to the maternal figure by a phallogocentric ideology terrified at the thought that women might desire to have the phallus” (62). Similarly Dika states that “the blood that Dracula craves, and from which we recoil, the “blood of life,” derives its power from the ancient fear of menstrual blood” (392). Jessica reinforces Dika's concept of the blood from vampires as “the blood of life” in her blog entry entitled, “Things That Are Shit” (July 17, 2011): “But my blood? My

blood ain't shit. Hoyt Fortenberry, you could not have been more wrong. My blood just saved someone's life".." Hoyt fears Jessica's blood because of its addictive and" impure" qualities and it can be said that he fears it because it belongs to a "monstrous" woman—a woman that does not need a man to feel secure nor need a man to heal those in need. In essence, he is the metaphor of castration anxiety that psychoanalysis and the male gaze rely on.

Jessica seems to reinforce this ideology in another blog entry entitled, "Be the Man" (July 20, 2011), where she states:

[M]aybe the power of my blood makes [Hoyt] feel small. He's in a relationship with a woman who's faster and stronger than him. But that's the woman he fell in love with... And while I want to let him be the man, so he can feel big and important, isn't all that stuff silly? Haven't we moved beyond all that in today's world? Women can have careers and men can be stay-at-home dads. Well I ain't gonna just sit pretty for him. I've never been that way and I never will be.

Jessica is very aware of the ideological problem that she faces when dating someone like Hoyt or a man that is not vampire. She is very aware of the world she lives in and with that she is aware of the world Hoyt wants her to live in. This display of obvious rejection to either of these worlds is very telling of her character, even though she seems to reluctantly choose the vampire life.

In an attempt to gain autonomy, Jessica decides to go to *Fangtasia* to feed on someone since Hoyt finds her blood to be shit. As she enters, she entices a human in

order to feed off of him in the bathroom. Later, as Jessica has shown time and time again, she feels guilty for her deviance and tells Bill about her encounter with the willing guy. She seeks confession to her “father”—another element in *True Blood* that continues to keep Jessica, Pam and other female vampires at bay with “the laws” of hegemony. Jessica and Bill sit together and Jessica confesses her “sins” to Bill while seeking guidance for her wrong doings. The parallel to the Catholic Church is no mistake and should not be overlooked. Again, Jessica is being punished, and made to feel shame for attempting to be autonomous in her monstrous being. It should be noted that Bill and Eric are held as a type of high authority, rather literally within the series. Bill is made a king and Eric is still a sheriff, while Pam remains nothing more than Eric’s progeny and Jessica remains a lost, confused “baby” vampire. Jessica tries to take the advice of Bill to tell Hoyt the truth, but she goes her own route and glamours him after telling Hoyt the truth, realizes that he doesn’t take it very well. The camera fixates on Jessica’s face after she glamours him to show, again, hard shadows on her face and the obvious expression of deep regret of what she’s done.

Jessica’s coming of age is pulled to the forefront of the series during the later episodes in Season Four. Jessica declares to Bill that she found a liking for Sookie’s human brother and Hoyt’s best friend, Jason Stackhouse. This shift in love interests is interesting. As Jessica’s interest in Jason might be purely sexual or it could very well be that Jason and Jessica are much and the same. Jason, although less intelligent than Jessica, is highly sexual but does have a kind heart. He seems to find himself in trouble because he’s naïve about life. This parallels Jessica almost exactly; the main difference

between the two is that Jessica seems to be a lot more grounded than Jason. Jessica is a sexual being, although may not act on it as impulsively as Jason does, she learns about her “deviant” self more and wants to embrace it even though this comes at the expense of Jason’s fetishization of her. She does not want to be afraid of it nor afraid to be who she is in the otherwise human world. According to her blog entry titled, “Where Have All the Cowboys Gone?” (August 28, 2011), Jessica states that she is tired of hiding who she is and how everyone should just not be afraid to be who they are:

I want to unlock these crazy fuckin’ feelings inside. The ones I’ve been keeping down there for so long. No more of this baby-vamp crap! I’m ready to grow up. Aren’t you? I think we were wrong all along. It’s not about keeping all this hunger, these cravings inside or controlling them. It’s about actually letting it all out! Learning how to let it out! ...I mean to live a little. Be who I am. A vampire. Not to apologize for that or to think it’s wrong cause it ain’t!

Her rhetoric is very telling of the transformation she will undertake as the series continues.

Jessica seems to find her own when she’s around Jason—although slightly problematic from a feminist point-of-view—but she at least does not allow Jason to tell her what she should do or hide who she is and this could be more because he fetishizes her rather than embraces and celebrates her autonomy. Although Hoyt never treated Jessica in such a way, she did feel to some degree that she needed to be this “housewife” figure for him. Since he represented good in her eyes, so did the idea of being home to

take care of him. She upheld the patriarchal image of what she felt was “good” and good for her to do. She upheld to the social construction of her gender role. She never mentions how good Jason is nor does she give him the same comparison. It is clear that Jessica feels something for Jason, but it is not the same level she feels for Hoyt. This may be a critique on the attitude Jessica has embraced as a vampire. Since she is deviant by nature, she has no business being with someone so pure and good as Hoyt. She needs to be “with her own kind.”

In Season Four Episode Eight “Spellbound,” Jessica tells Hoyt she no longer wants to be in a relationship with him. She specifically states that she realizes that she is a vampire and because she is a vampire she doesn’t think she is able to be in a monogamous relationship. Immediately, she is reinforcing the metaphors vampires have had in literature, film, TV and popular culture: vampires are the deviant Others we fantasize about being or exploring. When the “good” Hoyt turns on her when she is honest with him, his true “nature” comes to light. The good image of Hoyt as being the pure, wholesome guy is ripped away with his reaction to Jessica’s news: “I know there’s someone else...Oh man...you fucked someone else?!” When Jessica—shown in dark shadows and visually inferior to Hoyt—responds with “no,” he continues his abusive tirade. “You bitch! God dammit! You broke my fuckin’ heart! You know what? You don’t deserve me! And I sure as hell don’t deserve you! I deserve someone who’s not going to be a fuckin’ virgin for all eternity! I deserve someone I can have a normal life with....with kids!” (Hoyt to Jessica, S4E8). Not only has Hoyt attacked Jessica by calling her a bitch, simply because she did not stay in an incompatible relationship, but Hoyt also

attacks her virginity—as well as her “womanhood”—an attack on her inability to have children.

These words are the exact attacks women face in the real world on a daily basis, and having HBO reinforce this ideology is troubling, especially since Jessica is demonized in earlier scenes as a cheater and for choosing to glamour Hoyt instead of following through with the consequences. Hoyt’s comment about Jessica’s virginity plays to the idea of what the audience and popular culture reinforce in women/girls across the country; it’s the idea of virginity that’s popular, not the reality of being chaste (Valenti 50). It is obvious that Jessica’s physical state of virginity bothers Hoyt (as it already does Jessica) in the sense of the Otherness attached to it, and through camera identification it also bothers the audience as well. She cannot be both a virgin and a sexual being at the same time. This is what the metaphor of her permanent virginity states as an ideology.

This is why society and the *True Blood* series demonize Pam the way they do. She’s *overly* sexual in both looks and actions, and she’s also unacceptable. Hoyt attacks another element of being a woman that often pushes women into paradigms of those that can or cannot, those that are normal vs. those that are not—motherhood. As Jessica Valenti states in her text *Full Frontal Feminism*, the pressure on women to be mothers is just another element of sexism that is keeping women “in their place.” “A huge part of keeping women in their place has to do with creating a limited definition of what a ‘real’ woman is like. And a ton of what makes a woman is attached to motherhood”. “[I]f you don’t want to get pregnant, you’re unnatural” (Valenti 151-2). In this case, if you are unable to get pregnant because you are a creature that cannot procreate than you are

unnatural and thus demonized. Hoyt is attacking Jessica's vampirism, sex and judging her personality on the simple fact that she made a choice. She made the choice to not be held up in a monogamous relationship that bound her to the sexist gender roles Hoyt seemed to find great pleasure in living. Her lack of being a "whole" woman is enough to demonize her, no matter what good she may do in the future of the series.

In Episode Twelve "And When I Die" of the Fourth Season, Jessica and Jason entertain the idea of being together or at least attempting to see each other more. Jessica makes it very clear to Jason that she does not want a relationship yet, but does want to sleep with him, as well as possibly other people. She is standing up for what she feels is how she needs to live her life and what will make her happy, not anyone else. Jessica embraces this autonomy that she has recently discovered and becomes more alive through the episode, as well as taking a dramatic shift for her character to play out in future seasons. There is much to learn from Jessica's character and still much that is problematic. As the *True Blood* series, at this current state of analysis, enters into its Fifth Season, we can anticipate the character development of Jessica and what her virginity will determine for her as a monstrous figure.

This chapter analyzed problematic discourses within her character and how she is portrayed in the series. Through this analysis it was showcased how *True Blood* continues to create women to fit the sexual dichotomy in the hegemonic ideology of our society. Jessica is unable to gain any sexual autonomy as long as she engages in heterosexual intercourse, by the reversal of the castration theory onto herself through the constant deflowering of her hymen. Her desire for engaging in Otherness (sexual deviance,

independence and violence), creates the desire to objectify other women (Pam in particular). But this reversal of the gaze, creates grounds for further problematic discourse as her reversal is projected back onto her. Jessica's character further illustrates the problematic discourse that Valenti and Blank mention in the fetishization of virginity—both in popular culture and media. Jessica's character is a staple of the ideology of our society and the pressures placed on women today—particularly in relation to their sexuality:

The regulation and organization of sexual behavior is one of the most basic, and often one of the most volatile, arenas in which culture does its work. Virginity is one of an array of abstract concepts that human cultures have developed to impose some sense of order on the sexual behavior of their members. (Blank 251)

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSION

*“Modern technology has taken the fun out of being a vampire.”*

*-Pamela Swynford De Beaufort*

The purpose of this thesis was to answer particular research questions mentioned in the first chapter: Are these characters celebrated throughout the series as sexually strong feminist characters, or do they simply act as deviant monsters? Does their vampire being—with attached metaphors and taboos—restrain Pam and Jessica from becoming a complete challenge to the hegemonic ideology of sexual women? Do their *vagina dentatas* allow for challenging hegemonic discourse? These questions are related to previous work, as this research shows the parallels between female vampires in *True Blood* and the sexualized, deviant monsters in the literature via the characters of Pam and Jessica.

*True Blood* is a provocative series that explores multiple taboos which the audience often ends up desiring more of, such as through pairing certain characters in fan texts such as fan fiction and fan videos. As mentioned in Chapters Two and Three, Pam and Jessica both deal with their *vagina dentata* in different ways, neither one being truly able to break free of that stigma. Although most ideology is never either/or, but rather inclusive of both, the ideology this thesis attempts to reveal is if either Pam or Jessica

displays feminist characteristics that can be classified as a challenge to hegemonic ideology in regard to sexualized women. The response is not black or white. They are each challenging the hegemonic ideology and reinforcing it, although they do this in their own particular ways. One would argue that perhaps Jessica is more of a challenge to the hegemonic ideology of sexualized women, but when analyzing her body alone, her *vagina dentata* becomes a constant reminder of the pain she feels for being sexual—patriarchy's way of reminding Jessica that her sexual desires are not neither welcomed nor celebrated. Particularly in response to her permanent hymen, in which causes her pain every time she experiences sexual intercourse. This illustration of her permanent hymen and the pain associated is the reminder that society (audience) have over her sexuality (if it is assumed the audience follows Mulvey's concept of who holds the gaze).

Pam, on the other hand, is a very celebrated character among female viewers. She certainly has an appeal to a lot of women—strong, sexy, bold, funny and blunt. However, Pam's relationship with Eric is very problematic and her objectification of women—along with that of her maker—does not help the feminist argument for Pam. Pam plays on the desires of the audience by showcasing and celebrating the taboos that some desire dare not follow—the characteristics mentioned earlier. Pam and Jessica both celebrate moments of feminist discourse but fail to follow through to the end. They both seem to need a partner or love interest of some sort to continue on, to feel whole, or to fight for. Neither one is able to stand alone, like most of the male characters in the series. For those reasons, HBO does not challenge many hegemonic ideologies of women, although they provide a basis for this challenge to take place—within the *True Blood* realm. In order to

understand this conclusion entirely a comparison of these two women vampires is needed.

Both Jessica and Pam desire the taste of human blood—Pam more so than Jessica. But Jessica later discovers there can be nothing else like it. Their physical state of vampire illustrates what Julia Kristeva talks about in her *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982). Since they desire blood—human blood—they illustrate the idea of the abject in the self as well as playing on a taboo (53). Blood is an identified form of the body’s cleansing of itself or repairing itself, particular to menstruation. The fear of the uncleanliness or, in other words, the taboo element, arises here. Pam’s unwillingness to drink the synthetic blood—Tru Blood—illustrates her unwillingness to consume anything but “herself.” She is not afraid of blood from others, nor is she embarrassed by her own or her craving for blood. Throughout the series Pam is shown and gazed at as being the most marginalized Other of these vampire women—or even of all women in the series. She’s noted as being a lesbian, sexually promiscuous, and thus deviant—a sexualized object, violent, drinking only human blood and caring little to nothing for others (other than Eric), especially for humans. She is, for all intents and purposes, the “demon” woman of the series. Pam gets a “break” from being demonized in Season Two, when an actual demon, Maryann Forrester, plays the demon controlling the whole town. Only then does Pam become less demonized. Pam is the ultimate nightmare and taboo entertainer of the audience’s desires. She is the quintessential Other—the “whore” that reinforces the sexual dichotomy.

Looking at Jessica's feminist attributes, she does have a "taste" for both the synthetic blood and human blood, she drinks the synthetic blood more frequently in the beginning when she's in a relationship with Hoyt—who symbolizes the idea of the Nuclear Family and domestic ideology—a quality Jessica later openly rejects as a way to try and have a monogamous relationship with a human man. Jessica's character is the symbol of heterosexual normalcy in regards to her sexual behavior and her attributes throughout the series, which proves that she does not seem to entertain ideas of deviant behavior. If she does, they only arise from the influence of other men (Jason Stackhouse, particularly in S4E12 "When I Die"). Also, especially in Season Four, she makes remarks about saving herself for the right time in order to be truly be intimate with someone—Jason.

The link between blood and sex is no accident, especially in regards to women and menstruation. Jessica wants to be a "normal" vampire—as she often mentions Pam as being—but she's often very torn and too compassionate when it comes to feeding on people to make the complete switch. She seems to only accidentally kill her victims because of her lack of "control" over her monstrous self. As Bill, Jessica's white, heterosexual father figure tries to explain to her, she needs to learn to control her "desires" and "get used" to drinking Tru Blood instead of feeding on humans. He is attempting to contain Jessica to the home and to monogamy—a concept Pam has been known to mock Bill and Jessica about.

Jessica's philosophy towards vampires and love is rather interesting. Although considered a "baby vampire" and thus not having a lot of experience or understanding of

any or all things vampire, she's intelligent and observes her surroundings rather well. In doing so, she comes to the realization that this patriarchal strain that Bill and Hoyt are placing on her life is not only overly complicating her existence as a vampire, but they are stripping her of her desires to explore multiple transgressions—as vampires represent. Jessica is, as mentioned in chapter three, caught again in a middle gray area of the sexual dichotomy. Her physical nature of vampire allows her to explore those taboos and become the transgressive woman the audience wants her to be. However, the emotional, compassionate aspect of her character does not allow for such things to take place. She has to embrace a “bad girl” persona in order for that deviant monster to take form. She has to become that “whore,” since her physical state will never allow her to be the virgin—metaphorically, that is. Jessica is in a constant battle concerning who she is and what she wants out of life as opposed to what life has decided for her.

Pam, however, follows set guidelines for vampire women. If nothing else, Pam's overly sexual demeanor and voice illustrate that her *vagina dentata* is essentially who she is. She *is* a violent and sexual woman and her mouth is hard to ignore while she speaks; it is her “*Venus flytrap*” or Medusa resemblance, if you will. Pam seems to give no indication of rejecting this claim either; in fact, she celebrates her sexuality and violent ways. Outside of the violence, this could be a great feminist attribute of autonomy. However, her intentions cause concern. To illustrate this point further, there is a moment in Season Three where Pam is applying makeup in the bathroom while talking to Jessica. Jessica is very concerned at that moment about how to not kill someone when feeding and voicing her deep regret and concern to Pam, Pam is more concerned about the way

her makeup is looking then to be bothered with a “baby’s” precious problems. Pam continues to look at herself in the mirror while re-applying makeup over and over again, with the greatest attention to detail. Jessica, however, is not looking in the mirror; nor is she even standing up to be level with Pam while they speak. She stands in the beginning only for a moment. While she’s standing, the shadows cast a dark contrast onto her body, causing her to appear dingy in relation to Pam. She then moves to the bench in the bathroom where she remains for the duration of the conversation. Throughout the majority of the conversation, her head is held low and she’s dressed similar to what you might see a young country girl wearing—a vast contrast to Pam’s tight, sexy clothing. Through Jessica’s demeanor, she subconsciously seems to reject her physical state and appears to be embarrassed by her need for explanation on how to be a vampire—something she feels she should just instinctively know. Pam’s actions illustrate what Linda Williams mentions in “When the Woman Looks,” stating that:

[T]here is a sense in which the woman’s look at the monster [herself] is more than simply a punishment for looking or a narcissistic fascination with the distortion of her own image in the mirror that patriarchy holds up to her; it is also a recognition of their similar status as potent threats to a vulnerable male power. (23)

As De Beauvoir also mentions in her chapter “Myths: Dreams, Fears, Idols,” “a woman is rendered more desirable to the extent that nature is more highly developed in her and more rigorously confined: it is the “sophisticated” woman who has always been

the ideal erotic object” (159). This description offers a prime example of Pam’s overall erotic appeal to the audience and why the camera often fixates its gaze on her.

De Beauvoir continues:

[To] illustrate the social life of women and the distinction given to those of the upper class to those of prostitutes: only the prostitute, functioning exclusively as an erotic object, should display herself as this [toilette] and no more; like the saffron-dyed hair and the flower-strewn robe of antiquity, the high heels, clinging satin, heavy makeup, and strong perfumes of today advertise her profession. (531)

This description is all encompassing of Pam’s character. Furthermore, her *vagina dentata* is a constant reminder within the *True Blood* world: “I don’t know what it is about me that makes people think I wanna hear their problems. Maybe I smile too much; maybe I wear too much pink. But please remember, I can rip your throat out if I need to ... You picking up what I’m putting down?” (S3E1 ”Bad Blood”). It is also a reminder to the audience that “woman is vampire, she eats and drinks him; her organ feeds gluttonously upon his” (De Beauvoir 168-9).

Pam and Jessica as characters have displayed extremely opposing ideologies both among *True Blood* characters and to the audience. However, later in Season Four, Jessica does transform into a more dangerous vampire and embraces the monstrous form she so diligently attempted to reject in earlier seasons:

I want to unlock these crazy fuckin’ feelings inside me. The ones I’ve been keeping down there for so long...I think we’ve been wrong all along,

it's not about keeping all this hunger or cravings inside it's  
not about controlling them, it's about letting them all out. Learning how to  
let it out! I just mean to live a little. Be who I am. A vampire. And not to  
apologize for that or to think it's wrong, because it ain't.

(babyvamp-jessica.com, August 2011)

Jessica illustrates through her video blog that her sexual tension and self-loathing needs to come to an end. She needs and desires to celebrate who she is—a monstrous sexual woman—and not feel the need to cover this up to anyone whether in the *True Blood* world or the audience. Her attempt at autonomy is memorable; however, her desires and needs seem to still stem from others—particularly men (Jason, Hoyt, Bill).

To summarize these findings and claims made in Chapters Two and Three by way of feminist theory and methodology, it has been made clear that both Pam and Jessica suffer problematic discourses which seem to reinforce the hegemonies surrounding women and sexuality. They are different characters with different ideologies; however, they both share the same repression carried out through the *True Blood* diegesis as well as through the audience's expectations. It is understood that ideologies in themselves are rarely either/or, and in this research this is proven. However, all hope is not lost.

Although Pam and Jessica suffer reinforced oppression when it comes to their sexual desires, they each uphold particular feminist attributes that should not go undetected. Pam is strong, blunt and very autonomous in her sexuality; as a whole these attributes are argued to be celebrated throughout feminist discourse and scholarship. She is also a

leader, in some respects, and takes to teaching Jessica, in particular, the ways of being an autonomous vampire woman, and not apologizing for it.

Jessica, however, was brought up and continued to carry over in the first few seasons a highly moral and Christian ideology—one that isn't necessarily implied to be demonized. She quickly realizes the problematic implications this has on her life and decides to reject this ideology and its privileging of domestic life, monogamy (sort-of), and oppression in regards to women and sexuality. Once she rejects these claims, she starts to become a more feminist figure. However, her physical state of “virginity” remains to be the one strong and memorable hold that patriarchy, and thus the audience (through the gaze), have on her. It is this highly unavoidable trait about Jessica which makes her unable to embrace a more autonomous sexual discourse in her life. Prior to having sex with Hoyt, for example, she has to inform him of her physical state, as if she must get his permission or acknowledgement of the fact that she is in need or desiring to be “deflowered”—an act he takes very honorably. She refrains from mentioning her physical state to Jason in Season Four, although it can be implied that because Hoyt and Jason were best friends, the discussion was brought up before. Jessica's physical state of not only virginity but vampirism calls for additional feminist scholarship on the subject. Particularly since she is the physical manifestation of a *vagina dentata* more than any other vampire character, she feels the effects of this metaphor every time she has sex with someone. This brings up additional questions for further research such as, why would Jessica continue to reinforce this stereotype and not embrace the idea of having sex with women instead?

### Suggestions for Future Research

It would be important to study Pam's character from the audience's perspective in terms of both her fans and non-fans. Understanding why people love and hate her is interesting, as is discovering what it is about Pam that seems to attract a lot of attention.

Jessica's character is also interesting on a wide spectrum, one that deserves more scholarship. The original idea for this thesis was to dive into both Jessica and Pam's characters and find out as much back-story as well as current story in order to map out the attributes they both possess in order to then consider if there is any hidden feminist character. However, as the research soon discovered and analysis of the seasons reinforced, feminist inclinations are not simply either/or but could, rather, be all-encompassing and ever changing. As mentioned in this conclusion and at the end of each character's analysis, they each possess great feminist qualities but still contain problematic discourse. Perhaps there could be an analysis of the series as a melodrama, taking into account other non-human characters, or analyzing one main female character but including audience analysis in order to develop a more well-rounded and detailed examination of gender and sexuality in *True Blood's* philosophy.

Another character that is highly neglected but is in desperate need of feminist scholarship is Tara Thorton—Sookie's African-American best friend. Tara, throughout the series, especially in Season Three/Four, is repeatedly abused, neglected and Othered more than most of the vampire women are in the series. She is also further victimized by being made vampire in the newest season (Season Five), by none-other-than Pam. This is at the command of Sookie as an attempt to save her "life"—which creates the perfect

irony and highly problematic discourse for Tara's character in the series (S5E1). What does this say to women of color in media? Does Sookie have to be the only person to "save" Tara, or other supernaturals for that matter? Does Tara need to be saved? What does her vampire state illustrate through allegory in media? It is a clear indication of patriarchal, race and gender hegemonic ideology related to the sexual woman—especially to women of color—that is playing a huge part in Tara's suffering. She is the only female character that stays alive from the beginning and gets punished every season, each time more horrific than the last. Each time Tara is abused in some way it is, more often than not, by a man that is white and powerful. This is spoken about in Patricia Hill Collins' book *Black Feminist Thought* (2000): "Black women's sexuality is often described in metaphors of speechlessness, space, or vision; as a 'void' or empty space that is simultaneously ever-visible (exposed) and invisible, where black women's bodies are already colonized" (qtd. In Collins 133). The issue of race and black women's sexuality continues to be referred to in terms of the Jezebel, which is an obvious problematic stereotype that deserves feminist scholarship on *True Blood*.

Much attention is needed to the merger of science fiction/fantasy and the melodrama, particularly in terms of women supernaturals. If the sci/fi media text is arguably an exploration of the self's outer-limits of consciousness, then ignoring the placement of women within these genres is neglectful. The issues of race, gender and sex play a large part of these genres, particularly in instances where other worlds are being discovered or researched. Further research with regard to supernatural women is needed. Furthermore, analyzing *True Blood* from the angle of the melodrama is an important

factor to take into account, as *True Blood* is, as mentioned in Chapter One, a melodrama that includes problematic discourses of women and the body (as described in Linda Williams' "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess" (1989)).

This research concludes with a call to all feminist media and cultural studies scholars and answers some issues while allowing for a need for further analysis and study of the *True Blood* series. Although there is investigation being done of some subjects, little is being talked about in the area of marginalized women and people of color when referring to *True Blood* specifically or to supernaturals in media. Feminist research is needed to better understand and bring to light reinforced ideologies that many people feel are "dead" issues or simply "not happening" any more, as in post-feminist or post-racial terms.

Although the demographic targeted by HBO viewers places an immediate barrier between those privileged (and able to pay subscription fees) and those that are not (interesting parallel with the type of characters that continue to be objectified in the show versus those that are empowered), it is important to continue to examine problematic messages into the homes/minds of the audience. This research's aim was to not only add value and contribution to the feminist scholarship of the *True Blood* series, but to also help create a platform by which more scholars will feel the series deserves further research and analysis. Otherwise, characters like Tara, Lafayette, Pam and Jessica, to name a few, will never have a "voice" in the world of popular culture's sexist and racist hegemonic design.

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