

Phallus and Void in Kipling's “The Vampire” and Its Progeny

ANNE MOREY AND CLAUDIA NELSON

1 We thank Daniel Humphrey for his advice and comments.

When Rudyard Kipling wrote “The Vampire” in 1897 to accompany a painting by his cousin Philip Burne-Jones, he joined a century-long appropriation of middle-European folklore to point a contemporary sexual moral.¹ The painting (figure 1), which depicts

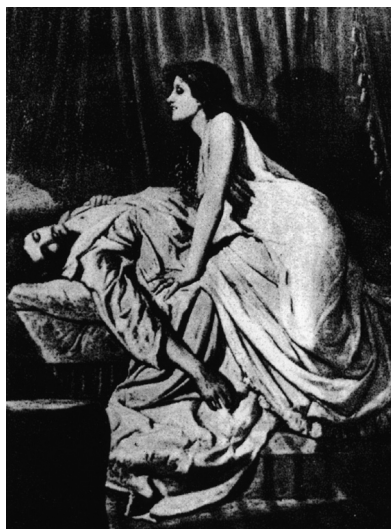


Fig. 1, Philip Burne-Jones, *The Vampire*

a depleted man prone beneath a beautiful woman resembling the artist's inamorata, the actress Mrs. Patrick Campbell, conflates Henry Fuseli's *The Nightmare* (1781, figure 2) and Henry Wallis's *The Death of Chatterton* (1856, figure 3), thus invoking both supernatural horror and



Fig. 2, Henry Fuseli, *The Nightmare*

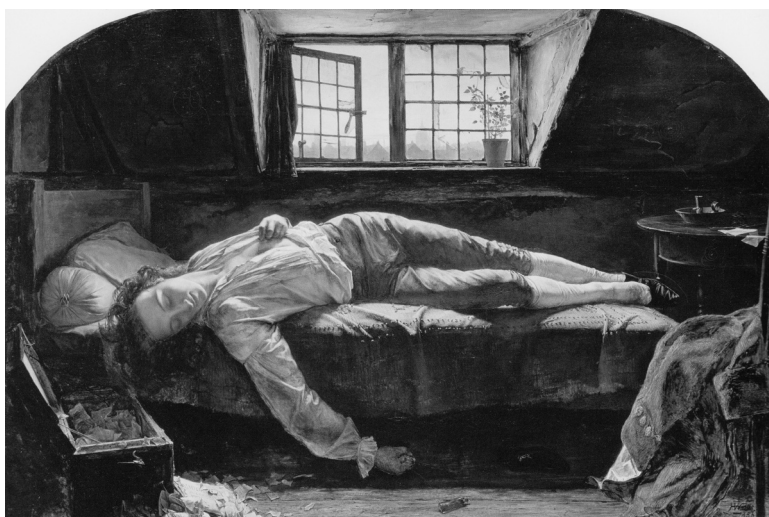


Fig. 3, Henry Wallis, *The Death of Chatterton*

the romance surrounding an artist's death. Kipling's poem, however, with its famous description of a woman as "a rag and a bone and a hank of hair," neither celebrates the supernatural nor represents bohemian prodigality as glamorous. Apparently intended partly as a warning to Burne-Jones himself, of whose interest in Campbell Kipling disapproved (Seymour-Smith 294), the poem rather suggests that the seminal in art and the seminal in sex are identical, so that too free expenditure of the latter renders one impotent in the former. Burne-Jones's vampire, with her shroudlike nightgown and glistening teeth, may or may not be the typical nineteenth-century female vampire, initiated into vampirism at the fangs of a rakish male. Kipling's fiend, albeit a member of "an alien gender to whom men's wrenching adoration is incomprehensible" (Auerbach 42), is simply a normal woman, her blood-drinking symbolic rather than literal.

Most nineteenth-century texts treat vampirism as deriving from the male. For instance, T. P. Prest's *Varney the Vampire* preys on women; Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is the catalyst releasing women's tendency to vampirize men; and even Sheridan LeFanu's *Carmilla* and Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Ducayne*, both of whom select only female victims, are activated by male wrongdoing. In other words, the 'natural' role of the nineteenth-century woman was originally presumed to be that of victim rather than vampire; thus if the male vampire is perverse because he uses the mouth as a phallus, the perversion of female vampires such as Stoker's Lucy seems for many Victorians to be linked to their status as embodiment of a sexuality that should be exclusively masculine. Stoker imagines the male awakening in the female, for his own purposes, a masculinized libido; Freud, Luce Irigaray complains, "falls back on the affirmation that the libido is necessarily male, and maintains that there is in fact only one libido, but that in the case of femininity it may put itself in the service of 'passive aims'" (40). In contrast, Kipling's vampire originates her own countervailing force rather than being activated by a man; the fool's perception of her as empty presumably derives from his inability to make an impression upon her. It is not her participation in male sexuality but her negation of it that makes her lethal. Suggestively, Lois Drawmer links late nineteenth-century representations of the *femme fatale* to the mid-nineteenth-century ideal of the asexual woman, as delineated by quasi-medical writers such as William Acton (22-23). Unattainable, unconquerable, and not subject to loss of semen, the asexual is only a step away from the insatiable, who is similarly inexhaustible.

Arguably, central to this negation is the woman's response to the male attempt to fetishize her. Freudian theory holds, as Freud wrote in 1927, that "the fetish is a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once believed in and [. . .] does not want to give up" ("Fetishism" 152-53). Thus the fetish is designed to enable the male to repress the too-horrifying realization that the female has no penis. Instead of reading her as castrated, he reads something associated with her—in "The Sexual Aberrations" (1905) Freud lists as possibilities "some part of the body (such as the foot or hair) . . . or some inanimate object which bears an assignable relationship to the person whom it replaces and preferably to that person's sexuality (for example a piece of clothing or underlinen)" ("Aberrations" 19)—as a substitute penis. In other words, he interprets her as the very "rag and bone and hank of hair" to which the "fool" of Kipling's poem "made his prayer." While Freud notes that "[a] certain degree of fetishism is [. . .] habitually present in normal love, especially in those stages of it in which the normal sexual aim seems unattainable or its fulfillment prevented" ("Aberrations" 20), Kipling's fool's efforts at consummation are not temporarily but permanently thwarted, explaining why the poem should so emphasize impotence and, in lines such as "The fool was stripped to his foolish hide," castration. Overtly, the poem tells of a man who wastes his energies on a woman who "could never know why"; he eventually loses honor, direction, fortune, and the woman herself. Covertly, it equates the man's tears with fruitlessly spent semen, the rejection of "the work of [his] head and hand" with a rejection of the male organ and its products. Thus the observation that "some of him lived but the most of him died" explains the loss of male potency by the woman's uninterest in the male romantic undertaking.

Freud's understanding of fetishism has attracted considerable commentary, much of it critiquing his implication that women are properly perceived as castrated. We cite his theories here not from a belief in their transhistorical accuracy but rather as helping to illuminate a particular turn-of-the-century view of the phallic woman. Writers such as Acton, Drawmer notes, worry that "indulgence in sexual intercourse [. . .] result[s] for the man in 'simple ruin—he goes bankrupt and is sold up,' further consolidating the assimilation of women to vampiric tendencies" (23). As this comment suggests, women may be so lacking, so empty, that they must seek to rectify their condition by draining men sexually, financially, and (Kipling implies) creatively. Like the vampire women in *Dracula*, whose sexual aggression can reduce their male prey to passively waiting in "languorous ecstasy" to be penetrated (38),

Kipling's vampire has deprived her victim of manly agency; the male's weakness is the female's fault. But in Stoker's novel, the arch-penetrator is not any of the women (none is permitted to consummate an attack on an adult male) but Dracula, who makes his female victims into versions of himself, "flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin. [. . .] When my brain says 'Come!' to you, you shall cross land or sea to do my bidding" (288). As the male vampire was to the female victim earlier in the century, so, in Kipling's poem, is the female vampire to the male. Actively "stripping" and "throwing aside" her prey, forcing him to replicate her own emptiness, Kipling's vampire is radical for her century because despite her gender, it is she who embodies libidinal energy and phallic enterprise.

This fetishization denies the creativity represented by the womb in favor of something more masculine; the "rag and bone and hank of hair" has no interior. Today's readers may well sympathize with the woman's refusal to evince what fool and narrator consider her proper sexual response, passive admiration of virility. Indeed, by trying to fetishize her, the fool has created a being who cannot serve as the vessel he wants her to be; even in his own terms she exists not to be penetrated but to penetrate, so that she must dominate him rather than the other way around. But as in the case of Freud's fetishist or Stoker's king-vampire, it is what he has made of her that is her crime. The woman has not merely spurned the phallus and its works, she has removed it altogether, as the narrator always knew she would (the ruse of fetishization is never comfortable or permanent). If the fantasy that originates fetishism is the child's perception that his father has castrated his mother, the ancillary fear is that the vengeful mother may respond by castrating the child. And indeed, by the poem's end, the former subject is now liable to penetration by "a white-hot brand," sunk to a condition below that of the phallic female.

The male of this poem, then, is caught in a vicious circle. Having recognized that the normal woman lacks a penis and hence must serve as a vessel to sheathe his own organ, he fears what he sees as her emptiness; she may not "understand" or "care" for his genitalia as she ought, so that she represents a threat to his virility. Accordingly, he re-creates her, turning her into the phallus that he considers more apt to sympathize with masculinity. But as it turns out, she does not complement but competes with his sexuality, since he can no longer penetrate her. Logic dictates that if she is not the object of penetration, it must be he who is. He too becomes, then, an empty "hide," an unfilled bladder, a perversely unfruitful womb. The end of the paradigm, like

2 A 1922 remake by the same studio, directed by Emmett J. Flynn and starring Estelle Taylor and Lewis Stone, failed at the box office; no surviving copy is known.

3 The poem does not appear in *Collected Verse of Rudyard Kipling* (New York 1907, London 1912). Philip Leibfred points out that Kipling had “failed to copyright” the poem, “probably due to the fact that it was a gift to his cousin” (30).

that of the poem, is that she “never could understand”—because in neither incarnation can she place enough “honor and faith” in male attributes.

The wellspring of this paradox, and of the impulse to fetishize more generally, would seem to be that when the male glimpses the female’s vessel-like qualities, he “understands” them to mean what they would mean if he himself displayed these characteristics: in Susan Lurie’s phrase, he would be “bereft of sexuality, helpless, incapable” (quoted in Williams 89). This is an understanding that the woman may not share, as Kipling’s hymning of the perceptual gulf between the sexes implies; she may view her sexuality as not antithetical to that of the male but merely different from it. Hence an 1899 response to Kipling’s poem, Mary C. Low’s “The Vampire: From a Woman’s Point of View,” argues that a woman who accepts men’s sexual viewpoint accepts exploitation: men want sex while women want love. Low’s speaker mourns:

Oh, the walks we had and the talks we had,
And the best of our heart and hand,
Were sought by the man who pretended to care,
He didn’t—but why he pretended to care,
We cannot understand. (vv. 7-11)

The male’s half-perception of this otherness, Linda Williams suggests, lies at the heart of the vampire film; the vampire, like the woman, represents “a sexual power whose threat lies in its difference from a phallic ‘norm’” (89), so that monsters and women are similar inasmuch as both can enact a form of sexuality that is not male. This trope of competing knowledge systems is the basis for one of the best-known revisions of Kipling’s poem, Porter Emerson Browne’s *A Fool There Was*,

which metamorphosed from play (1909) to novel (1909) and finally to the archetypal 'vamp' film, released by Fox in January 1915, directed by Frank Powell and introducing Theda Bara in her first major role;² each successive version inscribes women as horrifying voids dangerous by virtue of their otherness.

Kipling's American audience was particularly warm to "The Vampire"; the poem was first anthologized (and given headline billing) in *Departmental Ditties, The Vampire, Etc.*, a collection of his works published in the United States in 1898, more than twenty years before it resurfaced in Britain in *Rudyard Kipling's Verse: Inclusive Edition 1885-1918*,³ and also appeared by itself in at least three illustrated pamphlets put out by separate American publishers, again in 1898. Janet Staiger notes that another collection, *The Vampire and Other Poems*, sold some 90,000 copies (204). Likewise, when the Burne-Jones picture visited New York in 1902, it sparked assorted tableaux vivantes, narrative scenes extrapolated from the poem and culminating in a reenactment of the painting. Browne's play was the most successful of the many parodies and adaptations of poem and painting, "plac[ing] the name of Porter Emerson Browne on the roster of young American playwrights who had 'arrived,'" as one interviewer put it, and bringing in royalties "as high as \$3,500 a week" during its three-month run (Denig 71). A reading of the novel, at least, suggests that it was not literary talent that set Browne on these heights, but his ability to exploit the same subtext of concern that the phallus be properly 'understood' that also animates Kipling's poem.

Whereas Kipling suggests that lack of understanding is the female condition (ideally, fetishes are passive, created and controlled by men), Browne's texts expose another layer of anxiety by suggesting that women understand much more than men do (fetishes, alas, do not remain ideal, but acquire a terrifying life of their own). In the novel, good and bad women alike are credited with a knowledge of the "Hidden Things," the "Unknown" (152, 210), while the refrain of the narrative reverses that of the poem in associating lack of understanding with the male. Throughout the novel, the Unknown relates to the sexual, specifically to the relationship between phallus and sheath; as Staiger observes, both novel and film also respond to the contemporaneous "stress on human behavior as causal motivation" by "locat[ing] the vamp's behavior in psychological terms. The film is even subtitled 'A Psychological Drama'" (152-53). The narrative invites us to conclude that women, resenting their condition as sexual void while men remain ignorant of this danger, express their horror at their supposed 'castration' by projecting it onto men. This projection has two results. First, it exposes the anxiety that

women will castrate their lovers by forcing them to exhaust their potency in trying to fill an unfillable vessel; as the *New York Times*'s review of the play puts it, "Mr. Hilliard acts the husband for all he is worth, giving him the proper vigor and virility in the beginning and driving the lesson home in a carefully delivered study of the enervating effects of rum and rose leaves" ("Fool"). Second, it fetishizes (as walking phalluses) the beings who bear the penises that women covet and who are thus potential objects for castration.

On its face the novel describes a love quadrangle in which pure wife Kathryn and vengeful vamp Rien vie for the soul of diplomat Jack Schuyler while Schuyler's best friend, Tom Blake, covets Kathryn's love. The subtext, however, suggests that even good women have the potential to destroy men, in both their presence and their absence. In childhood, Kathryn's romping with Tom and Jack leads to the bursting of a pillow: "Its shrunken shape lay in a far corner of the room, rumpled, empty, a husk of the plump thing that it had been but a short time before" (30), an image that prefigures Rien's effect upon her victims. Similarly, when Jack's and Tom's mothers die, "Their goings [leave] [. . .] monstrous voids that might never be filled" (64), resulting in the elder men's emasculation and death. Kathryn's father, Jimmie Blair, has likewise perished (in a Latin American revolution) owing to his devotion to the feminine, since "he couldn't stand idly by and see women and little children shot" (16). Kathryn is so attractive that she causes Tom to feel "a strange emptiness within him; it was almost as though he were appalled by so much beauty—so much glory" (79). Her sister, Elinor, first fails to nurse her husband through a fatal fever and then inadvertently facilitates Jack's surrender to the vamp by preventing Kathryn from accompanying him on the ocean crossing on which he and Rien meet. Rien herself is always lethal to men, having driven to death not only her illegitimate father but also a series of lovers of whom Jack is merely the latest.

It is their condition as phalluses that destroys men, since in this role they are liable to detumescence. Real men are repeatedly described as "erect" or "well-set-up," while in contrast Jack's and Tom's widowed fathers lose "ambition from the brain, and [. . .] stamina from the spine" (64). Rien's castoff lover Young Parmalee has lost weight from living in the orgasmic "froth of things—the froth that is often the scum" that she has forced upon him (114), and Jack degenerates into "a palsied, pallid, shrunken, shriveled caricature of something that had once been human," a "sunken-eyed, sunken-cheeked, wrinkled thing" stripped not merely to the "foolish hide" of Kipling's protagonist, but rather to

his still more empty “naked, sodden skeleton” (272, 223). Near the end of their relationship, he has become “not a man, now. He was a Thing, and that Thing was of her. Hands hung slack, loose, at his sides; jaw drooped; lips were pendulous. Only, in his eyes was that light that she, and she alone, knew how to kindle” (300).

In each case it is the void associated with femininity or its lack that causes this condition. Rien, of course, so christened by her father to signify his rejection of her, is a “nothing” whom no man can satisfy, while it is perhaps the “great, great emptiness” within Kathryn that keeps her from recovering her mate (290). The voids left by the Schuyler and Blake mothers—and recall that in Freudian theory, it is the mother whose frighteningly “absent” genitalia turn her son into a fetishist—kill their men, just as Tom, pining for Kathryn’s love, complains of the emptiness of his life and blames on this emptiness his inability to achieve the proper (“well set up”) male figure: “I’m always either forty pounds too heavy or twenty pounds too light” (100). The survival of all three Blair women after losing their husbands suggests women’s superior strength; most sexually active men in the novel die by age forty, and none lives past age sixty. The male’s best survival strategy, it appears, is that of Dr. DeLancey, who remains a bachelor while acting as a father figure to younger men, or Tom, who becomes surrogate father to another man’s child. When DeLancey briefly regrets that he never married and produced sons of his own, he smothers this dangerous desire: “‘Shut up, you old fool,’ he soliloquized” (76). The term “fool,” of course, is more usually applied in the novel to Rien’s victims, who after their sexual expenditures are left lamenting, as Jack writes in bidding his wife farewell, “All that is left of me [. . .] is only a great emptiness, and a greater pain” (237).

The stage version of *A Fool There Was* reprinted Kipling’s poem in the program and reenacted Burne-Jones’s painting during the curtain calls; the novelization quotes “that thing of Kipling’s” relentlessly (130) and reproduces the painting on its cover. The 1915 film continues this referential trope in its intertitles, but here it follows not only the other Browne productions but also the 1910 Selig release *The Vampire* and Vitagraph’s 1913 *The Vampire of the Desert*, both of which likewise dramatized (with entirely new plots) what *Moving Picture World* described as Kipling’s “world famous poem” and “Sir Ed [sic] Burne-Jones’s famous painting” (“*Vampire*”).⁴ That even the synopsis is punctuated by stanzas from the poem suggests that this film too used its intertitles to invoke Kipling. Unfortunately, no print of either the Selig or the Vitagraph film is known to have survived, but it is evident

4 Sir Philip Burne-Jones was the eldest son of the more eminent Sir Edward Burne-Jones.

5 The novel describes the butler's enforced play with little Muriel as "a distinct prostitution of pride" (250), a sexually loaded term that again implies the erotics of male helplessness before the feminine.

from the *Moving Picture World* summary of *The Vampire* that not only the poem's diction but also its anxieties were preserved.

The plot of the 1910 film concerns the efforts of the fool's sexually pure elder brother to recover the jewels (presumably representing semen) that Guy has 'spent' on the Vampire, whose name, Loie, evokes the French *joie*. Brother John's attempts gain force from his discovery that Loie is the woman who destroyed the father of Guy's foster sister, now his wife; he offers the Vampire a fortune to leave America and thus permit the restoration of the idyllic—if incestuous—family circle that she has disrupted. She accepts the money but reneges on the contract, effectively draining both brothers of their phallic capital. In the end, the synopsis notes, "The young husband's mind is rent—his honor gone and the yawning abyss of the great beyond seeks its own."

On the one hand the "yawning abyss" is clearly death, which like insanity appeared to many Victorian commentators a predictable result of overworking the penis via masturbation or fornication. On the other, given the context established in the influential texts by Kipling and Browne, it is the feminine void represented by Loie herself. Extracting money, jewels, and sexual energy from men, she not only manipulates male potency for her own purposes (another instance of a woman not 'understanding' what the phallus is really for, much as one of the offenses committed by the title character in *The Vampire of the Desert* appears to be that "When [her much older married suitor] attempts to kiss her, she repulses him" [*Desert*]) but also leaves it detumescent and destroyed. Like Rien, she offers what Sumiko Higashi describes as "a negation of [the male] self" that is at once tempting and emasculating (59).

Higashi argues that the Vampire represents “man’s objectification of his fear and hatred of woman” and her sexuality, in a world in which “The good woman [. . .] was not so very different from the bad” (58, 60). This similarity is especially apparent in the 1915 Bara film, where all men are the property of some female and where all females are more or less interchangeable; as Bara puts it in a 1919 magazine memoir, “The good little girl is just as bad as the bad little girl is good—so why moralize” (716). Thus Schuyler’s best friend is now dangling after Kate’s sister, who accepts an engagement ring after raising it to her lips in what may be a kiss but looks more like a bite to test its value. Even the butler is the slave of the Schuyler daughter, who deprives him of his dignity before the female staff by making him play with dolls and eventually turns him into a “horse” for her driving.⁵ Proto-graphic matches and crosscutting reinforce the covert kinship between the vamp and her putatively innocent “sisters” (who like her lack names); the child’s pretended newspaper reading gives way to that of Bara, who follows her prey’s career in the press, while the intertitles from Kipling’s poem may be read as commenting equally on all the women’s wasting of men’s energies.

Film seems the ideal medium for a discourse on castration anxiety and fetishism because, as Christian Metz has famously observed, the film screen itself models the fullness and lack dynamic explored here. The screen appears to contain all life, but does not. As spectators, we must both avow and disavow this belief. We are deceived or deceive ourselves in the interests of achieving a pleasure impossible without the deception. According to Metz, “For the establishment of his full potency for cinematic enjoyment (*jouissance*) he [the film spectator] must think at every moment (and above all *simultaneously*) of the force of presence the film has and of the absence on which this film is constructed” (74, emphasis in original); this paradox is reminiscent of the potency that the male perception of the woman’s insatiable lack assigns to her. Thus the sexual imagery of *A Fool There Was* suggests that a terrifying but pleasure-induced wastage is the inevitable product of the union of phallus and void. Bara’s victims cannot light their cigarettes or stand upright; bent, staggering, or prone, they beg for women’s embraces, as if to try to regain the life force spent there. Here again, men *are* the phallus, although they may in desperation turn to secondary phallic symbols such as guns and bottles—which, of course, work not to restore male potency but to penetrate the men themselves.

Women wear their genitalia more lightly. As in the novel, in which Rien contrasts the white rose of “pallid, pale, wistful, weak” respectable

6 Moving Picture World's synopsis of *Red and White Roses* helpfully observes that the white roses associated with the protagonist's fiancée are "indicative of purity and sincerity"; the vamp, of course, receives bouquets of red roses.

love to the red rose of the "pulsing, throbbing love of body and soul and heart and head" that renders men "impotent in its tearing, tossing grip" (204-5), and as in intervening vamp films such as Vitagraph's 1913 *Red and White Roses*, which shows Browne's influence but omits the Kipling references, flowers suggest the erotic delights that women provide.⁶

The vamp employs her ever-present roses to render ineffectual Parmalee's gun, to blot out the forget-me-nots that Schuyler's wife has given him, and to sprinkle petals on her dead victims; the 'good' women regard roses more dubiously but are surrounded by them nonetheless, so that, for instance, flowers form the initial link between the vamp and Schuyler's child. In neither case, however, is it implied that their genitals make women vulnerable, as men are vulnerable—on the contrary, they are a weapon for castration. When Parmalee aims his gun at the vamp, she seductively deflects it with the flower that she is holding, following up the gesture with the famous order, "Kiss me, my fool!" The triumph of her will is immediately followed by the suicide of her unmanned victim.

Staiger's analysis of both novel and film versions of *A Fool There Was* focuses on the distinction that these texts make between good and bad women in terms of their effect upon men: good women direct men toward family life, bad women seduce them away from it. She suggests that one use of such representations is to illuminate "the variable meaning of 'woman' as a 'transfer point' for debating changing social formations" (149). We would add, however, that while women in these texts are certainly differentiated in terms of their virtue, the images and concepts associated with them are less "variable" than one might initially assume. Key tropes such as flowers

and emptiness, for instance, occur with reference to good women as frequently as they do to bad ones. Perhaps another way to understand the range of women on display here is in terms of motherhood, recalling that Freudian theory identifies the mother as the source of fetishism.

If, through the image of red or white roses, women are linked to the deathliness of routine or the consequences of its neglect, they are also endowed with the power of engendering progeny, both actual and parodic. While Browne's novel asserts that the good woman gives her husband children, it also associates even the bad woman with reproduction—and in both cases, men function as the means by which women replicate themselves. Rien, for instance, has her mother's eyes, the feature that becomes her weapon to destroy men, beginning with her father; Rien's mother's successful reproduction enables her revenge upon her seducer. Similarly, Kathryn is a miniature version of her mother, as is her daughter, Muriel. And if Rien's progeny are her victims, who lose their adult masculinity, Muriel similarly turns men into children, be those men "Woberts" the butler, forced into games of hide-and-seek, or Tom, who becomes Muriel's favorite playmate and storyteller.

So powerful is femininity that the man who evades the unfillable void of feminine need is most of the way to a woman himself. Tom, who remains a bachelor when he loses Kathryn to Jack, feels of Muriel that she is "flesh of his flesh, blood of his blood, bone of his bone" (161). His role in entertaining and comforting Muriel is almost greater than her mother's. Later, when he attempts to explain the situation to Muriel, Tom "[a]lmost [. . .] wished that he were a woman; the relief of tears would have meant much" (235). But even in reproduction the role of the male is diminished in the female mind, as when Kathryn thinks that it was God, not Jack alone, "who had given her the little child" (255). The structure of the fetish, the dialectic of avowal/disavowal, also underpins the good woman/bad woman divide and the tropes that stem from it. Thus we perceive that death and reproduction are nearly indistinguishable and that femininity is power, masculinity weakness. In an interview, Bara claims that "[t]he vampire that I play is the vengeance of my sex upon its exploiters" (quoted in Staiger 160), a notion shared by these male-authored texts, whose concern about a simultaneously weak and too puissant femininity (good or bad) evidently marks an uneasy conscience. The 'castrated' woman is not, as we all know, as men would be if they were castrated—she's much, much more powerful but just as angry. And she wreaks her revenge through actual or parodic maternity, giving her male admirers the option either of death

by being feminized through detumescence or survival by being turned into ersatz mothers. Through the figures of the male survivors, in other words, it becomes clear that the logic of these texts is not merely to endow women with the missing phallus, but also to endow men with the missing womb.

Appendix

A fool there was and he made his prayer

(Even as you and I!)

To a rag and a bone and a hank of hair

(We called her the woman who did not care),

But the fool he called her his lady fair

(Even as you and I!)

Oh the years we waste and the tears we waste

And the work of our head and hand

Belong to the woman who did not know

(And now we know that she never could know)

And did not understand.

A fool there was and his goods he spent

(Even as you and I!)

Honor and faith and a sure intent

(And it was n't the least what the lady meant),

But a fool must follow his natural bent

(Even as you and I!)

Oh the toil we lost and the spoil we lost

And the excellent things we planned

Belong to the woman who didn't know why

(And now we know she never knew why)

And did not understand.

The fool was stripped to his foolish hide

(Even as you and I!)

Which she might have seen when she threw him aside—

(But it is n't on record the lady tried)

So some of him lived but the most of him died—

(Even as you and I!)

And it is n't the shame and it is n't the blame

That stings like a white-hot brand.

It's coming to know that she never knew why

(Seeing at last she could never know why)

And never could understand.

WORKS CITED

Auerbach, Nina. *Our Vampires, Ourselves*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995. Print.

Bara, Theda. "How I Became a Film Vampire: The Self-Revelations of a Moving-Picture Star." *Form* (June 1919): 715-27. Print.

Browne, Porter Emerson. *A Fool There Was*. New York: H. K. Fly, 1909. Print.

Denig, Lynde. "Vicissitudes of a Playwright—No. 4: Porter Emerson Browne." *Theatre* 22 (August 1915): 71, 93-94. Print.

Drawmer, Lois. "Sex, Death and Ecstasy: The Art of Transgression." *Vampires: Myths and Metaphors of Enduring Evil*. Ed. Carla T. Kungl. Oxford: Inter-Disciplinary P, 2003. 21-26. Web.

A Fool There Was. Dir. **Frank Powell**. Fox Film Company, 1915. Kino Video, 2002. DVD.

"A Fool There Was; No Doubt of That." Play review. *New York Times* 25 March 1909, 9:1. Print.

Freud, Sigmund. "Fetishism." *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* 21. Trans. James Strachey in collaboration with Anna

Freud. London: Hogart P and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1961. 149-57. Print.

———. "The Sexual Aberrations." *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Definitive edition 3, trans. and revised James Strachey. New York: Basic, 2000. 1-38. Print.

Higashi, Sumiko. *Virgins, Vamps, and Flappers: The American Silent Movie Heroine*. St. Albans: Eden Press Women's Publications, 1978. Print.

Irigaray, Luce. *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Trans. Catherine Porter. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1985. Print.

Kipling, Rudyard. "The Vampire." 1897. *Departmental Ditties, The Vampire, Etc*. New York: Doxey's, 1901. 154-55. Print.

Leibfred, Philip. "Kipling on Film." *Films in Review* no. 426 (January/February 1994): 28-35. Print.

Low, Mary C. "The Vampire: From a Woman's Point of View." *Bookman* 9 (March-August 1899): 61. Print.

Metz, Christian. *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*. Trans. Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster and Alfred Guzzetti.

Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982. Print.

"Red and White Roses" (synopsis). *Moving Picture World* 15 (8 March 1913): 144. Print.

Seymour-Smith, Martin. *Rudyard Kipling*. London: Macdonald, 1989. Print.

Staiger, Janet. *Bad Women: Regulating Sexuality in Early American Cinema*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1995. Print.

Stoker, Bram. *Dracula*. Oxford World's Classics. Ed. Maud Ellmann. New York: Oxford UP, 1998.

"The Vampire" (synopsis). *Moving Picture World* 7 (12 November 1910): 1127. Print.

"The Vampire of the Desert" (synopsis). *Moving Picture World* 15 (10 May 1913): 678. Print.

Williams, Linda. "When the Woman Looks." *Re-Vision: Essays in Feminist Film Criticism*. Ed. Mary Ann Doane, Patricia Mellencamp, and Linda Williams. Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1984. 83-99. Print.

SUMMARY

On one level, Rudyard Kipling's "The Vampire" (1897) and the works inspired by it, particularly Porter Emerson Browne's *A Fool There Was* (1909) and its 1915 film adaptation, dramatize anxieties surrounding the woman's superiority to male attempts at sexual domination. Freud's contemporaneous theories on fetishism provide insight into the imagery of female void and male depletion central to these texts; poem, novel, and film all emphasize symbolic castration. As phallic woman, the vamp wreaks her revenge through actual or parodic maternity, giving men the option either of death through detumescence or survival by being turned into ersatz mothers.

Anne Morey (1961) and **Claudia Nelson** (1960) teach in the English department at Texas A&M University. Dr. Morey is the author of *Hollywood Outsiders: The Adaptation of the Film Industry, 1913-1934* and the editor of *Twilight: Essays on Genre, Reception, and Adaptation* (Ashgate, forthcoming). Dr. Nelson's books include, most recently, *Precocious Children and Childish Adults: Age Inversion in Victorian Literature* (Johns Hopkins, forthcoming).

