Empowerment and vampire literature: an examination of female vampire characters as a cultural response to oppression

Pui Nam Chan

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DATE: November 29, 2017

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Empowerment and Vampire Literature: An Examination of Female Vampire Characters as a Cultural Response to Oppression

CHAN Pui Nam

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Philosophy

Principal Supervisor: Dr. Amy Lee Wai Sum

Hong Kong Baptist University

November 2017
DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis represents my own work which has been done after registration for the degree of MPhil at Hong Kong Baptist University, and has not been previously included in a thesis or dissertation submitted to this or any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualifications.

I have read the University’s current research ethics guidelines, and accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures in accordance with the University’s Committee on the Use of Human & Animal Subjects in Teaching and Research (HASC). I have attempted to identify all the risks related to this research that may arise in conducting this research, obtained the relevant ethical and/or safety approval (where applicable), and acknowledged my obligations and the rights of the participants.

Signature: __________________________

Date: November 2017
Abstract

Vampire and Vampirism have raised the interests of the public from 1700s. Vampire is being used as a lens to discuss social issues in the real world. However, it is seen that there are limited works discussing the situation of coloured communities. This project is to examine female vampire figures in select works and evaluate the extent to which those figures are able to represent an empowered image of women of colour. To achieve this aim, textual analysis will be used to examine classical vampire literature, such as Sheridan Le Fanu’s “Carmilla” (1872/2003), Mary E. Wilkins Freeman’s “Luella Miller” (1902/2014), Bram Stoker’s Dracula (2007), Anne O’Brien Rice’s Interview with the Vampire (1976/2010) and L. A. Banks’s Minion (2003). There will be interdisciplinary reading of the social situation and behavior of the colored alongside with textual analysis of Jewelle Gomez’s The Gilda Stories: A Novel (1991) and Octavia E. Butler’s Fledgling: A Novel (2005). I will conclude that vampire literature has the ability and potentiality to reflect social behavior and environment of the coloured, especially coloured women. The contribution of this thesis is to demonstrate that reflecting the situation of the coloured can be a new area for vampire literature to explore in the future development and evolution of vampire literature as a genre. This is also breakthrough to the function of vampire literature as a genre because on top of appearing as entertainment and reflection of society, vampire literature is able to serve social function to empower and enlighten readers by raising their awareness to social issues that people are used to neglect.
Acknowledgments

I still remember the day I came to the school for attending enrollment interview for the research degree programme. I arrived at the school half an hour earlier for I hurt my leg seriously. Every step that I walked was so painful that I could hardly bear and forget. Teachers who came for the interview were shocked when I was explaining the reasons for my hurt leg. As I was quite young when I applied for the programme, Prof. Eva Man asked if I can adjust myself to the lonely road of doing research. When I looked back, Prof. Man's question and my hurt leg are so inspirational because that day marked the beginning and the road of my research life.

Failures and pain are my friends in the past few years. I have to send my gratitude to Dr. Amy Wai Sum Lee who has been supporting me, giving me valuable advice and guidance in the past few years. Year 2013 was the darkest year of my life. It was Dr. Amy Lee who helped me to get through examinations. It was also Dr. Amy Lee who listened to me and allowed me to cry like a baby girl helplessly in her office. It was still Dr. Amy Lee who sent me emails and met me from time to time to soothe my fear and answer my questions regarding to the research. It was always Dr. Amy Lee who give me guidance and advice in the continuous reshaping
and restructuring of the framework of this research.

My gratitude also goes to Prof. Wong Kin Yuen and Dr. Amy Kit Sze Chan for their encouragement. Prof. Wong and Dr. Amy Chan are my teachers who always encourage me to pursue my dream in research. They enlightened me and told me there are choices to choose in my life so as to make it meaningful. During the past few years, they helped a lot in enriching my theoretical background by introducing me to read works from different scholars in reading club. They also offered me opportunities to teach so that I can affect others' life as what they did to me. Thank you very much for letting me to see my potentials and making my life meaningful.

I also have to thank my family and Angus Chow for their love, understanding and tolerance. Without them, I am sure I cannot get through difficulties in the past few years. Their support is so crucial that they ensure their presence when I am in need. When I need someone to share with, they are always here. When I cried on street like a psycho under the rain, they hugged me without any concerns. When I want to give up, they encourage me and respect my choice. When I do not want to be bothered, they keep silent. Thank you for your love and unconditional support.
Friends' support are always a force backing me up. I have to thank my friends for allowing me to be absent from countless gatherings because I have to stay home for doing research. From now on, we can stop talking about doing research but other things else. Special thanks has to be given to Miss Cheung and Cecilia Chan. Thank you for offering me professional training and advice when I experienced emotional instability in the past few years.
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Empowerment and Vampire Literature: An Examination of Female Vampire Characters as a Cultural Response to Oppression

Introduction

Vampires and vampirism have raised the interest of scholars and the public since the 1700s, as indicated by the amount of fiction, short stories, encyclopaedias, organisations, journals, articles, research and websites related to the topic. Most of this attention has focused on the characteristics and appearance of vampires. For example, a vampire is often considered an undead bloodsucker that wears a high-collar opera cape. Vampires have pale skin, long fingernails and bloody lips. They sleep in coffins during the daytime and come out only at night to inflict harm or procure blood. Likewise, dictionaries typically define vampires based largely on descriptions of their appearance and behaviour. The Oxford English Dictionary describes a vampire as ‘[a] preternatural being of a malignant nature (in the original and usual form of the belief, a reanimated corpse), supposed to seek nourishment, or do harm, by sucking the blood of sleeping persons; a man or woman

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Heiland (2004) observes that vampirism was the most intensely reported activity in the late 1600s to 1700s: ‘[b]y the 1750s, everyone who was anyone had written about the vampire craze; even such major figures as Rousseau and Voltaire felt obliged to enter into the discussion (though only to critique it – see Frayling 1991:30-1)’ (p. 106).
abnormally endowed with similar habits’. This study draws attention to the potentiality of vampires and discusses their different related characteristics.

Before vampire literature developed as a genre, it appeared in oral form in rural folklore culture and mythologies. *Lilith* is an evil character from Jewish folklore in Babylon and Assyria, and *Lamiai* and *Langsuyar* are characters from Greek and Malaysian folklore, respectively. The images and characteristics of vampires in different places or regions differ and are comprehensible only in those specific regions. This suggests that vampires have developed into different variants since ancient times.

In myth and folklore, vampires were usually used to explain incidents that were inexplicable at the time due to the limited development of science and technology, such as accidents that occurred during childbirth. Take *Pontianak* in Malaysian and Indonesian mythology as an example. *Pontianak* is similar to early manifestations of the vampire, such as *Estries* from Hebrew mythology and *Churel* from Hindu folklore, which portray vampires as female figures. *Pontianak* was used to explain the problems encountered during childbirth in ancient Malay. It was believed that *Pontianak* was a female vampire who died in childbirth.
Although *Pontianak* sometimes appeared as a beautiful woman who lured and seduced men, she also killed pregnant women and stole infants and foetuses for their virginal blood. People in ancient Malay associated the deaths of pregnant women and babies with *Pontianak*, saying that the deaths resulted from her jealousy. However, had the people in ancient Malay been more knowledgeable about science and technology, they would have known that there were many possible reasons for such deaths. Later on, people linked death-related incidents such as plagues, accidents, suicides and even the unexpected and sudden deaths of people or livestock to vampires. Vampires became considered a part of the supernatural world and were blamed for social incidents in the community, especially incidents that people feared and did not understand.

At the end of the eighteenth century, vampires emerged in the gothic literature, not only in myth and folklore, but also in poetry, drama and short stories, and attracted attention in social, cultural, literary and even academic areas. Based on historical and prototypical vampire figures such as Elizabeth Bathory and Vlad Tepes,

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2 Elizabeth Bathory was a Hungarian Countess.
3 Vlad Tepes was a fifteenth-century warlord, prince of Wallachia in Romania and the real Dracula. He was also a member of the Order of Dragon, a society dedicated to protecting Christianity from skeptics. This society was considered an underground society that started conspiratorial wars in opposition to the holy crusades. Vlad Tepes was also known as Vlad the Impaler for the cruel fashion in which he impaled his enemies during wars and his rule of Wallachia.
images of vampires became more concrete than in ancient times and were consolidated by various literary texts. Influenced by myths and folklore such as *Pontianak* in Malay, the vampires presented in literature were primarily female. Later, many vampire stories were written based on the historical figure of Vlad Tepes. Bram Stoker’s fiction novel *Dracula* is the most famous example. The titular protagonist of the novel became an iconic and stereotypical vampire figure as seen in the development of vampire image in the genre as a whole. Literary texts and even films were largely influenced by the classical vampire image of Dracula. The continuous publishing of vampire literature over the centuries highlights the enduring popularity of vampires. However, discussions of vampire literature have focused on portrayals of male rather than female vampire figures. For instance, Heiland (2004) illustrates that Ruthven, the male vampire in John Polidori’s *The Vampyre* (1819), serves as ‘a metaphor for the predatory nature of social institutions such as the government, the church, and the bourgeoisie had long been recognized’ (p. 106). Rather than using female vampire figures to discuss the social conflicts of the time, this classical vampire story offers a portrayal of Ruthven, a white male from a privileged class. Even when female vampire figures were included, they reflected the social behaviour of white females from privileged classes. For example, the female vampires in Clemence Dane’s *Regiment of*
Women (1917/1995)⁴ and Francis Brett Young’s White Ladies (1935)⁵ reflect their social environments and are used to discuss the social behaviour and issues of the white community, such as suffrage, activism, marriage and lesbianism.

As a literary genre, vampire literature serves to reflect the society and culture of its time. As such, vampire literature as a genre has transformed along with changes in time and context. In The Universal Vampire: Origins and Evolution of a Legend (2013a), Bordman and Doan investigate the reasons for the continual transformation and retransformation of vampire figures and conclude that vampire stories in the eighteenth century ‘constitute resistance to the dominant cultural norms of the time . . . [and] reflect the anxiety of Western European contact with Slavic, Turkish and other non-Western societies’ (pp. ix-x)⁶. Apart from reflecting anxieties towards non-Western European societies, vampire literature reflects other anxieties, desires and fantasies such as homosexuality, feminism and capitalism.

For example, by suggesting the sexual deviance of Dracula, Stoker made Dracula

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Dyer (2002) affirms Clemence Dane’s Regiment of Women (1915) and Francis Brett Young’s White Ladies (1935) as vampire literature by arguing that ’[t]hese are not vampire novels in the strictest sense of the term – there is no blood-sucking, no notions of being “un-dead”, none of the paraphernalia of the popular vampire tales, but the imagery describing the lesbian relationships in these novels is drawn from vampirism’ (p. 73).
‘all the more frightening’ for he ‘had his own anxieties over his [Stoker’s] homosexuality’ (Tichelaar, 2012, p. 233). In Anthony Trollope’s The Way We Live Now (1875)\(^7\), anxieties towards capitalism are shown metaphorically by portraying the vampire as the drainer of a prayer’s property.

In The Lure of the Vampire: Gender, Fiction and Fandom from Bram Stoker to Buffy (2005), Williamson agrees that ‘[t]hroughout the twentieth century, the depiction of the vampire becomes increasingly sympathetic and the fan culture surrounding vampire fiction becomes increasingly large’ (p. 28). Although the horrific elements of vampire literature are retained, twentieth-century vampire literature includes more fantasies, romantic and entertainment elements. The publication of works such as Stephenie Meyer’s Twilight saga (2008)\(^8\) and L. J. Smith’s The Vampire Diaries (2010)\(^9\) illustrates the transformation and extension of vampire literature into subgenres such as popular culture, youth culture, franchises and romance while broadening the target readers to include teenagers and children. Starting from the twentieth century, more female vampires have been portrayed in vampire literature than in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Furthermore,

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in addition to serious discussions about gender and political issues, vampire literature as a genre has expanded its capability to discuss more social and cultural issues. For instance, given the prevalence of consumerism in the twentieth century, vampire literature has a stronger connection to ‘consumer identity and identification that are most prominently developed in the metaphorical exchanges of the broader literary market’ (Piatti-Farnell, 2014, p. 7). This change of scope reveals that the aims of vampire literature have changed over time and within different cultural contexts. However, it is still difficult to find vampire literature that depicts vampire figures in response to the unique historical development of various minorities, such as “people of colour”\textsuperscript{10}.

Throughout its history and evolution as a genre, vampire literature has reflected ideologies, cultures, concerns, anxieties, desires and fantasies. Its areas of reflection have widened and broadened from personal anxieties to social awareness and consciousness, exemplified by its introduction of consumerism, capitalism and personal identity formation. Despite the presence of horrific and fearful elements, components such as sympathy, fandom and entertainment are becoming more important in the evolution of vampire literature as a genre. However, no matter

\textsuperscript{10} The utilization of the term “women of colour” will be explained in the next paragraph.
how and which type of vampire literature develops as a genre, its transformation is influenced by environmental, social, cultural and historical changes in different times and cultural contexts.

The major aim of this study is to examine female vampire figures in selected works and evaluate the extent to which those figures are able to represent an empowered image of “women of colour”. Chai (1985) describes in the article ‘Toward a Holistic Paradigm for Asian American Women’s Studies: A Synthesis of Feminist Scholarship and Women of Color’s Feminist Politics’ that “women of colour”:

- consist of Native American, Hispanic, Black, Asian American and Pacific Island women who share the experience of struggle against many forms of oppression. These are women who face the historical and present day effects of racism, classism, white middle-class ethnocentric assumptions, ageism, disableism, and in some cases, homophobia (p. 59).

That means the essence of “women of colour” does not only and mainly lie in the geographical characteristic and origin of women. More importantly, it is the oppression they have been experiencing resulting from their historical oppression.

The reason for choosing “women of colour” for examination mainly is the double oppression women of colour experienced resulting from their race and gender. Because of this, “women of colour” in this thesis does not only superficially to the
skin colour of women, but also take into account of the historical and cultural oppression experienced by the targeted group. For the utilization of the term in the coming chapters, I frame “women of colour” as the group of women who are not Caucasian and are being oppressed or discriminated, and resulting in segregation because of their historical and cultural oppression.

To achieve the aim of this research, this study adopts two methodologies: textual analysis and an interdisciplinary reading of fictional texts and social environments in different times and contexts. This study is divided into four chapters. Chapter one serves as an introductory chapter. Chapter two details how the development of feminism and the concept “empowerment” can be helpful in reading the development of vampire genre as a whole. Chapter three is a textual analysis on vampire literature from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Chapter four adopts the strategy of interdisciplinary reading to summarise the different kinds of oppression found in the social situations of people of colour and map these social situations to several examples of vampire literature from the twentieth century.

In this study, I examine both vampire literature from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and vampire literature from the twentieth century compare their portrayals
of vampire characters and show that they differ in their choices of observed target
groups in their evolution as a genre. Based on the analysis of Sheridan Le Fanu’s
*Carmilla* (1872/2003), Mary E. Wilkins Freeman’s *Luella Miller* (1902/2014),
Stoker’s *Dracula* (2007) and Anne O’Brien Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire*
(1976/2010), I argue that vampire literature from the eighteenth and nineteenth
centuries portrays white female figures from privileged classes as powerless,
regardless of their human or vampire status. By looking at how the female
protagonist and female vampire being portrayed in L.A. Banks’s *Minion* (2003), in
spite of appearing to be powerful weapon, I argue that non-white and non-privileged
empowering female figures start to become a targeted group of portrayal in vampire
literature. To further the discussion, vampire literature from the twentieth century
such as Jewelle Gomez’s *The Gilda Stories: A Novel* (1991) and Octavia E. Butler’s
*Fledgling: A Novel* (2005) reveal the need to broaden the target observation group
to non-white and non-privileged communities and attempt to portray the women
from these communities as empowered figures. This study largely emphasises the
depiction of female vampire characters instead of vampire characters as a whole, as
both female vampire figures and non-white women suffer from two or even three
kinds of oppression. Vampires comprise a doubly oppressed group due to their
Otherness in a cultural context. The vampire figure is a unique figure that
constantly crosses boundaries, such as the human/ monster, dead/ undead and moral/ immoral boundaries. This makes the vampire figure different from a human, and writers have used its Otherness as a lens to reflect and discuss human anxiety and desire in the vampire literature.

In terms of race and gender, female vampire figures and especially female vampires of colour are triply oppressed compared with male vampire figures. For example, as a black-skinned young female vampire, the character Shori in Butler’s *Fledgling: A Novel* (2005) is triply oppressed. She is considered as Other in the Ina community due to her black skin. Although Shori’s skin colour allows her to walk about during the day, some of the traditional Ina families neither consider her pure nor ability as a blessing and a form of evolution. Instead, they see Shori as the Other, attributing her black skin to a genetic experiment that combined human and Ina genes. Shori’s young age is another cause of her oppression in the Ina community. Given that vampires are seen as Other in the human world, Shori is indeed a triply oppressed character who is being discriminated, oppressed and segregated from the Ina group for purely her background and experience. However, the fictional Shori experiences a different form of oppression from black women in the real world. Although Shori’s oppression is the result of genetic
engineering, black women experience oppression as a result of racism. However, both black women and Shori are similar in that they are seen as the Other even in their own communities and are being segregated from their own communities. In this sense, the empowerment of Shori may present a powerful and inspiring portrayal that allows black women to consider how to fight for their rights from their unique position and identity. Considering female vampire figures as the Other in their novels allows writers to navigate the real-world oppression and discrimination of women of colour.

In this introductory chapter, I summarise the development of vampire literature as a genre and point out the components, patterns and aims of some of the vampire literature from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I also present my rationale of selection of texts in chapters three and four and reasons for analysing female vampire figures. In order to link the analysis of female vampire figures and oppression experienced by “women of colour”, I define my utilization of the term “women of colour” and point out the similarities between female vampire figures and “women of colour”. Lastly, the introduction also details the methodology and scope of my research.
In chapter two, I describe the development of feminism, especially second wave feminism and its significance in the reading of the selected texts in chapter three in details. I also explain my reasons for using ‘empowerment’ as a framework for this study. I then summarise how I define and use the term ‘empowerment’ in different contexts and draw readers’ attention to the discussion of independence, autonomy, awareness, consciousness, freedom of choice, freedom of speech and actions taken within the concept of ‘empowerment’ in the various chapters. Finally, I point out the significance of this study as it relates to the evolution of vampire literature as a genre.

In chapter three, I highlight the insensitivity of the vampire literature from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. My target of analysis is the representation of female vampire figures. I argue that the representation of these figures as victims of the patriarchal system is common in the vampire literature from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although female vampire figures should be more capable than humans, they have a tendency to be portrayed as voiceless and helpless characters who lack awareness and consciousness. Comprehensiveness is another insensitivity of the vampire literature from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Female vampire figures are rarely mentioned in discussions of the issues of women
outside the white and privileged classes. The oppression and discrimination of
women from different cultural backgrounds and classes tend to be ignored in such
discussions.

Chapter four focuses on the vampire literature from the twentieth century and
argues that it is able to depict and reflect the oppression of people of colour by
portraying female vampires as empowered women to a certain extent. To achieve
this aim, I apply my analysis of the social environments of people of colour in terms
of slavery, sexual violence, awareness and consciousness to the settings, character
development and plots of selected literary works with vampire from the twentieth
century and argue that writers are aware of real-world social situations to a certain
extent and deliberately include them as elements in their novels.

In the conclusion, I recall readers’ attention to the framework of the study. I
reinforce the argument that the writers of the selected contemporary vampire
literature are able to present female vampires as empowered images of women to a
certain extent. However, these texts are not and cannot wholly reflect the social
situations, environments, discrimination and oppression experienced by people of
colour as they are, after all, fictional rather than documentary works. However, I
argue that these writers’ attempts to depict female vampires as empowered images of women should be appreciated and represent a breakthrough in the development of vampire literature as a genre. By revealing the breakthrough, this research is contributing to vampire literature as a genre for pinpointing that it is a possible channel for writers to express their concerns with and explore the oppression of “women of colour”.
Chapter Two: Development of Second Wave Feminism and Empowerment

Chapter one introduces the adaptation of textual analysis and interdisciplinary reading as the methodologies in this study. This chapter is to deploy the development of feminism, especially the second wave feminism, and its significance to the reading of texts with the use of “empowerment” as a lens to examine the selected cases studies in chapter three. In chapter three, various texts will be analysed to support the argument that the empowered images of women found in the vampire literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are not comprehensive. Authors of vampire literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries tend to discuss issues associated with the white middle-class community, which is also the target group of second-wave feminism. However, these authors fail to comprehensively present the key themes of third-wave feminism in their works. Neglecting major themes of third-wave feminism is definitely a defect when advocating or introducing feminism in fictional works, as second-wave feminism neglects race and class in the gender discussion. The intersection of gender, class and race must be acknowledged to improve our understanding of the oppression of women in different contexts. As such, in the coming chapters, I make the preceding argument to differentiate how writers make use of fictional
vampire figures to highlight the situations and oppression of women of colour in different social environments. Therefore, this chapter is a bridging chapter that begins by outlining the problem of second-wave feminism and the rise of third-wave feminism.

The Problem of Second-Wave Feminism

Second-wave feminism began in the United States in the 1960s, a post-war period that saw unprecedented economic growth and a baby boom that resulted in the creation of the nuclear family as a common family structure. Under the nuclear family structure, women fell into a patriarchal system in which they were made responsible for housecleaning, raising children and caring for their husbands and men were made responsible for breadwinning. In response to the patriarchal norm, Simone de Beauvoir (1973) suggests that women are seen as an absolute Other and expresses her ideal notion of equality between men and women in the future in her book *The Second Sex*. De Beauvoir wishes for a future in which females are liberated in terms of education, sex and sexuality, marriage, pregnancy and motherhood, the legal system and position in the workplace. Considering the notion of woman, de Beauvoir suggests that ‘one is not born, but rather becomes, a

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woman’. This assertion infers that the notion of ‘woman’ is culturally and socially established and imposed on females. It identifies the difference between sex and gender and the biological and cultural differences between males and females and implies that the identity construction of gender in society is problematic. De Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* inspired various feminist thinkers such as Betty Friedan, Shulamith Firestone, bell hooks and Judith Butler to develop their feminists theories. Inspired by *The Second Sex*, Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. This influential and popular book marked the beginning of second-wave feminism in the United States and is still in print. Friedan (1963)\(^{12}\) discusses the oppression and situation of housewives from the perspectives of psychology, media studies and advertising. She argues that women should liberate themselves and overcome their fears to pursue education and careers. Instead of devoting themselves wholly to the family, women should develop their careers for the sake of their mental health. Both of the mentioned books hold that second-wave feminism focuses on the roles, rights and choices of women as they relate to the family, childbearing, education and the workplace. To continue discussing the assertion that ‘one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman’, Butler (1990)\(^{13}\) illustrates the relationship between

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gender and identity construction based on ‘gender performativity’ theory in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Supporting the view of de Beauvoir, gender performativity theory outlines the importance of cultural factors to female gender construction. The patriarchal system and ideologies shape one’s ideas of man and woman. To conform to the norm and gain the identity of and become a woman, one must perform according to the idea of woman shaped under the patriarchal system. However, such second-wave feminist theory – the three classical writings of de Beauvoir, Friedan and Butler, and the works of famous feminists such as Luce Irigaray’s *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974/1985a)\(^{14}\) and *This Sex Which is Not One* (1977/1985b)\(^{15}\) and Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex: The case for Feminist Revolution* (1970)\(^{16}\) – have been accused of excluding lower-class women and women of colour from their major discussions. For example, although Margaret A. Simmons (2001)\(^ {17}\) comments that de Beauvoir’s ‘treatment of women’s experiences in other cultures is cursory, and her generalizations appear hasty and ethnocentric’ (p. 33), she also comments that the discussion of racism in Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for

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*Feminist Revolution* (1970) is unsatisfactory because ‘[i]n her [Firestone’s] reduction of racism to sexism, she [Firestone] relies upon an overextended and distorted metaphor of the “Family of Man.” Her [Firestone’s] discussion is marked by racist stereotypes and an insensitivity to the oppression of black women’ (p. 33). By pointing out the incomprehensiveness of second-wave feminist theory, Simmons (2001) affirms the following:

Too often in the past, white feminists have seemed reluctant to listen to minority women without censure . . . Feminist ideology has generally failed to reflect the experiences of women in other cultures . . . White feminists should recognise the right of minority women to articulate a politics based on their own experiences. (p. 38)

Simmons acknowledges that second-wave feminism is too general to represent women as a whole, including women in different locations and cultures. Winifred Breines also confirms in *The Trouble Between Us: An Uneasy History of White and Black Women in the Feminist Movement* (2006) that ‘[u]ndoubtedly, the issue of feminist racism is unfamiliar to most people, who identity the women’s movement as being about gender, not race . . . And for most of those years, black women rejected and attacked the feminist movement as racist’ (pp. 6-7). This overgeneralisation of race indeed conflicts with the aims of second-wave feminism
and feminism as a whole. Regardless of the branch of feminism one supports, feminism aims to liberate females who are being oppressed in the patriarchal dichotomy. However, disregarding women of colour and lower-class women definitely indicates a failure to liberate a group or some groups of women from that oppression. Thinking about it in another way, the act of excluding women of colour or lower-class women is indeed another form of oppression to these groups of women, as their rights to fight for equality are exploited by white middle-class women. Viewing the situation from the privileged position today, the lack of attention paid to women of colour and lower-class women means that second-wave feminists overlook the differences between women while celebrating only the differences between men and women. This not only highlights the hypocrisy of second-wave feminism, but also creates another set of power relations and hierarchy in society, violating the aims of feminism in general. Race and class are essential factors in the discussion of feminism.

As explained in chapter one, one of the functions of vampire literature is to act as a mirror to reflect ideologies prevailed in a particular time. The discussion of the development of feminism therefore is significant in reading vampire literature.

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18 In the set of power relations and hierarchy created, white middle-class women enjoy a relatively higher position than women of colour and lower-class women.
because a parallel structure is found alongside with the historical and cultural development of second wave and third wave feminism, and the development of vampire literature as a genre simultaneously. Second wave feminism advocates the rights and needs for empowerment of white women of privileged classes. Simultaneously, when putting these advocates as a lens into the reading of selected texts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, similar ideologies can be spotted and reflected as explained in chapter three.

**The Rise of Third-Wave Feminism**

In response to the problems in second-wave feminism, Rebecca Walker coined the term ‘third-wave feminism’ in 1992 in an article titled ‘Becoming the Third Wave’\(^\text{19}\). Walker’s work reminds women with a very different approach from the second wavers, like those in media and popular culture, that we enter a post-feminism era when ‘[t]hird wave feminists are motivated by the need to develop a feminist theory and politics that honor contradictory (personal) experiences and deconstruct categorical thinking’ (Richard, 2008, p. 40). In *Third Wave Feminism: A Critical Exploration Expanded Second Edition* (2007), Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie and Rebecca Munford agree with Naomi Wolf, Katie Roiphe and Rene Denfeld’s belief

that ‘the second wave feminism’s solutions would not allow them [women of colour] to navigate the complexities of their own lives (p. xv)’. All of these observations hint that third-wave feminists provide a much larger flexibility and space for the discussion of feminism because they are able to take care of females with different historical and cultural backgrounds in a way that addresses the complexities of the lives of women of colour in different classes. These complexities hint at the need to include race and class in the discussion of gender. In contrast to the second wavers, the third wavers respect the differences between women from all backgrounds and embrace complexities, personal experiences and sisterhood to address the oppressions they face daily where class, race and gender intersect.

The rise of third-wave feminism indicates the need of women of colour in different classes to deal with the complexity in their lives. It also indicates the uniqueness of the historical development and daily lives of women of colour in different classes. To understand the oppression of these women, we must know the history of people of colour in the white community.

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To continue the discussion of the parallel development of feminism and vampire literature as a genre, it is observed that the key ideologies and advocates of the third wave feminism have been inserted and embedded in works in the twentieth century. As will be shown in chapter four, once the selected case studies are reviewed with the advocates of the third wave feminism, it is found that writers in the twentieth century start to be aware of the necessity of embracing differences among women in the world. Differences in and intersections among class, race, gender were embedded into selected texts for further exploration of the vampire literature genre as a whole.

In order to demonstrate the parallel development between feminism and vampire literature as a genre explicitly, this study adopts two methodologies: textual analysis and an interdisciplinary reading of fictional texts and social environments in different times and contexts under an ‘empowerment’ framework. Empowerment functions as the conceptual framework of this study because it is ‘an essential starting point and a continuing process for realizing the ideals of human liberation and freedom for all’ (Sahay, 1998, p. 10). In *Women and Empowerment: Approaches and Strategies* (1998), Sahay also affirms the importance of empowerment as follows:
Empowerment of women has multiple benefits not only for the environment but also for humanity as well . . . [because empowerment] is the central and powerful force in the search for a safe environment, economic and social justice, adequate reallocation of resources, the survival of all species and the common goal of a healthy planet in which future generation can flourish. (p. 11)

Sahay’s affirmation reveals that the consequences of empowerment are not limited to power gain of individuals. Rather, the consequences can be seen in different levels and sectors in society. As a result, empowerment theory is applied in various sectors in society, such as business and organisation management (Huq, 2015; Potterfield, 1999; Ginnodo, 1997), psychology (Rappaport and Seidman, 2000; Prilleltensky, 1994) and social work (Turner, 2011; Lee, 2001). As empowerment theory is applicable to many contexts, there are different approaches to defining empowerment, such as via practices and methods.

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Perkins and Zimmerman summarized and pinpointed in the article “Empowerment Theory, Research and Application that the different approaches to defining empowerment share the common idea in which empowerment is ‘an intentional on-going process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources’ (Cornell Empowerment Group, 1989; as quoted in Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995, p. 570). In this study, I modify Perkins and Zimmerman’s approach to defining empowerment. I consider empowerment as a process adopted by the oppressed and especially people of colour (‘people lacking an equal share of valued resources’ in Perkins and Zimmerman’s terms) to regain their power over their lives and fight for equality and justice in a multiracial community. This resonates with Perkins and Zimmerman’s notion that empowerment is an ‘intentional on-going process centered in the local community’ and requires ‘group participation’. To be empowered, one must be aware and conscious of the oppression and discrimination he or she suffers by developing an independent and autonomous identity. Perkins and Zimmerman refer to this as ‘critical reflection’. One is also required to be aware of and respect his or her own freedoms of speech and choice in addition to

those of others, which relates to Perkins and Zimmerman’s ideas of ‘mutual respect’ and ‘caring’.

In chapter three, I conduct a textual analysis to point out the insensitivity of the classical vampire literature in terms of its depiction of the oppression and discrimination of women. My analytical targets are the female vampire figures in the selected texts. In the first part of the chapter, I subject Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (1872/2003) to textual analysis to investigate its female characters with a focus on protection, sexuality and empowerment. I also examine female vampire characters such as Luella Miller in Freeman’s *Luella Miller* (1902/2014) and the three ‘sisters’ of Count Dracula in Stoker’s *Dracula* (2007). Via textual analysis, I argue that the two female vampire figures lack self-consciousness and conform to gender roles under a patriarchal system. I also assess the portrayal of Claudia in Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* (1976/2010) to argue that she is an object for manipulation. Although Rice attempts to show Claudia’s awareness and consciousness in the plot, Claudia is not empowered, for she fails to obtain autonomy in her life. In L.A. Banks’s *Minion* (2003), I pinpoint the evolution of the vampire genre by arguing that despite the presence of a conventional voiceless female vampire with no awareness, consciousness and autonomy, Banks
deliberately designes a coloured vampire huntress as an empowering figure who attempts to give her voice, gain awareness and consciousness and learn to use her intrinsic power.

To examine the ability of vampire literature to illustrate social situations and issues of people and especially women of colour, I adopt an interdisciplinary reading approach in chapter four. I evaluate the extent of Gomez’s *The Gilda Stories: A Novel* (1991) and Butler’s *Fledgling: A Novel* (2005) in terms of their portrayals of empowered women and ability to raise the awareness of their characters and readers alongside with the social environments highlighted in the same chapter. Similar to chapter three, chapter four is divided into three sections. Although Gomez and Butler do not discuss the suffering of slaves and sexual violence in *The Gilda Stories: A Novel* (1991) and *Fledgling: A Novel* (2005) in depth, they exhibit an awareness of the presence of oppression. Indeed, the two authors attempt to raise readers’ awareness and consciousness of the oppression of people of colour by portraying Gilda and Shori, their two respective female vampire figures, and other female characters as empowered women.
This study addresses vampire literature as a genre along with its writing patterns and social functions. It shows that the novels of Gomez and Butler successfully set examples for designing female vampire characters as protagonists while conveying the message that women of colour should and can have the power and ability to be empowered. Apart from their writing patterns, these authors contribute to the re-reading of vampire literature by providing it with an alternative social function. In addition to serving functions of leisure, entertainment and fandom, these novels successfully offer a platform for discussing social issues. This study demonstrates the possibilities for discussing the future evolution of vampire literature.
Chapter Three: Vampire Literature in the Eighteenth to Nineteenth Centuries: Women as Powerless Objects

This chapter aims to identify the insensitivities of the classical vampire literature in terms of its presentation of empowered women. This examination focuses on female vampire figures in the selected literature. The analysis addresses how the authors of the selected literature present female vampires in their work, and demonstrates that the classical vampire literature has not present an empowered image of women. The chapter begins by analysing Carmilla and other female figures from Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (1872/2003). Attention is then drawn to Luella and the three sisters of Count Dracula in Mary E. Wilkins Freeman’s *Luella Miller* (1902/2014) and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (2007), respectively. The focus of the chapter then shifts to Claudia from Anne O’Brien Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* (1976/2010). The chapter concludes with an examination of the nameless female vampire figure, Damali Richards and Marlene in L.A. Banks’s *Minion* (2003).
Female images in *Carmilla* (1872/2003) communicate a need for protection. In the story, both Carmilla and Millarca are left to be supervised by men in a similar way. After Carmilla’s mysterious mother mentions the difficulties of bringing Carmilla with her, Laura’s father, a retired wealthy English widower, offers to help take care of Carmilla:

> If Madame will entrust her child [Carmilla] to the care of my daughter [Laura], and of her good gouvernante, Madame Perrodon, and permit her to remain as our guest, under my charge, until her return, it will confer a distinction and an obligation upon us, and we shall treat her with all the care and devotion which so sacred a trust deserves. (Le Fanu, 2003, p. 96)

The help offered by Laura’s father implies more than a simple courtesy. Rather, it is a display of male power. The use of words such as ‘under my charge’ and ‘an obligation upon us’ imply a man’s power over a woman, as the words ‘charge’ and ‘obligation’ indicate that someone has the responsibility and right to take any action.

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29 Male power refers to a conceptual and stereotypical thinking that men are more powerful and capable than women in terms of offering protection.
to ensure that a situation is under control. In this situation, it is Laura’s father who has the responsibility and right to take any action to ensure Carmilla’s safety under his supervision. Therefore, the offer of care for Carmilla can also be seen as a symbol of male power over a woman, as Carmilla is not considered capable of taking care of herself.

Apart from this, the help that Laura’s father offers suggests that Carmilla is in need of protection. Although it would be reasonable for one to offer help to take care of a young girl injured in a carriage accident, both his action of offering help and his words suggest that women are incapable of self-defence. It is not the action of offering help that matters, but the reasons for and gestures when offering help. If the reasons and gesture imply seeing the recipient as a weak character, the offered help is only a demonstration of power over others. Although Carmilla’s mother cannot bring her daughter with her due to a life-and-death issue, she asks whether there is a village nearby where she can leave Carmilla until she returns. The help offered by Laura’s father indicates that he considers his protection superior to the decision made by Carmilla’s mother. Laura’s father obviously believes that Carmilla’s mother has no ability to protect Carmilla. In this way, both Carmilla and her mother present weak images of females who require help from men.
Millarca and her enigmatic mother present a similar situation. Millarca’s mother convinces General Spielsdorf to take Millarca with him and her daughter, Bertha, so that she can be left alone to deal with a secret matter. Similar to Carmilla’s situation, General Spielsdorf takes Millarca with him. Same as the previous example, Millarca and her mother also present images of females who require protection from men.

The vampire Mircalla, Countess Karnstein\textsuperscript{30}, is another female figure who requires a man’s protection. Before becoming a vampire, Countess Karnstein has a romantic relationship with Vordenburg, a heroic vampire hunter. To protect Countess Karnstein from being hunted, Vordenburg hides her tomb in a secret location. Although the author does not mention how this action helps to protect Countess Karnstein, it is obvious that if her tomb were not hidden, General Spielsdorf would have eliminated the vampire Mircalla. This would have prevented Carmilla from appearing and having the chance to meet Laura and her father. Therefore, Vordenburg’s action protects the vampire Mircalla, Countess Karnstein, by prolonging her life.

\textsuperscript{30} The vampire Mircalla, Countess Karnstein, is also Millarca and Carmilla.
The vampire Mircalla, Countess Karnstein, Millarca and Carmilla are not empowered images of women. Millarca and Carmilla ask for help from men as a way to stay with the humans. Even the vampire Mircalla, Countess Karnstein, must rely on male protection to prolong her life as a vampire. All these clearly show the stereotypical images of men and women in the story: men are heroes and protectors, and women are not capable of protecting themselves. As such, it is reasonable to believe that Le Fanu shows these stereotypical images that are unfair to women and consolidates them in the story.

Scholars such as Cooper (2010)\textsuperscript{31}, Williamson (2005)\textsuperscript{32} and Auerbach (1995)\textsuperscript{33} regard the story of Carmilla as a lesbian vampire story. Twitchell affirms in \textit{The Living Dead: A Study of the Vampire on Romantic Literature} (1981) that ‘Carmilla, like \textit{Christabel}, is the story of a lesbian entanglement, a story of the sterile love of homosexuality expressed through the analogy of vampirism’ (p. 129). Cooper suggests in \textit{Gothic Realities: The Impact of Horror Fiction on Modern Culture} (2010) that Carmilla’s sucking of blood from female victims is a kind of ‘penetrating sameness’ (p. 71) and that an ‘erotic mode of reproduction draws still

closer to the pathological reproduction eventually associated with homosexuality’ (Cooper, 2010, pp. 71-72). Although *Carmilla* (1872/2003) is recognised as a lesbian vampire story, I argue that Le Fanu does not present Carmilla as an empowered woman.

Despite Carmilla’s identity as a lesbian vampire, Le Fanu depicts lesbian love as destructive. After being bitten by Carmilla, Laura recalls the change in her physical body: ‘I [Laura] had grown pale, my eyes were dilated and darkened underneath, and the languor which I had long felt began to display itself in my countenance’ (Le Fanu, 2003, p. 119). Similar to Laura, Bertha experiences a decline in health after being bitten by Millarca. Richard Dyer characterises a vampire’s bite as sexual behaviour in the article “Children of the Night: Vampirism as Homosexuality, Homosexuality as Vampirism” in Susannah Radstone’s *Sweet Dreams: Sexuality, Gender and Popular Fiction* (1988):

Even when the writing does not seem to emphasize the sexual, the act [of biting] itself is so like a sexual act that is seems almost perverse not to see it as one. Biting itself is after all part of the repertoire of sexual act; call it a kiss, and, when it is as deep a kiss as this, it is a sexual act. (p. 55)
As biting and blood sucking are metaphors for sexual behaviour, Laura and Bertha’s decline in health indicates that intimate relationships between vampires and humans consume the human body. Le Fanu seemingly suggests that lesbian love is destructive and may cause harm to the people involved. Instead of vindicating homosexuality, this portrayal is believed to consolidate misunderstandings of homosexuality.

Homosexuality is neither accepted nor supported in the story. In response to the harm caused by the biting of Carmilla, Cooper (2010) argues that the negative portrayal of the intimate behaviour of Carmilla, Laura and Bertha indeed ‘resembles the concept involved in the twentieth-century term “homophobia”’ (p. 74). In addition to the harm caused, referring to intimate actions between female vampires and female humans as ‘terrible’ and ‘dreadful dreams’ and linking the ‘dreams’ with ‘horror’ and ‘fear’ constitute negative portrayals of the intimate behaviour of women. These negative portrayals hint that homosexual behaviour is neither pleasant nor enjoyable from the perspective of either the people involved or the storyteller. This linking of homosexual behaviour with fear and horror further supports Cooper’s argument. The story’s depiction of homosexuality as an unpleasant relationship and portrayal of intimate actions in the form of dreams
significantly highlights the concept of homophobia. If we see dreams as
projection of our desires and subconscious, then attributing intimate actions to
dreams can be seen as an effort to escape from reality, especially when the dreams
are terrible, fearful and dreadful. In this way, intimate relationships are something
the dreamer does not want to admit to consciously desiring. It is reasonable to
interpret that portraying intimate actions in the forms of dreams is also an
expression of homophobia. Therefore, one can assume that Le Fanu also hints at
homophobia by noting that homosexuality is neither accepted nor welcomed by the
public in *Carmilla* (1872/2003).

The hunting of Carmilla/ Millarca/ Mircalla is a symbolic attempt to eliminate
homosexual relationships. Although there are no ‘victims’ to ask for or actively
communicate the need to hunt Carmilla/ Millarca/ Mircalla, the figures are hunted
and eliminated at the end of the story. Furthermore, there are two attempts at
hunting Carmilla/ Millarca/ Mircalla, motivated and practised by male characters
in the story. Men intervene in the homosexual relationships between Carmilla/
Millarca/ Mircalla and Laura and Bertha. The women involved in these
homosexual relationships have no chance to speak for themselves, express their
opinion on the hunt or stop it at any time. This suggests that women’s wills,
thoughts and choices in the story are neither respected nor considered important. It also symbolically illustrates heterosexuals’ rejection of homosexuality.

Through the two attempts at hunting Carmilla, Millarca or Mircalla, Sheridan Le Fanu accentuates the double discrimination of females and female same-sex relationships in *Carmilla* (1872/2003).

Le Fanu’s female characters, whether vampire or human, are not empowered images because they are depicted as silent victims whose sexuality, wills, thoughts and freedom of choice are disrespected. These female characters are incapable of protecting either themselves or the people around them. They need to be protected by men, who offer help to take care of their children or eliminate vampires to ensure their health. Although Le Fanu discusses homosexuality in the story by addressing that it is neither welcomed nor accepted by the public, the hunting of lesbian vampires in *Carmilla* (1872/2003) hints that homosexuals fail to eliminate discrimination against their homosexuality. Finally, although Le Fanu attempts to bring the discussion of homosexuality to the public, he fails to project the situation of people of colour in response to the issue. Therefore, Carmilla, Millarca and Mircalla are not comprehensive empowered images in *Carmilla* (1872/2003).
Mary E. Wilkins Freeman’s *Luella Miller* (1902/ 2014) and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (2007): Lack of Self-Consciousness and Gender Roles

In Mary E. Wilkins Freeman’s *Luella Miller* (1902/ 2014), there are no empowered characters, regardless of gender. Although Luella Miller is the only vampire in the story, her identity as a vampire does not create any privilege in her life. Rather, she is a victim who is dependent on others and lacks self-consciousness. Indeed, Luella Miller appears as one of the weakest characters in the story. She is married, always helpless, pitiful and unable to take care of herself:

“I never made the coffee in all my life,” says she, dreadfully astonished. “Erastus [Luella Miller’s husband] always made the coffee as long as he lived, and then Lily [Erastus’s sister] she made it, and then Aunt Abby made it. I don’t believe I CAN make the coffee, Miss Anderson.” (Freeman, 2014, p. 62)

Luella portrays herself as unable to take care of herself in daily life. She must rely on others, and her dependence results in her lack of motivation to take care of herself. Although her appearance of ‘helplessness’ encourages others to help her, it is not a real empowerment because her overdependence on others results in the loss of her ability to support herself.
Similar to the titular character in *Luella Miller* (1902/ 2014), the three sisters of Count Dracula in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (2007) are dependent female vampires who must rely on Count Dracula for survival:

> “Are we to have nothing tonight?” said one of them [the three ‘sisters’ of Dracula], with a low laugh, as she pointed to the bag which he [Count Dracula] had thrown upon the floor, and which moved as though there were some living thing within it. For answer he nodded his head. One of the women jumped forward and opened it. (p. 60)

The question asked in the preceding passage shows that it is Count Dracula who feeds all of his sisters’ with food or blood every night. It seems that if he did not do so, the sisters would be unable to feed themselves. One may argue that the sisters attempt to feed themselves with Johnathan Harker’s blood. However, if not for Count Dracula’s agreement, Johnathan Harker would be unable to enter the castle and thus meet the three sisters. Therefore, like the titular character in *Luella Miller* (1902/ 2014), the three female vampires in *Dracula* (2007) must depend on a third party for survival. Although there is no sign in the story that the motivations for empowerment of the three sisters are obstructed due to their dependence on Count Dracula, the story does not mention what the three sisters think about their living state. They do not acknowledge that Count Dracula
exploits their ability to take control of their lives. They are simply dependent and serve the function of enticing his victims. This is sufficient to prove that Stoker does not present the three sisters as empowered images of women in the novel.

Luella Miller is made to be a victim to introduce the issues of gender roles and the domestication of women. Freeman presents most of the female characters in the story with very few alternatives to construct their identities, regardless of their consciousness of their empowerment. Most of the female characters in *Luella Miller* (1902/2014) such as Miss Anderson, Lily Erastus, Aunt Abby Mixter and Maria Brown are house workers. They are kind and good at doing housework and taking care of those in need, such as Luella Miller. Although Luella Miller is a headmistress, the story contains almost no description of her work and the development of her career. Luella Miller does not mention any of her plans or job ambitions, nor do any of the other female characters express their thoughts about developing their own careers. Instead, Freeman emphatically depicts Luella Miller as a beautiful, innocent and helpless creature. Barbara Patrick argues in *Brown* (1995) that ‘[t]he women of this world “find themselves” either by throwing themselves into the work allowed then (keeping of the house) or falling into the
other role allowed them (that of the beautiful but helpless female)’ (p. 77).34 This explains the emphasis placed on domestic work in the story. Freeman seems to address the social problem that women's roles are limited to family matters rather than career development according to their wills. The women in the story have no autonomy in planning their lives, but instead conform to the gender role that society gives to them.

Luella Miller’s inability to deal with housework also confirms that society expects women to stay home and take care of housework:

“Why don’t she [Maria Brown, a neighbour to Luella Miller] stay home and do her washin’ instead of comin’ over here and doin’ YOUR [Luella Miller’s] work, when you are just as well able, and enough sight more so, than she is to do it?” (Freeman, 2014, p. 66)

Miss Anderson’s accusation of Luella Miller supports the idea that women should take responsibility to deal with housework at home. The character says that Maria Brown has ‘her washing’ to do while it is ‘YOUR’ [Luella Miller’s] job to finish the chores at Luella’s place. Miss Anderson seemingly challenges Luella Miller’s

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inability to do housework, believing she should be able to do so and take on the responsibility. More than a vindication of Maria’s help, Miss Anderson’s accusation implies that every woman should take on the responsibility of doing housework at her own home. It is clear that Freeman captures the domestication of women in *Luella Miller* (1902/2014) via her portrayals of female characters.

As a vampire who lives under domestication, Luella Miller fails to empower herself because she can only exploit others, such as her husband, Lily, Aunt Abby and Maria Brown. This exploitation of others is the consequence of Luella Miller incorrectly exercising her power as a vampire. In response to Miss Anderson’s accusations of not doing the housework herself, ‘[s]he [Luella Miller] sort of laughed as innocent as you please. “Oh, I [Luella Miller] can’t do the work myself, Miss Anderson,” says she [Luella Miller]. “I never did. Maria HAS to do it”’ (Freeman, 2014, p. 66). Luella Miller laughs because she thinks Miss Anderson’s accusation is nonsense. Luella Miller does not have to do the work because her power as a vampire allows her to get others to do the work for her. Maria must do the work for Luella Miller, as she is under the influence of the vampire’s power. Indeed, she has no ability to reject Luella Miller’s request. Therefore, it is obvious that Luella Miller enjoys a superior status over her helpers or victims because she
uses her power to get them to act as she wishes. Although this indicates Luella Miller’s exploitation of Maria, it also explains why she has never done any housework. It supports Patrick’s argument in Julie Brown’s book *American Women Short Story Writers: A Collection of Critical Essays* (1995) that ‘Luella does no work because she is not trained for it, nor is it in her interest to work … [Luella Miller is] successful at getting others to do for her’ (p. 78).

Apart from getting others to do the housework for her, Luella Miller fails to define herself by using her power as a vampire to exploit others. In Brown (1995), Patrick comments that ‘[s]he [Luella Miller] seeks power in the world through manipulative behavior, the best means available to her’ (p. 78). It is arguable that using her power as a vampire to get others to do the domestic work for her is a way of fighting against domestication, as Luella Miller has no need to conform to the concept that women should be responsible for doing chores. Luella Miller is able to differentiate herself from others only when she has no need to do these chores. Although she can escape from doing the housework by exploiting others, she loses the ability to support herself as either a vampire or a human. Her exploitation of others affirms that she is a conspirator in a patriarchal system, as she internalises the patriarchal mentality of exploiting those less fortunate or privileged to serve her.
Luella Miller suffers from manipulative behaviour, and all of the characters who help her eventually die. In this way, Freeman may be expressing her objection to domestication and exploitation.

Although the three sisters in *Dracula* (2007) have no need to perform household chores in the castle, Count Dracula exploits them in another way. Similar to Luella Miller, the three sisters have never left home and indeed seem to be imprisoned in Count Dracula’s castle. In this way, the freedom of the three sisters is exploited. Not only can they not leave the castle, but the three sisters must also obey Count Dracula’s command.

“How dare you [the three ‘sisters’] touch him [Johnathan Harker], any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me! Beware how you meddle with him, or you’ll have to deal with me.” (Stoker, 2007, p. 60)

The preceding passage affirms that Count Dracula is in an authoritative position in his relationship to his sisters. The expression ‘Back, I tell you all!’ is an order rather than a request, and expressions such as ‘how dare you’ place the blame on the three sisters for disobeying Count Dracula’s command. Count Dracula also threatens the three sisters by inferring that there will be consequences if they
disobey and that they will have to ‘deal with’ him. The threat is significant in that it assumes the incapability of the three sisters to fight back. Count Dracula uses these tactics to establish his superior and authoritative position above the three sisters. Hence, although these three female vampires possess a more-than-human ability, they remain in a subordinate position to Count Dracula. The strong contrast in the statuses of Count Dracula and the three sisters highlights Stoker’s attempt to present the three sisters as passive and inferior.

In Freeman and Stoker’s stories, female vampires such as Luella Miller and the three sisters are always beautiful but passive. Although Luella Miller is not under anyone’s control, she is a prisoner like the three sisters in Dracula (2007), for she never leaves the house and fails to escape from domestication. Unlike the three sisters, who have no power to fight against Count Dracula, Luella Miller has the power to exploit others. However, exercising her power does not help her to develop her identity. Instead, her exploitation of and overdependence on others results in the loss of her autonomy and capability of supporting herself. Therefore, the female vampires in both Freeman and Stoker’s stories share the same oppressed status as many female characters depicted by writers in the same historical period.

Claudia is an object for manipulation in *Interview with the Vampire* (1976/2010). Rice portrays Claudia as a five-year-old female vampire in the novel, a decision that provides a lead into Claudia’s personal development. The vampire Lestat turns the young girl into a vampire to strengthen his relationship with the vampire Louis. In *Abject Terrors: Surveying the Modern and Postmodern Horror Film*, Magistrale (2005) offers the following comments on Lestat:

> He revels in the God-like power that attends his daily decision regarding which mortals are to live and which are to die. His appetite knows no bounds, and he is amoral to the point of making the child Claudia into a vampire to manipulate and preserve control over ‘the little family’ he has constructed with Louis. (p. 45)

Turning Claudia into a vampire gives Lestat control over Claudia and the ‘little family’. Furthermore, Lestat’s act of turning Claudia is manipulative, as it is not done for her sake but rather out of his own selfishness. Examining the reasons for turning Claudia into a vampire reveals that she is presented as an object for manipulation.
It is also apparent that Claudia’s way of life is being controlled and decided. As a five-year-old female vampire, she lives with her two ‘fathers’, the vampires Lestat and Louis, together like a family. According to Auberbach’s book *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (1995), ‘for Claudia who will always look like a doll, vampirism is no release from patriarchy, but a perpetuation of it until the end of time’ (p. 154). Living with the two patriarchs, Claudia has no option to make decisions about her own life. Even the way she dresses is a decision made by her two fathers. It is clear that Claudia lives under the supervision and control of her two fathers and therefore has only limited autonomy. Hence, she is depicted as an object for manipulation in her early vampire life.

To a certain extent, Claudia is an empowered image, as she exhibits consciousness and individual thinking. As a young female vampire, Claudia is highly educated and knowledgeable. Given the advantage of never growing old, she is able to endlessly enrich her knowledge by going to school and amassing life experience. Rice also presents Claudia as a strong character who has an independent identity, can think critically and dares to speak for herself. To communicate her longing for independence, she actively speaks up and requests a mini coffin for herself so that she will not have to sleep with her two fathers. Claudia also exhibits the right
and choice to rectify issues that make her unhappy. Rather than keeping her thoughts to herself, she chooses to deal with them actively by speaking up. Although her life is manipulated and restricted due to her age, she is not a passive but rather a partially empowered character. There are reasons to believe that Rice deploys Claudia as a female vampire who longs for an autonomous identity. Claudia’s hatred of Lestat provides a clue of her desire for autonomy. She is hostile to Lestat, who does not ask about Claudia’s willingness before turning her into a vampire. This act represents an exploitation of Claudia’s autonomy, as her will is disrespected. Claudia is not given the choice to live the life of either a human or a vampire. The exploitation of her right to choose implies that her autonomy is taken away. Hence, Claudia’s hatred of Lestat shows that she desires to live with the right to choose and be autonomous.

Claudia also expresses her desire to live autonomously by communicating her hatred of being a young vampire for the rest of her life. As Claudia becomes a vampire at the age of five, she can never grow into a physically mature woman. This presents an obstacle for her to live autonomously, as she cannot experience the life of a physically mature woman. Instead, trapped in a five-year-old girl’s body, she lives miserably like a prisoner. According to Browne and Hoppenstand’s The
Gothic World of Anne Rice (1996), Claudia is ‘a woman trapped in a child’s body, robbed of power, never knowing what it’s like to really be a woman and to make love’ (p. 21). She cannot pursue higher education, find a job or experience love by having affairs and relationships. Her chance of experiencing her own growth is taken away because her adult mind is trapped in a child’s body. The longer she lives as a vampire, the more she recognises that her physical body makes her unable to experience her life autonomously and comprehensively. Therefore, Rice’s choice to put Claudia into a five-year-old body symbolically limits her character’s chances at independence. Rice seems to agree with Browne and Hoppenstand’s (1996) point that ‘[s]he [Claudia] became a metaphor for a raging mind trapped in a powerless body’ (p. 21). Although Claudia is a vampire, she is powerless because she can gain neither autonomy nor the chance to experience her life. Rice’s portrayal of the conflict between a child’s body and an adult mind invites readers to consider a complex state of awareness. The author attempts to depict Claudia as a character who longs to live autonomously and hates her identity as a perpetually young vampire.

In spite of Claudia’s willingness to live the way she wants to, she is not an empowered character because she fails to achieve autonomy. Claudia attempts to
kill Lestat twice by giving him poisoned blood. Her attempts are acts of revenge for Lestat’s exploitation of her. More importantly, the killing of Lestat is the only way for Claudia to regain part of her autonomy, as it rids her of his supervision and control. In *Vision/ re-vision: Adapting Contemporary American Fiction by Women to Film* (1996), Lupack affirms that Claudia’s killing of Lestat is ‘an illusory freedom’ because she looks for a ‘surrogate mother’ during the travel to Europe with Louis (p. 232). Claudia is not successful in her fight for autonomy. In the latter part of the story, Louis turns Madeleine into a vampire who acts as guardian to Claudia. The turning of Madeleine into a vampire and search for a guardian, or in Lupack’s terms ‘a surrogate mother’, reveal Claudia’s ‘[d]esire to repudiate paternal control’ (Lupack, 1996, p. 232). Instead of living freely, Claudia has no way to rid herself of supervision by others. Therefore, she can never live the way she wants to.

Finally, Rice’s arrangement of the ending of *Interview with the Vampire* (1976/2010) is a symbol of Claudia’s failure in her fight for autonomy. Claudia is sentenced to death, left under the sun and burned to ashes for her attempt to kill Lestat. If the killing of Lestat is a metaphor for ridding his control over Claudia’s life, then the death of Claudia may be her punishment for trying to escape from his control.
Although Claudia’s death may not hint that it is wrong for one to fight for autonomy, it is certain that Claudia is never granted the chance to live in the way she desires.

L. A. Banks’s *Minion* (2003): Female Vampire as an Object and An Empowering Female Vampire Huntress

Although preceding cases are major to describe female vampire figures as powerless objects, it is found that L. A. Banks attempts to include an empowering female huntress in *Minion* (2003) to deploy her awareness of embracing differences among women. Damali, the main character of *Minion* (2003), is a female vampire huntress of colour, as well as an orphan in *Minion* (2003). Her parents were killed by vampires. She is the chosen one every thousand years to be born as a Neteru, a vampire huntress. She is found and trained by Marlene and Marlene’s team for the knowledge of being a vampire slayer. The first part of this section will focus on the portrayal of conventional female vampire figure. Analysis will then shift to the relationship between Damali and Marlene. This section will end with showing the Damali is in attempt of empowering herself.

L. A. Banks conforms to the conventional depiction of female vampire figures in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Female vampire in this serialized work
has no name and is voiceless. She is an object with no individual thinking that is subordinated to male vampires:

“The perfect weapon - and she's quite beautiful,” Nuit said with an easy grin, studying his manicure. "They used her on your brother, and the others in your family ... They used it on a few of my artists, your people, a few agents that wouldn't comply, and another record label that has been marked by our family. Created chaos. Fear. And this weapon is so blatantly horrific that no one would associate it with an inside job from human authorities - no bullets, no knife, very creative … She only did what she was told, no reason to kill her. She's useful to our purposes.” Nuit stroked the panther tenderly. “She's gorgeous, beyond comprehension - and is only doing what is natural ... and she does it so well.” (Banks, 2003, chapter 15)

The above is Nuit’s, a male vampire, introduction to the female vampire. It is noticeable that Nuit does not see the female vampire figure as a being but a weapon, an object. The use of words such as “weapon”, “used” and “useful” hint at the hierarchy between male and female vampires with male vampires the ones who are in a supreme position with absolute control over their property, female vampire. Not only is female vampire not a subordinate of male vampire, but is being further degraded to a property of male vampires. “She only did what she was told” further hints that female vampire is voiceless and without awareness and autonomy. She does not have her own thinking and is absolutely obedient to the orders of male vampires. She does not make decision on her own or voice her will. From Nuit’s
introduction, it is noticeable that L. A. Banks is depicting female vampire conventionally as a beautiful, voiceless property of male with no awareness and autonomy.

To further consolidate the conventional image of female vampire figure, L. A. Banks associates female vampire with sex:

A female vampire appeared out of the haze around the artist who was too gone to pass the hose nozzle without assistance. She took a hit from it, handed it to a person beside her, dropped to her knees, and opened the guy's pants. No one around the table even seemed to notice as her head began to skillfully bob above his lap. (Banks, 2003, chapter 15)

“She took a hit from it” shows that the female vampire offers the male artist a blow job because of the hint she gets. It is also suggested that the female vampire is the one who offers sex service to male guests. The gestures “dropped to her knees” and “skillfully bob above his lap” also hint that she kneels down in front of the male artist. The action of kneeling down can be associated with the subordinate position of the female vampire to the male artist. Throughout the sex, no enjoyment on the female vampire’s part is mentioned. From the above, it is observed that L. A. Banks conforms to the conventional image of female vampire that female vampire is being related to sex service provider within the hierarchy.
Despite the conventional image of female vampire, *Minion* (2003) should be appreciated because L. A. Banks is aware of the necessity of embracing differences among women and the importance of empowerment. Banks deliberately puts a vampire huntress of colour as the protagonist of the novel. Although Banks does not embed history of people of colour and related themes in the setting of the novel, such as slavery and sexual violence, Banks shows her awareness towards the power of team and sisterhood. The vampire hunting team consist of members with different super power related to five senses and a Neteru. Team members aim at assisting hunts, the development and protection of the Neteru, Damali. From a quarrel between Damali and Marlene, Banks explicitly talks about the importance of teamwork:

“I handled it, and also got a bunch of them tonight.” Damali leaned on her sword and glared at Marlene.

“No more solo acts. Period. We're not looking for numbers - we're looking for the source - the quality of the kill, not the quantity. That's the part you don't get yet. We can do topside vamps for a lifetime, and still wouldn't make a dent. Strategy is what you're lacking, and common damned sense!”

Damali studied her blade and looked up from it with a sideways glance. She respected Marlene, but she was sick of her telling her what to do. Who put her in charge, anyway? (Banks, 2003, chapter 10)
Marlene accuses Damali for ignoring the safety of team members. Rider, one of the team members, supports Damali for a solo hunt and gets hurt because of this. Marlene is angry because Damali does not understand the meaning of team work for Damali mentions her will to hunt a few more vampires on her own disregard the reasons for Rider’s injuries. “No more solo acts. Period. ….common damned sense!” shows that Marlene talks with a very strong tone like a leader. It is the strong tone of Marlene that irritates Damali to think that Marlene takes the leading role of the team. However, Damali does not understand that the anger of Marlene is the result of Damali’s disregard of the importance of team work. Marlene understands the aim of hunt, importance of strategies and values the power of team work. She explains to Damali that the aim of hunt is to hunt the master vampire but not hunt large number of vampires. The value of team goes to the power and abilities of different members who can contribute to a smooth strategic hunt. Therefore, the safety of members are crucial. She points out that Damali has no strategy. In other words, Marlene is indeed rational when analyzing the Damali’s mistake. She understands that Damali fails to control her thoughts and emotions in critical moments.
Damali and Marlene is not in a leader and subordinate relationship, rather, Damali and teammates learn and share their experiences on an equal footing:

“Baby,” Marlene said, calling to Damali. “Baby, talk to me. Tell me how you feel.”

“Like shit,” Damali replied, gulping hard, then taking in and letting out fast, shallow of air. “I'm burning up. Can't get the scent out of my nose. My skin - it's in my skin. The beach. It's down at the beach. Under the pier. But a house, or something. I can hear it hissing.” Too nauseated to continue, she leaned her head back and panted, wiping at her forehead in anger. “I will cut that bitch's throat out! Five of our men, plus Jose - Dee Dee? I'll gut her.” (Banks, 2003, chapter 10)

From the above, it is noted that Marlene encourages Damali to share her feelings after the quarrel. Marlene is willing to listen to Damali about her thoughts rather than forcing Damali to accept the blame towards her. Knowing the reasons for Marlene’s anger, Damali is willing to speak about her feelings. She explains that she is physically unwell and is angry because the female vampire hurts her friends and teammates. Her solo act is not a result of her disregard of team spirit; rather, it is a result of her care towards teammates. This conversation proves that there is care and love between Damali and Marlene. Damali and Marlene both have opportunities to speak for their own like sisters with no hierarchy found in the relationship.
Experiencing physical un-wellness, Damali takes the initiative to understand the situation. She talks with Shabazz, another teammate of vampire slayer team:

“Every thousand years a Neteru is born,” Shabazz said. “A vampire huntress. This millennium, you're it. And at least seven of us, usually twelve, come with the package to bodyguard a Neteru while they wipe out a predator's line that's getting too thick. There must be one hundred and forty-four thousand of us on the planet at any given time to hold all manifestations of evil at bay - an army of twelve times twelve, representing the twelve original tribes. Guardians are made and lost every day” … “Last night, your metabolism changed,” Shabazz said in a matter-of-fact tone. “Second sight, olfactory and taste awareness, tactical sensing, increased audio capacity strength. When the seventh one hits ...”

“What's the seventh?” (Banks, 2003, chapter 13)

If Damali does not take the action on her own to ask her teammates about her origin, she will never know the history of Neteru and the guardian team; and that her physical un-wellness is a transformation process of being a mature Neteru of thousands of years. Damali also shows her curiosity on her intrinsic power by asking what the seventh change of metabolism is. She pays attention to the history of Neteru and the process of becoming a mature Neteru. This conversation is also important in the way that she has the consciousness of the change on her own and is aware of her intrinsic power. If there is a hierarchy among the relationship between Damali and her teammates, Damali will not share her physical un-wellness
with teammates and seek help from them. This confirms that although Damali is the Neteru, Damali does not see herself a leader in the team and create hierarchy among the team. Instead, she cherishes the experience and knowledge of every team member and is willing to learn from them. From the above, it is seen that Banks presents no hierarchy among Damali and the team. All of the teammates honor team spirits and treat each other equally with love and care.

Damali is an empowering character for she is autonomous. Apart from sharing the feeling to teammates, Damali also expresses herself in writing:

I don't want to have to listen to the brothers call me baby, then in the next breath bitch - when I make my choice and it's not in their favor, and I want the old dolls to back up and give me space to breathe, to figure this complex shit out on my own - respect, notwithstanding. Naw, I ain't trying to be a baby's momma, when I'm just a baby myself... and I like my new power to turn heads, and make men shiver without touching them, I'm just playing - just seeing how strong my vibe is, but that don't give them the right to violate it. Naw. Don't give the old dolls the right to judge what's on my mind, neither, just 'cause my body's talking to me loud and clear … (Banks, 2003, chapter 17)

Similar to Gilda, Damali writes to record her voice and restructure her thoughts. Confusion, struggles and autonomy are found in her writing. She is confused of

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35 Gilda is the main character in Jewell Gomze's *The Gilda Stories: A Novel* (1991) which will be analyzed in chapter four of this study.
her future. She is clear that she does not like to be a puppet of her teammates but she needs to learn from and cherish the relationship with them. She does not know how to deal with the future of her and the relationship with the team. She is struggling from the way she should use her new power. However, she shows her autonomy by making choices on her own in the writing that she decides not to do what is told by her team nor to be overridden by her new power, but to learn how to master and use the new power appropriately and rationally.

Although there is no hierarchy in the team and Marlene is not the leader, the relationship between Damali and Marlene is like mother and daughter. In chapter seventeen, Marlene further explains her blame towards and apologizes to Damali:

“No, don't be sorry, Mar.” Damali shook her head and pushed a stray lock off Marlene's shoulder. “Momma eagle, you have flown through storms, hunted and brought back food for the nest, and battled in the wilderness. It is dangerous out there, and I'm so new ... just floating on air ... while you have the eagle eyes that know there's a storm coming, there's a cliff nearby, fierce beasts in the night, and you did what you knew, screeched a warning for me to get back to the nest. Your eyes and instincts are still good, Marlene. Know that I respect that. Please.”

“Mom - Marlene,” Damali said. “You gave me everything that you could. Now I have to figure this out for myself.” (Banks, 2003, chapter 17)
In the conversation, Damali refers to Marlene as “Mom” and “Momma eagle”. To Damali, Marlene is more like a parent than a guardian or a simple teammate. Marlene is the one who find, teaches, guides and nurture her. She prepares Damali to be an independent, strong and courageous Neteru. All the things Marlene does is for Damali’s own good in the same way of a mother to her daughter. In the novel, Marlene always calls Damali “baby” and “my baby girl”. The way she calls Damali also hints that Marlene is seeing Damali as her daughter. Besides, Marlene tries her very best to share her experiences so as to avoid Damali to repeat the mistakes that she made in the past. This is also the way Marlene nurtures Damali and the reason for Damali’s thinking that Marlene always tells her what ought to and ought not to do. Knowing how Marlene thinks, Damali respects Marlene and understands the relationship between them. Damali is thankful to Marlene and is willing and happy to learn from the experiences of Marlene and the past. She then shows her autonomy that she is going to figure out how she should make use of her new power and the strategies that should be used to deal with the vampire slaying in the future. The mother and daughter relationship between Damali and Marlene does not only reveal the reconciliation between them. It also demonstrates that Damali and her team value a lot their experience and the past, which is also one of the advocates of the third wave feminism.
Although Banks does portrays female vampire figures conventionally as a voiceless, powerful and horrific object with no individual thinking and awareness of consciousness, she includes an empowering woman of colour, Damali, in the novel. Damali takes her first step in empowering herself by noticing her physical change, asking about the physical change from her team. She demonstrates that she is aware of her innate power. Knowing her origin and that she fails to control the new power, Damali is autonomous and agrees about the importance of team work and team spirits with no hierarchy among the relationship. In the team, all members treasure experiences and the past. Although Banks is not embed history of people of colour in the novel, Banks does aware of the differences among women by inserting advocates of third wave feminism and present Damali as an empowering figure in the first series of Vampire Huntress Legend Series.

Preceding analysis reveals that no author of classical vampire literature presents female vampire characters as empowered figures. In Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (1872/2003), Carmilla and other female figures are based on the stereotypical images of women as weak figures who are incapable of protecting themselves. Freeman and Stoker present Luella and the three sisters of Count Dracula as seductive objects and victims who are passive, dependent and lack self-consciousness in *Luella Miller*
(1902/ 2014) and Dracula (2007), respectively. Although Claudia in Rice’s Interview with the Vampire (1976/ 2010) is aware of her own exploitation and actively attempts to regain autonomy over her life, she never has the chance to live in the way she desires. In Minion (2003), although L. A. Banks conforms to conventional female vampire figure as a voiceless property of male, Damali is a woman of colour who attempts to start empowering herself in the novel. In spite of the fact that vampire literature is not written for the proclamation of the rights of any representation groups, vampire literature can be a window for critics to have a glimpse of the social situation in the particular era generally as a whole. Reviewing the works discussed in this chapter with this manner, more importantly, the preceding authors demonstrate only the oppression and stereotypical images of women belonging to non-underprivileged classes in white communities. None of the preceding vampire literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, even L.A. Banks Minion (2003) mentions the oppression faced by women from different classes in these white communities. This suggests that the rights and situations of women of colour is not a major concern during this period of time. Therefore, one of the insensitivities of the considered classical vampire literature in terms of their presentations of empowered images of women is the non-comprehensiveness of their depictions of the oppression and situations of women in different cultural
contexts. However, it is important to know that at the end of nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, writers starts to be aware of the necessity of inputting women of colour in vampire literature for exploration.

Chapter three introduces and summarises several key aspects of the oppression suffered by real-world women of colour. The current chapter is based on these key aspects. Before moving on to the discussion, I link the incidents portrayed in Jewelle Gomez’s *The Gilda Stories: A Novel* (1991) and Octavia E. Butler’s *Fledgling: A Novel* (2005) to the real-world situations mentioned in chapter three. I then argue that these books are able to demonstrate empowered images of women of colour to a certain extent and raise readers’ consciousness of the current situations of people of colour in the real world.

**Slavery**

Although slavery is not the main theme of Gomez’s novel, she exhibits an awareness of the slavery history of African Americans in *The Gilda Stories: A Novel* (1991). People of colour\(^{36}\) became involved in the white community after 1600 due to colonisation. Using their military power, the white colonisers turned

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\(^{36}\) In this case, ‘people of colour’ generally refers to those not born as white or yellow. This group of people is discriminated against because they are seen by the community as the Other. The term includes people who are brown or dark brown.
the African lands into colonies. Some of the white colonisers stayed in these colonies to exercise their power to rule, ‘modernise’, ‘liberate’ and ‘educate’ the indigenous locals. Some of these indigenous locals were sent or sold to the white communities as slaves. According to the record of the US Department of the Interior, the first indentured servants arrived in the American colony of Virginia in 1619, and the first slaves were brought into the state of New Amsterdam (which became New York) less than a decade later. By 1690, slaves could be found in every colony. In *Black Americans in Delaware: An Overview* (1997), James E. Newton highlights the demand for slaves in the U.S. as follows:

In 1721, an estimated 2,000-5,000 slaves lived in Pennsylvania and the three lower counties on the Delaware (New Castle, Kent, and Sussex). Possibly 500 of this number resided in the three lower counties. Most of the slaves and free blacks in the three lower counties worked as farm laborers or as domestic servants. (para. 3)

The slave trade was common in the 1700s to 1800s, and advertisements could be found in newspapers (see Figure 1).
The advertisement pictured in Figure 1 conveys several important messages about slavery in the 1800s. It clearly mentions that a large number of people of colour were being imported to the United States regularly to serve the white community, indicating the extent of the slave trade. Content like ‘[h]is Negro Depot is one of the most complete and commodious establishments of the kind in the Southern country, and his regulations exact and systematic, cleanliness, neatness and comfort being strictly observed and enforced’ hints that the slave trade was an organised and growing business from the white perspective. The advertisement’s reference to people of colour as servants who were ‘sound and perfect in body and mind’ seemingly emphasises their health and strength. Indeed, such an advertising strategy illustrates that people of colour were degraded to objects or property as slaves from 1600s to 1800s. Gomez’s novel is divided into five chapters, with location names and years serving as the titles of each (e.g., ‘Louisiana: 1850’;
‘Yerba Buena: 1890’; ‘Rosebud, Missouri: 1921’ and ‘Hampton Falls, New Hampshire: 2020’). The framework is like a timeline that records the important incidents that happened to Gilda in her 200-year journey from Louisiana to New Hampshire. Slavery is depicted in the first chapter, entitled ‘Louisiana: 1850’. Recalling the overview of the history of slavery mentioned, slaves could still be found in the United States in 1850. Therefore, Gomez might have intended to match the setting of her first chapter with the history of slavery to discuss the lives of women of colour in white communities.

In the book, the Girl (later named Gilda) and her family’s lives reflect the daily lives and family structures of slaves. Gomez’s main protagonist is a little black girl who escaped from a plantation where her she and her mother, now deceased, worked for white owners. She escaped because she refused to continue to be a property of the owner. In a way, her escape reveals the identity of offspring of slaves as property of the master. Within the slavery system, slaves were allowed to form families and give birth to children. However, the offspring of slaves was considered property of the slave masters. Charles Ball recalls the following memory about the slave trade:
My mother was the slave of a tobacco planter, an old man, who died, according to the best of my recollection, when I was about four years old, leaving his property in such a situation that it became necessary, as I supposed, to sell a part of it to pay his debts. Soon after his death, several of his slaves, and with others myself, were sold at public vendue. My mother had several children, my brothers and sisters, and we were all sold on the same day to different purchasers. . . . I learned subsequently, from my father, that my mother was sold to a Georgia trader, who soon after that carried her away from Maryland. Her other children were sold to slave-dealers from Carolina, and were also taken away, so that I was left alone in Calvert county, with my father . . . (Taylor, 1837, p. 16)

Ball’s recollection makes it clear that everyone in a slave’s family was the property of the master. Members of a slave family were like valuable goods and commodities that could be sold or ‘re-sold’, as in the case of Ball’s mother, to others in return for money. The parents in the slave families could not protect their children from being sold. It is likely that no member of the slave family could object to the trade and that the destiny of a child who was born in a slave family was determined when he or she was born. As the child’s parents were slaves, he or she faced being a slave for the rest of his or her life. From the perspective of the slave owners, as the offspring of slaves were their property, the more children their slaves had, the more economic and/ or human resources the slave master enjoyed. Although the Girl was not sold by the master, it is sure that the Girl was
not willing to live under the control of the owner of the plantation. This first chapter, written in the tone of a recalled memory, explains how the Girl escaped and was rescued and found by a female vampire named Gilda. Gomez’s decision to write her first chapter in the format of a historical record shows the importance she places on the significance of the memory and enslavement history of the Girl.

Although this chapter serves to set up the background of the story, it is an important indication of Gomez’s awareness of the history of African Americans as depicted in the daily lives, traditions and family structures of non-white female slaves. Daniel Patrick Moynihan first introduced black matriarchy theory in a sociology report entitled ‘The Negro Family: The Case for National Action’ in 1965 to deconstruct the black family. In his report, he concludes that ‘[a] fundamental fact of Negro American family life is the often reversed roles of husband and wife’ (p. 19). According to black matriarchy theory, black women should be responsible for all social problems such as unemployment, poverty and workplace discrimination, found in black families because ‘[n]egro families are dominated by the wife’ (p. 19). Gomez’s portrayal of non-white families matches the family

structure noted in Moynihan’s research, as there are no apparent depictions of men of colour as dominators or breadwinners in either the Girl’s family or the female vampire Gilda’s house. In contrast, it is the Girl’s mother who goes out to work at the plantation to support and raise her daughter and teaches the Girl how to take care of herself. It seems that it is indeed the mother who is the breadwinner in this non-white family.

Although women of colour worked, this does not mean they were the dominators of their families. It would be too dogmatic to blame black women for all of the social problems afflicting their families in either Gomez’s novel or the United States in general. To examine and oppose Moynihan’s theory, in the book *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750 – 1925* (1977), Gutman creates objective measures of matriarchy as a form of family structure and finds that unskilled black male workers earned two to three times more per week than black women who worked as servants or washerwomen. In terms of salary, black women earned less than white men and women and black men. Although Gomez’s fiction does not reflect the economic situation of workers in the 1850s as a dispute about the cultural myths of black matriarchy, her work is still significant in its depiction of the

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common but unique structure of non-white families under the slavery system.

To empower and liberate oneself from the slavery system or any form of oppression, one must develop and construct an independent identity to define who he or she is on his or her own rather than blindly accepting imposed identities. Before one can construct an independent identity, one must acknowledge and dare to speak out his or her suffering. As a black female writer, bell hooks (1989) states that she cannot write an autobiography to record the oppression she suffered, as secrecy and silence block her ability to tell her story (pp. 155-156). bell hooks was taught by her mother and family to keep silent and secret about any injustice and oppression she encountered. She found a way out by writing imaginative works that incorporated elements of her real-life experience. Her action proves that breaking the silence is the first step in fighting against injustice and oppression. Acknowledging the importance of breaking the silence, bell hooks (1989) confirms the following in her book Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black:

The longing to tell one’s story and the process of telling is symbolically a gesture of longing to recover the past [violence, injustice and oppression] in such a way that one experiences both a sense of reunion and a sense of release . . . that enabled me to see that the act of writing one’s autobiography is a way to find again that aspect of self and experience that may no
longer be an actual part of one’s life but is a living memory
shaping and informing the present . . . It [writing] was the act
of making it [experience] present, bring it [experience] into
the open, so to speak, that was liberating. (pp. 158-159)

Bell hooks’s experience affirms that breaking the silence by writing either
autobiography or imaginative fiction has two functions. First, it helps one to
search for his or her identity based on past experience. Second, it enlightens
others to reflect on their experiences and lives and encourages others to start
constructing their own identity. *Fledgling* is a record of a part of Shori’s life and
experience between the time she wakes up with no memory of the past and the time
she starts her new life after the Council of Judge. As it is written in her voice,
*Fledgling* can be seen as a resistance to the past violence and injustice Shori
experienced. If we see the novel as Shori’s autobiography, then the process of
writing and remembering her experience in the present allows her to liberate herself
from the past. It offers a chance for Shori to face the oppression and injustice she
suffered. However, the remembering process and memory also have an effect on
her identity formation process. The remembering process and memory are
representations or reproductions of the past that open the individual to his or her
identity (Edwards and Middleton, 1990; 39 Conway, 2003 40). Focusing on

memory and identity formation, it is crucial to highlight that ‘remembering’ does not mean the individual brings back the original identity he or she once had. Rather, ‘remembering’ offers a chance for one to reflect and reconstruct his or her identity, as the ‘remembering’ process takes place in the present. hooks (1989) explains that ‘remembering was part of a cycle of reunion, a joining of fragments’ (p. 159), and the new identity created by the process of remembering is a reconstruction of identity that includes elements of the past and the present of oneself. *Fledgling*, written from the first-person narrative perspective by a black-skinned female vampire, maintains an on-going formation of Shori’s identity. This proves that Shori’s identity is fluid. Even after she finishes her search for her origin, her identity formation never stops, but continues in the form of writing about her past. In Deleuzian terms, Shori is always ‘becoming’ herself but never ‘being’ herself. This gives her an opportunity to construct an independent identity for herself.

Shori is an empowered image in the novel because she demonstrates independence and critical thinking in the construction of her identity. Before Shori meets

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Iosif, Wright refers to Shori as Renee. After meeting Iosif, Shori knows that her name is Shori instead of Renee. Ferguson (2009) discusses the relationship between identity and social life in the book *Self-identity and Everyday Life* as follows:

Names connect self and identity. On the one hand the name objectifies self and converts the living moment of self-presence into a communicable identity; and, on the other hand, the name absorbs and draws to the self all those identifying relational features of social life through which particular individuals, places, and traditions are constituted. For modern western society self-identity is articulated, first of all, by naming. (p. 90)

The name ‘Shori’ draws and connects the character to the Ina community of Iosif. Instead of blindly accepting her given identity, she takes the initiative to learn the Ina language and history by reading books; understanding the Ina culture, traditions and living habits; and comparing herself with Iosif in terms of the shape of their teeth and living habits. Her initiative proves that she is questioning her given identity and can independently decide whether she wants to take on the identity of Shori as her own. Although Shori cannot recall her memory, she understands that the one called Shori is part of the Ina family. This clearly shows that a name offers

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41 Iosif Petrescu is a vampire and the father of Shori.
one both a communicable identity and an identity that connects the individual to a specific social life, tradition and culture. After the visit to Iosif’s place, Shori shows that she has accepted her status as a member of the Ina community by saying, ‘I’ll be glad to come back here [Iosif’s place] and learn more about my life, my family’ (Butler, 2005, p. 85). The use of the pronouns ‘I’ and ‘my’ are of prominent importance. Shori not only agrees that she is an Ina, but also agrees with her name and the social life and history it connects her to. Similar to “The Girl” in The Gilda Stories: A Novel (1991), “The Girl’s” acceptance of her naming as Gilda implies that she is willing to inherit the African American cultural and historical background the name suggests. The Elder Gilda also wants to remind Gilda of the importance of the past, which is one of the themes of the novel. Shori’s abandonment of the name Renee and adoption of the name Shori for the rest of the story is symbolic evidence of her empowerment. The characters’ rejection and acceptance of a name are their own decisions. Ferguson (2009) criticises the act of naming: ‘[n]aming is a tyranny and it might be expected that, to an increasing degree, individuals and groups resist being named, and reject the names bestowed upon them’ (p. 91). Before uniting with the Ina family, Shori is given the name Renee by a white male human. Her abandonment of that name can be seen as a symbolic rejection of a name bestowed upon her by a white man. Furthermore,
Shori decides to reject the name ‘Renee’ after her own learning and investigation and without influence from any third party. In this sense, the abandonment of the name ‘Renee’ is an empowering act that Shori performs to reject her domination by a white male human and ensures her survival both critically and independently. Although the two texts do not directly mention how one can liberate oneself from the slavery system, Shori and Gilda are presented as empowered images because they do not blindly accept identities given to them by others. Rather, they are role models of women of colour, as they insist on critically investigating their histories during the identity construction process. Only when one can construct an identity independently and critically on his or her own is he or she able to notice that every human is an autonomous individual rather than a commodity for sale or meant to serve others as a slave. Therefore, constructing an independent identity provides a firm basis for fighting against slavery.

**Sexual Violence**

Apart from slavery, violence is another common issue found in the life of people of colour. West states in *Violence in the Lives of Black Women: Battered, Black, and Blue* (2013) that women of colour undergo various kinds of violence in daily life,
such as sexual child abuse, dating violence, intimate partner violence, sexual assault and sexual harassment (p. 1). As violence is a rather big and complex issue in the daily lives of people of colour, it is essential to understand the interrelationship between race, gender and class before further discussing the issue. Intersectionality is a sociological theory introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to discuss multiple dimensions of black women’s employment issues and experiences in the United States.42 Crenshaw later explained her objective in introducing the theory as follows:

[It illustrates] that many of the experiences Black women face are not subsumed within the traditional boundaries of race or gender discrimination as these boundaries are currently understood, and that the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women’s lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of these experiences separately. (Crenshaw, 1993, p. 1244)

In other words, the concept of intersectionality is to ‘mov[e] away from a “one-size-fits-all” paradigm to a paradigm that sees women as uniquely whole with multi-layered identities stemming from their race, colour, age, social, class,

ethnicity, culture, history, geographical location, language and citizenship status’ (Danis and Lockhart, 2010, p. xxviii). The lens of intersectionality reveals that the violence encountered by women of colour in their daily lives can vary in distinctive and different ways according to their different statuses and identities. Agreeing with this approach, Collin (2002) points out in the book *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* that ‘[s]pecific acts of sexual violence visited on African-American women\(^{43}\) reflect a broader process by which violence is socially constructed in a race- and gender-specific manner’ (p. 147). As violence towards people of colour is socially constructed in such a manner, violence is common and can easily be identified in the general daily experiences of women of colour. Figure 2 shows that more than half and one third of multiracial women report encountering sexual violence other than rape and rape in their lifetime, respectively. Apart from highlighting the seriousness of sexual violence in the daily experiences of women of colour, this report highlights the vulnerability of women of colour, who often experience sexual assault in different contexts in their daily lives.

\(^{43}\) African-American women are considered one of the groups of women of colour in this study.
Resonating with the report, in *Violence in the Lives of Black Women: Battered, Black, and Blue* (2013), West states that although there have been documented cases of female offenders, men are most commonly the perpetrators of all kinds of violence in the lives of people of colour (p. 2). Comparing the genders of perpetrators in the report, ‘[m]ale rape victims and male victims of non-contact unwanted sexual experiences reported predominantly male perpetrators’ (The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey 2010 Summary Report, 2010, p. 3). The figures clearly prove that although the exercise of power by a superior over an inferior results in the sexual assault or harassment of the inferior, the social status of a man of colour may be lower than that of a white person, but women of colour maintain the lowest social status in the community. This may be a reason

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for the seriousness of the sexual assaults that occur within groups of people of colour.

Although Gomez does not discuss the complexities\textsuperscript{45} and effects of sexual violence\textsuperscript{46} on victims in *The Gilda Stories: A Novel* (1991), she attempts to address sexual assaults and rape. In the novel’s third chapter, Gomez thoroughly describes the backgrounds and attitudes of two perpetrators who want to rape Gilda on the street. Gomez (1991) portrays the perpetrators as males of higher privilege, using descriptions like ‘two men on horse back . . . They were moving at a good pace, as if racing’ (p. 112). Only the rich can raise, race and ride horses as a kind of transportation. The men’s use of horses emphasises that they come from middle-class families. After addressing the sex and class of the perpetrators, Gomez (1991) includes conversations between the two men to indirectly address their concerns of the race: ‘This here’s a niggah gal, we got here. What you doin’ out on the road this hour?’ (p. 113). The middle-class man who speaks distances himself from Gilda by using the term ‘niggah gal’ to address her as a woman of colour,

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\textsuperscript{45} ‘Complexities’ refers to how different genders, classes and races result in different types of sexual violence to people of colour in different contexts. For example, sexual violence encountered by lower-class men of colour and perpetrated by white men are not mentioned in any form in the novel.

\textsuperscript{46} According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey 2010 Summary Report, sexual violence may result in frequent headaches, chronic pain, difficulty sleeping, activity limitations, poor physical and mental health, asthma, irritable bowel syndrome and diabetes (p. 3, pp. 61-63).
indicating his probable whiteness. By including these several details, Gomez portrays the perpetrators as middle-class white men. Apart from their background, Gomez carefully inserts a change in attitude when the perpetrators learn that Gilda is female rather than male: ‘He [one of the perpetrators] stood before her [Gilda] with an angry glare that quickly turned into a leer when he realized she was not a man . . . “Maybe we [perpetrators] teach one more niggah [Gilda] a lesson tonight, hey Cook?”’ (Gomez, 1991, pp. 112-113). The men’s change in attitude is purely the result of their knowledge of Gilda’s gender. The terms ‘leer’ and ‘teach a lesson’ are embedded with sexual meaning and particularly suggest sexual assault. The use of “one more” in the discourse hints that the men have already “taught” another black person a lesson. At the same time, they show the vulnerability and low status of women of colour when facing white men. It seems that the vulnerability of any woman of colour walking alone on the street at night is enhanced given their likelihood of being sexually assaulted or raped simply because of their race and gender. Although Gomez focuses only on depicting the background and attitudes of the perpetrators in this incident, the representation is still significant, as the author highlights the seriousness of sexual violence in the daily lives of women of colour and how racial and gender identities shape individuals’ daily experiences and put them in the vulnerable position of victims of
In addition to their vulnerability when facing middle-class white men, women of colour are doubly oppressed as they are also treated violently by men of colour. In the fourth chapter of Gomez’s novel, Toya, a human woman of colour who works as a prostitute for Fox, a male vampire of colour, escapes from the brothel and seeks help from Gilda for protection. Toya tells Gilda that Fox hit her with a coat hanger and locked her in a dark room to prevent her from leaving. Instead of catching her, Fox follows Toya for two days. Toya believes that Fox ‘just wanna see how long I can hang on before I crawl back to him’ (Gomez, 1991, p. 134). Gomez’s inclusion of this incident in the novel is significant in the way it highlights the problems of violence and prostitution in the context of the non-white community.

Apart from pointing out the vulnerability of women of colour and especially non-white prostitutes when facing sexual violence, the significance of the incident depicts the hierarchy of men and women of colour. Fox’s power is symbolised by his treatment of Toya, which includes beating her, locking her in a dark room and following her everywhere she goes. Fox imposes his power on Toya to make her understand that she is his property for good, that she has no way of escaping from
his control and that it would be useless to try. The imposition of power can be seen as a method of control and particularly a method of male control over women. This matches Collins’s (2002) finding that ‘many Black men have internalized the controlling images applied to Black women’ (p. 148). Toya’s use of the words ‘crawl back’ implies that she is in an inferior position and always under the control of Fox in their relationship. Gomez does not thoroughly discuss prostitution, which is one of the important themes of third-wave feminism and the daily experience of women of colour. However, in her depiction of Toya’s circumstances, Gomez reveals her awareness of the injustice women of colour face in relation to sexual violence and the hierarchal relationship between men and women of colour.

To empower oneself, one must obtain an autonomous identity and understand that relationships between people should operate on an equal rather than hierarchal basis. In *The Gilda Stories*, both Gilda and Ermis appear as empowered images as they attempt to retain their autonomous identities when Gilda turns Ermis, a girl without hope and who wishes to end her life, into a vampire. In *The Gilda Stories*, newly turned vampires are ‘not bound’ to the vampire who turned them (Gomez, 1991, p. 246). Gilda tells the newly turned Ermis that she does not need to ‘feel obligated’
to accompany Gilda on her journey to find home and connect with her vampire family members if she does not wish to: ‘You can still end your life if you wish, or go on alone’ (Gomez, 1991, p. 246).

This conversation proves that the newly turned vampire remains in charge of his or her own life. Newly turned vampires can make choices on their own as immortals according to their own wishes. Gilda respects and agrees with Ermis and encourages her to live autonomously. However, the conversation also makes readers aware that everyone should have the choice to be autonomous, regardless of their position. This is why Gilda tells Ermis that being a vampire can free Ermis and offer her new meaning and a new life.

In Octavia E. Butler’s *Fledgling: A Novel* (2005), Shori is also an empowered figure because she encourages her symbionts to take charge of their own lives and respect their ways of living. Although a human may agree to be tied with an Ina, it does not mean that human symbiont must give up his or her way of life. For example, Theodora is offered the opportunity to choose her way of life after agreeing to be Shori’s symbiont. Shori makes it very clear that Theodora can choose to stay with or live apart from the Ina. Theodora and any of her symbionts are free to engage
in love relationships, form families, give birth to children, leave to work whenever they want, travel and visit relatives. Although Theodora chooses to stay with Shori, Shori promises to try her best to offer a living environment akin to the one Theodora had before becoming a symbiont. This arrangement highlights that Shori encourages her symbionts to choose their own ways of life and respects their right to choose.

In addition, Shori demonstrates herself to be an empowered figure because she is aware that the relationship between an Ina and a human should be equal. In her relationships, Shori neither takes on the dominant role nor acts as a master to decide anyone’s life or lifestyle. Her symbionts are free rather than enslaved. Reviewing the way in which an Ina is tied to a human symbiont, it seems that Shori is the master and that her symbionts are enslaved given the exchange of fluid that enforces their relationship. The Ina inserts venom into the human symbiont’s body to give him or her pleasure, and the symbiont offers blood to the Ina to sustain its life in return.\footnote{Inserting venom into a human’s body for blood in the \textit{Fledgling} and offering dreams and ideas to humans in exchange for blood in \textit{The Gilda Stories} are ideas reminiscent of the extraction of blood in the classical vampire literature. As the extraction of blood symbolises the sexual behaviour of vampires and humans, the respect shown for humans and their freedom of choice and the maintenance of a symbiotic relationship between vampire and human infer that human blood donors in both of the novels do not suffer from sexual violence.} Once a human is tied with an Ina, the human can no longer live
without the Ina, whose venom becomes key to the symbiont’s survival. If an Ina dies, its symbionts die as well because they no longer receive the necessary venom injections. In other words, the human symbionts are dependent on Inas for survival. This fact emphasises that Shori’s relationships with her symbionts are not equal. However, Inas and human symbionts are equal in status. Iosif mentions that human symbionts are important to Inas. They rely on Inas to stay alive, and Inas rely on symbionts to sustain their lives in different ways. As such, Inas do not enjoy a superior status in the relationship. Instead, the relationship is a symbiotic one. Although Shori is able to control a human’s consciousness, she never exercises nor imposes her power to control her symbionts’ thinking. Given the way she treats her symbionts, Shori offers the reader a new way to consider the relationship between vampire and blood donor. She also demonstrates that the ideal relationship between an Ina and a symbiont should be a symbiotic partnership rather than a master-and-slave relationship. Most importantly, Shori demonstrates the line of thinking that feminism strives for justice and equality. If Shori did not strive for justice and equality, she would not have to maintain a symbiotic relationship with a symbiont, as she is physically stronger than a human being and more capable of taking control of a human’s life. Although Shori is discriminated against in the Ina community, she does not impose her power to harm anyone’s
interests. Instead, she insists on striving for just and equal relationships, whether they comprise two Inas or one Ina and one human. This makes Shori an empowered figure in the novel.

Gilda from Jewelle Gomez’s *The Gilda Stories: A Novel* (1991) is a model for how an empowered figure should exercise power. To be an empowered figure, one should be aware of the presence of his or her innate power and exercise that power for the sake of the self and others without harming others or their interests. As in Octavia E. Butler’s *Fledgling: A Novel* (2005), blood is exchanged in *The Gilda Stories: A Novel* (1991) for the sake for both vampires and blood donors: ‘She [Gilda] had grown used to searching the sleeping night for someone with whom she might trade for life’s blood . . . it had become natural to her to exchange dreams or ideas for a share of life’ (Gomez, 1991, p. 57). During the blood exchange process, Gilda goes into the potential donor’s mind and searches for what he or she needs. This process is important, as it shows that Gilda does not objectify the donors solely to extract what she requires without considering their needs. Gilda’s use of the word ‘trade’ proves that she does not enjoy a superior position over blood donors. Her relationships with blood donors are equal and involve a trade in which both parties have their survival needs fulfilled. This illustrates that Gilda exercises her
power while showing concern for the blood donor in the process.

Although Gilda has to suck blood from blood donors, she always does good deeds for the donors or provides them with gifts in exchange, such as leaving compelling dreams or ideas that the donors require to overcome the challenges they encounter in their lives. In 1921, Gilda meets a young woman who has ‘no thoughts or dreams’ (Gomez, 1991, p. 123). Gilda decides to give her a dream for blood because she ‘felt such sorrow at this [the young woman’s] diminished capacity for life’ (Gomez, 1991, p. 123). After Gilda sucks the blood,

she [Gilda] wrapped the fear around the edge of the dream, making it more compelling . . . The young woman began to experience the urge to project into a future. Her mind filled with thoughts of the other women who lived and worked in the house – the smiles she had not acknowledged, the endearments and angry words yet to be shared. (Gomez, 1991, pp. 123-124)

If she were not offered a dream, the young woman’s life would be dim and miserable. The dream Gilda offers revives the woman, brings new meaning to her life and motivates her to overcome the challenges she faces. To Gilda, blood donors are more than a source of survival: ‘The exchange has become an important part of her [Gilda’s] living and of her understanding of those who remain mortal’
(Gomez, 1991, p. 57). In other words, Gilda helps the blood donors to create meaning in their lives by offering them dreams and ideas. However, searching her donors’ minds offers Gilda meaning in turn, as the process maintains her humanity by allowing her to understand the mortals and help them with their lives. Given that Gilda never implants ideas or dreams with evil intentions, it is worth noting that both Gilda and Shori in *Fledgling: A Novel* (2005) challenge the conventional ideas that vampires objectify humans by exercising their power solely for their own benefit. As empowered figures, Gilda and Shori promote the idea that everyone should have the right to live autonomously and be respected for their ways of life. Although neither of the novels mentions how individuals can free themselves from sexual violence by obtaining an autonomous identity, living autonomously and taking charge and control of one’s life is a must when fighting to establish symmetrical relationships between people in different cultural contexts. Only when one notices that he or she has the freedom of choice and that his or her choices should be respected by others can he or she refuse to be involved in a hierarchal relationship and thus find freedom from sexual abuse. Gilda and Shori also demonstrate how one can make use of an innate power to do good and maintain relatively equal relationships with blood donors or symbionts.
Preserving Culture and Traditions and Raising Consciousness

The relationship between Eleanor and Gilda reveals the race and class conflicts of women in white communities. Gomez presents Eleanor as a white royal female vampire who is arrogant and ignorant. This representation may imply Gomez’s understanding of how white and non-white women see each other. When Eleanor first meets Gilda, Eleanor asks, ‘What news do you have to bring us from the uncivilized hinterlands?’ (Gomez, 1991, p. 63). Feeling an unfamiliar discomfort, Gilda objects and clarifies Eleanor’s misconception that where Gilda comes from is uncivilised. After the clarification, Eleanor invites Gilda to a salon, as she thinks Gilda’s fashion is ‘frightfully outmoded’ (Gomez, 1991, pp. 64-66). During the conversation, Gilda’s discomfort hints that Eleanor’s preconception of her and where she comes from is untrue. Therefore, Gilda’s discomfort is proof of her awareness of Eleanor’s problematic response. It can also be interpreted as a reaction to Eleanor’s disrespect for Gilda’s historical and cultural heritage. If so, then Gilda considers Eleanor ignorant, as she does not acknowledge, accept or respect any history or culture that differs from hers. Meanwhile, Eleanor believes that she is superior to the uncivilised Gilda. This implicitly conveys the message that Eleanor’s cultural heritage is superior to Gilda’s. Eleanor asks Gilda to go to
a salon with her, seeking to teach Gilda how to dress in a more fashionable way.

The implications of Eleanor’s invitation reflect the findings of Allen, Epps and Haniff in *College in Black and White: African American Students in Predominantly White and in Historically Black Public Universities* (1991) that education in a multiracial community has the unidirectional goal of ‘civilising’ non-white individuals with white ideologies and cultures under the assumption that the Anglo-European culture is superior (p. 214). The gesture of teaching Gilda how to dress is a kind of education and civilisation given to Gilda, a woman of colour, by Eleanor, the white female. Gomez’s portrayal of Eleanor’s conversation with Gilda and Gilda’s feelings about Eleanor’s preconception are significant, as Gomez shows her awareness of white people’s ignorance and disrespect of the history and cultural heritage of people of colour and the common thinking of the former that the latter must be educated and civilised according to their supreme values and culture.

Furthermore, Gomez’s portrayal of Eleanor seeking to teach Gilda to dress fashionably may be a criticism of white values and ideologies. In the novel, it seems that Eleanor, the white character, is always the one who dictates and defines what is fashionable and pretty. Yancy (2005) conducts a study in this vein with
the help of Hume and Kant’s enlightenment theory of aesthetics. Yancy (2005) argues that both Hume and Kant’s concept of aesthetics is a ‘racialized aestheticization’, as it is ‘modes of creation, perception, and interaction that support white subjectivity that they have identified as aesthetics, and it is modes of creation, perception, and interaction that support black subjectivity that they have denominated as uncultivated and lacking in taste’ (p. 85). It is always Eleanor, the white individual, who suggests, instructs and even orders Gilda, a person of colour, on how she should or should not dress and behave. It is Eleanor who judges Gilda’s taste based on her own measures and perspective. It seems that values and ideologies are constructed and created from the perspective of the white individual, who disregards the diversities of culture in the community. Gomez might have deliberately chosen ‘fashion’ as a representation of arts and aesthetics and left room for readers to criticise the definitions of aesthetics and beauty created and monopolised by the white community.

To empower women of colour, one must take the initiative to show to the world that he or she acknowledges the injustice they face and the misconception the white community has towards them. In 1955, Gilda owns a salon in the South where

Toya, a black female human customer, comes to seek help to address matters of life and death. Toya tells Gilda, Bird, Skip and Savannah a great deal about the injustice, violence and exploitation she has suffered under the control of Fox. Toya can be seen as a woman of colour who is empowering herself, as she is aware that she is a commodity for sale (her body is sold for money). More than simply noticing the problem, she actively searches for a way out. This is a clear action that communicates to the exploiter (Fox) and other prostitutes still under his control that his brutality is unreasonable and unjust. As such, Toya makes an attempt to empower herself.

To empower oneself, one would seek help from legal system as it represent rights, equality and justice. However, the racial discrimination of non-white prostitutes can also be seen in the legal process as it applies to prostitution. As Ditmore (2011) observes, ‘Black, Latina or other women of color who face racism at every stage of the criminal justice process are even less likely to get protection or any form of redress against rape, racist sexual assault or other violence’ (p. 158). At the early stage of the criminal justice process, according to Flowers’s *The Prostitution of Women and Girls* (1998), ‘[a]rrest data indicates that poor, black female streetwalkers are most often targeted by police’ (p. 21). Flowers (1998) also
concludes that ‘[b]lack women are seven times more likely to be arrested for prostitution than prostitutes of other races’ (p. 21). Although the arrest data do not show whether women of colour are less protected in the criminal justice process, they do show the inequality and injustice of the legal system in relation to people of colour. MacKinnon identifies the lack of legal protection and the injustice of the legal system for non-white prostitutes in *Women’s lives, Men’s Laws* (2005) by commenting that ‘[t]o be a prostitute is to be a legal nonperson in the ways that matters . . . Anyone can do anything to her [coloured prostitute] and nothing legal will be done about it’ (p. 153). MacKinnon’s comment indeed indicates the degradation of the non-white prostitute’s image as a nonperson sexual commodity.

In response to the injustice of the legal system towards non-white prostitutes, support organisations have been established to help these prostitutes and women of colour fight for equality, for instance by offering legal services such as Legal Action for Women (LAW) in 1982 and distributing the rights sheet known as ‘A Guide to the Rules of the Game – A-Z for Working Girls’ to prostitutes in red-light areas in 1981. In *Rethinking Prostitution: Purchasing Sex in the 1990s* (1997), Scambler reports successful cases in which ‘LAW found (and in some cases trained) lawyers who were ready to defend women in the way they wanted to be defended, and
women started winning their cases in court’ (p. 84). Although there have been successful cases\(^49\) in which women of colour were helped to fight for an equal and just legal process, many such women have been unreasonably sued.\(^50\) Regardless of whether such cases are successful or reasonable, they provide evidence that women of colour are victims of racial and gender discrimination.

Toya the victim does not seek help from the police or legal system. Instead, she seeks help from fellow women of colour, Gilda and Savannah. As women of colour are doubly oppressed and exploited in the legal system due to their gender and race, Gomez uses Toya to represent the situation and experience of women of colour searching for justice within an unjust legal system. Toya’s action of seeking help from other women of colour can be considered an attempt at empowerment, as Toya is endeavouring to publicise her problems (both the brutality of Fox and the unjust legal system) to the world.

\(^49\) In one of the successful cases reported in Scambler’s (1997) book, ‘[o]ne young Black woman with two children told the court she was paying an exorbitant rent and said: “When I don’t have to pay that rent, I won’t be a prostitute.” She was found not guilty’ (p. 84).

\(^50\) “A non-prostitute woman was raped in the area. When she reported it, the police accused her of being a prostitute and arrested her boyfriend for pimping because he’s Black” (Scambler, 1997, p. 85).
However, Toya’s action also proves that she and other women of colour are aware that their culture and tradition must be preserved. Collins affirms in the book *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (2002) that ‘[i]n the comfort of daily conversations, through serious conversation and humor, African-American women as sisters and friends affirm one another’s humanity, specialness, and right to exist’ (p. 102). After listening to Toya, Gilda, Bird, Skip and Savannah are empathetic to her situation and agree to help her because she has the right to live free from Fox’s control and domination. Indeed, Toya’s situation is similar to what Gilda experienced as a black female under the domination of the white community before she escaped from the plantation and was rescued by the Elder Gilda. As she understands the way Toya is being treated, she is willing to rescue her and support her escape. This resonates with Collins’s (2002) idea that ‘[e]ach knew that only another Black woman could fully understand how it felt to be treated that way and to respond in kind’ (pp. 103-104). When the critical moment comes, Gilda tells Bird that they should kill Fox. Bird replies, ‘We have to. He’ll [Fox] never stop until he’s killed us all’ (Gomez, 1991, p. 163). Gilda and Bird understand that although the killing of Fox is sinful, it must be done to protect Toya and and all those who offer her help. The killing of Fox is significant because the women’s fight with him and his death symbolise
the empowerment and liberation of women of colour. In fact, this incident is far more complex than an exploration of the fight for justice and vampire killing, the traditional theme of the vampire novel. Gomez also expresses the importance of sisterhood support, a part of the culture and tradition of women of colour to achieve empowerment within the black community. Killing Fox and freeing Toya are definitely signs of liberation for which black women have been longing for decades. By highlighting the killing of Fox in the novel and presenting Toya as a woman of colour who empowers herself, Gomez surely inspires black women to acknowledge the importance of sisterhood and support in the fight against discrimination and injustice and the achievement of liberation.

Gilda also proves her empowerment by showing that she is conscious of Aurelia’s potential and her rational choice of not turning Aurelia into a vampire. Gilda refuses Aurelia’s request, who has a background similar to that of Gilda, to turn her into a vampire, as she likes and wants to stay with Gilda. When Gilda decides not to turn Aurelia into a vampire and leaves her, Aurelia questions her as follows:

\[\text{Aurelia and Gilda have similar backgrounds. Gilda presents herself in Missouri in 1921 as a middle-class educated widow. Aurelia, who grew up in a middle-class educated black family, is married to a middle-class black husband. She is used to living the life of an ordinary black women in the African American community. The deaths of her parents and husband leave her a large sum of money but no greater life meaning. It is Gilda who shares stories, histories and places with Aurelia and gives her the support and encouragement she requires to explore the world as she wishes. Aurelia and Gilda's friendship and sisterhood is built based on their backgrounds.}\]
“Then you [Gilda] won’t leave me [Aurelia]?”
“I’ll go away as I said I must, but I’ll never truly leave you, your life is here, mine is not.”
“How can you be so certain? We’ve been happy! . . . But why must you go?”
“The past does not lie down and decay like a dead animal, Aurelia. It waits for you to find it again and again.”
“What is it? What have I done? Please come back!” (Gomez, 1991, pp. 125-126)

This conversation makes it clear that whereas Gilda is rational, Aurelia is emotional. Aurelia’s desire to stay with Gilda is rooted in her emotional dependence on Gilda.

Gilda’s decision not to turn Aurelia into a vampire is made with serious and rational consideration for two reasons. First, Gilda wants to leave to search for meaning, a journey that requires making connections with herself and the past. Cherishing experience, the past and one’s ancestors is a characteristic of black feminism, and Gilda’s desire to review the past creates meaning for her present and future. Aurelia cannot help Gilda on her journey. Furthermore, Gilda believes that turning Aurelia into a vampire would not help Aurelia and her vampire community. Indeed, Gilda ‘could not take this woman [Aurelia] into her life. There would be others, more in need or with more knowledge, who would be her family’ (Gomez, 1991, p. 126). Gilda believes that Aurelia has already found the meaning in her life, eliminating the need to turn her into a vampire. Gilda’s refusal to turn Aurelia
into a vampire and her decision to leave Aurelia to her own future are rational decisions made after serious consideration and prove Gilda’s faith in and awareness of Aurelia’s potential. Gilda is seemingly arrogant and disrespectful of Aurelia’s will on the issue. However, rationally, the deal to turn Aurelia into a vampire is not made simply because Aurelia is ineligible. Gilda’s promise to not leave Aurelia is an act of showing respect for Aurelia’s will to not be left alone emotionally.

More importantly, Gilda’s faith in Aurelia’s potential is confirmed in a later chapter of the novel. Clinging to Gilda for her wit, respect, kindness and generosity, Aurelia develops the ability to empower herself by understanding herself, her own power and the meaning of life and starts helping others to achieve empowerment by taking on the role of activist and paying attention to and helping African American women who are suffering. Aurelia gives meaning to her own life and the lives of others by advocating feminism. She also inspires her great granddaughter Nadine, whose name means ‘hope’ in Russian, to continue her activism activities in the black community, such as setting up the GrassRoot organisation and starting the GrassRoot movement. Aurelia would not be able to demonstrate her power and ability in her activism and liberation work if Gilda had
turned her into a vampire. In other words, Aurelia’s achievement is the consequence of Gilda’s rational decision not to turn Aurelia into a vampire. Although Gilda shows her empowerment via her consciousness and awareness of Aurelia’s potential, Aurelia and Nadine prove themselves as empowered women by using their power to pay attention to, help, influence and encourage other women of colour to empower and liberate themselves.

Although *Fledgling: A Novel* (2005) mentions nothing about activism, Shori is able to present herself as an empowered figure by noticing and fighting against the injustice she encounters in the Council of Judgement. In a way similar to that seen in *The Gilda Stories: A Novel* (1991), when facing injustice, discrimination and oppression, Shori seeks help from her allies and poses her case to the law court. This act publicises the injustice and oppression of the community to hopefully raise people’s consciousness about the issue. It is also taken to seek equality and justice.

Not long before the start of the court proceedings, Silk Milo demonstrates his obvious discrimination against the non-white community violently by requesting

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52 The Council of Judgement is the law court of the Ina community. It signifies the real-world legal system. Any forms of injustice Shori encounters in the Council of Judgement symbolise the oppression and discrimination of people and especially women of colour.

53 Silk Milo as an ancient white male vampire who is 541 years old. He is highly respected and reputed for his pure vampire blood type. A representation of an upper-class, rich, white male figure, he is invited to bless the council majestically for judging Shori’s murder cases.
that Shori be examined by a human physician for her loss of memories (pp. 243-244). This action is taken to humiliate Shori, as Inas have the ability to heal themselves without the need to visit doctors. By requesting that Shori be examined by a human physician, Milo Silk indicates that he sees Shori as Other rather than as a member of the Ina community. Like Gilda, when Shori is facing discrimination and oppression, she recognises the problem and speaks to fight against the power of the white community and attain justice and equality. In return, Shori replies, ‘I am Ina, Milo, and if the doctor must examine me, then for your own sake, I request that she also examine you’ (Gomez, 1991, p. 244). Shori’s reply exhibits her empowerment because she is aware of the humiliation and disrespect shown to her, decides to speak up and takes action to fight against discrimination and oppression.

In the way she deals with discrimination and oppression, Shori presents an empowered image and demonstrates how one can make use of his or her innate power to attain equality without hurting others. Humiliated by Shori, Milo is extremely angry: “You’re not Ina!” . . . He slammed his palm down on the table, making a sound like a gunshot. “You are not! And you have no more business at this council than would a clever dog” (Gomez, 1991, p. 244). Milo Silk’s
statements further degrade Shori from a non-member of the Ina community to an animal. Responding to his statement, Shori rationally and cleverly requests a change in council member, for she suspects Milo’s ability and suitability as a candidate given his need to jot notes while Inas speak. In this case, Shori’s innate power is her wit. She understands that only when she removes Milo from the council can she obtain a fair judgement. Shori decides to persuade other members of the Council of Judgement with adequate reasons and facts and detailed observation. As she points out only that Milo must jot notes while Inas speak, her stratagem of removing Milo from the Council of Judge hurts no one either physically or psychologically. The successful removal of Milo Silk as a member of the council is meant to inspire people of colour and communicate that rationality and refusing to keep silent are the keys to fighting injustice.

All of the preceding proves that Gomez and Butler are aware of the general situation of people of colour. In view of the social environments of colour of people, it is clear that they are subordinate to the white community regardless of gender and suffer from oppression. Apart from being degraded as commodities, the heirs and family structures of slaves were harmed under the slavery system. Although abolition was achieved in 1865, slavery was an important historical development
for people of colour because it marked their pain, horror and oppression. However, the oppression and discrimination of people of colour did not end after abolition. Women of colour were the most vulnerable group exposed to sexual violence due to racial and gender discrimination. Facing sexual violence in their daily lives, women of colour failed to be protected by the legal system. The legal system as a symbol of justice has failed to provide an equal and just environment for people of colour. Although social organisations and services are present to help them strive for an equal and justice legal process, people of colour continue to suffer from oppression based on their race and gender.

Intersectionality theory reveals that gender, class and race help to shape the distinctive daily lives of people of colour. Intersectionality theory is not included in this chapter to deconstruct the oppression of women of colour, as this would only overgeneralise the complexity of their oppression. Rather, it is introduced as a bottom-up observatory tool used to clarify how and why oppression is formed in different contexts. The theory is significant as it does not decrease the complexity and fluidity of the daily lives of women of colour. In turn, it confirms the role of the intertwining web-like relationship between class, race and gender in shaping the daily experiences of women of colour and affirms that any separation of class, race
and gender in discussing the oppression of those women is inappropriate and inadequate.

Although the works of Gomez and Butler are fictional, they remind those who are suffering from oppression due to their race and gender of the possibility of fighting against injustice. They also help to raise the awareness of the white community that people of colour have long been discriminated against and oppressed in different ways. Although neither of the authors discusses every aspect in detail in their novels, the broadness of their discussion should be appreciated, as readers are introduced to the different social problems found in non-white communities. Readers who are interested in knowing more about the problem can trace the lines of the novels and consult non-fiction books and information for further exploration.

Gilda, Toya, Aurelia, Nadine and Shori are empowered images because they demonstrate the qualities required for empowerment. To empower and liberate women of colour, one must begin by empowering the individual. One must first empower oneself by developing an independent and autonomous identity and thinking rationally and critically. One should then learn to respect freedom of choice and exercise his or her innate power without imposing power on anyone else,
as maintaining a symbiotic relationship with people in different contexts is the only way to ensure equality. One must be conscious of injustice and oppression in different aspects. One can finally be considered as empowered by taking action to fight against different forms of injustice using his or her innate power. To liberate the entire non-white community, it is of utmost importance for the empowered to influence, encourage and advocate people of colour and their friends to dare to empower themselves.
Conclusion: A Demonstration of an Empowered Image of Women in Non-White Communities and the Potential Development of Vampire Literature as a Genre

In this study, I attempt to show that Jewelle Gomez and Octavia E. Butler are able to portray female vampire figures as empowered images of women to a certain extent. To demonstrate that Gilda in Gomez’s *The Gilda Stories: A Novel* (1991) and Shori in Butler’s *Fledgling: A Novel* (2005) are empowered images of women, I draw readers’ attention to how the vampire literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries portrays female vampires. Before doing so, I provide an overview of second- and third-wave feminism. I observe that the target group discussed in the vampire literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with its portrayal of female vampire figures is the same as the target group discussed in second-wave feminism. Both emphasise the welfare of the privileged white female and neglect women with other cultural identities and from different times, places and contexts. Due to this trend, I argue for the importance of including the situations and welfare of people of colour in both third-wave feminism and vampire literature. Then I explained the use of Empowerment as a lens to read selected texts in this study. The origin and usage of “Empowerment” by other scholars are described in detail. Since empowerment is a key process for one to liberate oneself from oppressions, the study thus frames the definition of empowerment
deliberately for the use as a lens to read selected texts in the thesis. It is discussed that there are steps for one to be empowered, such as to be aware of and gain consciousness of the oppression one is experiencing; to be aware of and notice the intrinsic power of one to fight against oppressions; and to learn the proper use of one’s power to liberate oneself without harming the interests of others. These steps will be used to evaluate and examine selected texts for showing the evolution of vampire literature as a genre.

The focus then to shift pointing out that the vampire literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is inattentive in its reflection of the social environments and behaviour of people of colour, I argue that the writing patterns of vampire literature have evolved following the development of feminism. I make it clear that writers of vampire literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries commonly depict female vampire figures according to gender stereotypes and patriarchal ideologies. In Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* (1872/2003), all of the female vampire characters are objects for protection. Although Carmilla and Millarca need men to take care of them, Mircalla has to rely on men to prolong her life as a vampire. In Le Fanu’s work, female vampire figures become powerless objects. Luella Miller in Mary E. Wilkins Freeman’s *Luella Miller* (1902/2014) and the three sisters in Bram
Stoker’s *Dracula* (2007) are female vampire characters who lack self-consciousness. All of these characters are helpless and must rely on third parties for survival. To highlight the consequence of overdependence, Freeman deliberately describes Luella Miller’s loss of her ability to support herself. In terms of characters conforming to gender roles in the patriarchal system, Freeman discusses the domestication of women in the plot of her story. In contrast, Stoker designs the three sisters as sexual objects who are subordinate to and must obey Count Dracula. Although Luella Miller and the three sisters are vampire figures, this identity does not privilege them. Instead, Freeman accuses Luella Miller of being a conspirator of the patriarchal system, as she internalises the patriarchal mentality of exploiting those less fortunate or privileged to serve her. During the discussion, neither of the female vampire characters is presented as an empowered image because they do not show that they are conscious of the consequences of being overly dependent and conforming to the gender roles assigned to them. In *Interview with the Vampire* (1976/2010), Anne O’Brien Rice’s Claudia is trapped in the body of a five-year-old girl with a mature mind. Characters with innate conflicts invite readers to reflect on their complex lives and living conditions. Claudia’s design also contributes to her presentation as an object for manipulation. As an object of manipulation, Claudia can never escape from supervision and
patriarchy. Although Rice shows Claudia’s awareness and consciousness of the oppression she suffers and her attempt to fight for autonomy, she can never achieve empowerment. This ending of the story is significant not only due to Claudia’s attempt to pursue empowerment, but also because it emphasises the writing patterns of vampire literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This chapter ends with an analysis of L. A. Banks’s *Minion* (2003). I argue that the female vampire figure in this novel is conventional in that she is a nameless, voiceless, powerful and horrific figure who does not know how to use her innate power to liberate herself and is unaware of the oppression she is experiencing and is always linked with killing and deaths. Despite the conventional female vampire figure presented in the novel, I argue that including a coloured vampire huntress and her team shows the writer’s awareness of the importance of embracing differences. I argue that although it is not the female vampire figure who is empowering herself, L.A. Banks is attempting to show the possibilities of the empowerment of women of colour in the novel through portraying the coming of age of Damali, a woman of colour, and her relationship with Marlene. I point out that vampire literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has a clear tendency to portray female vampire figures who are white and from the privileged classes as powerless objects that are dependent, lack awareness and consciousness and are less autonomous. Analysis of these
writing patterns shows that the vampire literature in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is no-inclusive in its reflection of the oppression and discrimination of people from different times and contexts, such as men and women of colour.

Considering the many forms of oppression and discrimination affecting people of colour through the lens of Kimberlé Crenshaw’s intersectionality, I adopt an interdisciplinary approach to reading vampire literature to show that Gomez’s *The Gilda Stories: A Novel* (1991) and Butler’s *Fledgling: A Novel* (2005) are able to portray female vampire figures as empowered images of women to a certain extent, as both of the protagonists are aware and conscious of the oppression and discrimination they face in their daily lives. These characters also show their awareness of and respect for their rights and freedoms of choice and speech. Furthermore, they attempt to demonstrate their autonomy and ability to think individually and critically in the decision-making process and put their thoughts into action. Mapping the daily experiences of women of colour with Gomez’s *The Gilda Stories: A Novel* (1991) and Butler’s *Fledgling: A Novel* (2005), it is undeniable that neither author can deploy or comprehensively reflect the situation of women of colour, especially those from the lower classes. For example, in their discussions of slavery and family roles, both novels fail to reflect how women of
colour were treated and trained on their way to be sold to whites and the family roles of men and women in non-white families. Although they discuss sexual and workplace violence, neither author overly discusses domestic violence, verbal violence, children sexual abuse, dating violence or the psychological, mental and health effects of violence on women of colour. Key themes such as prostitution and legal justice are mentioned only in a general way without providing any details about how identities like class and race result in different forms of discrimination and oppression against women of colour through the lens of intersectionality. The historical development, events, issues and milestones of the fight against injustice in legal systems such as suffrage, abortion rights, reproduction rights and workplace justice are also not discussed in *The Gilda Stories: A Novel* (1991) and *Fledgling: A Novel* (2005).

Despite the absence of in-depth discussions and depictions of the oppression of women of colour, the two selected texts are unique and worthy of great appreciation, as their authors are at least aware of the problem of second-wave feminism, the different kinds of oppression women of colour in different classes and the insensitivities of vampire-themed literary works in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although the daily experiences of people of colour are overgeneralised
in the texts, the authors attempt to emphasise issues in the non-white community that are worthy of real-world discussion. This indeed enriches the function of vampire literature, as it adds an alternative social function to the function of offering leisure and entertainment to readers. Both Gomez’s *The Gilda Stories: A Novel* (1991) and Butler’s *Fledgling: A Novel* (2005) take a big step and open a new area for the development of vampire literature. They explore vampire literature as a genre in addition to its evolution. Finally, they show that vampire literature can be used as a lens to examine and help reflect on the oppression found in the daily lives of people of colour.

Future scholarship should continue examining works in the twentieth century to trace the recent development and evolution of vampire literature as a genre. Due to time limit, this research does not include examining vampire literature in popular culture and works that are serialised. It is hope that future researches can focus on analysing the characterization of coloured female vampire figures in serialised works to learn from the coming of age and the way these figures deal with oppressions and achieve empowerment and grow together with them. Since themes and elements, such as fantasies and science fictions is emerging to the vampire literature in the twentieth century, the scope of targeted readers are
expended to kids, teens and young adults. It is possible that recent works are more influential to readers and are able to reflect difficulties and oppression found in the daily lives of young women of different race and class.
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Taylor, J. S. (1837). *Slavery in the United States: A Narrative of the Life and Adventures of Charles Ball, A Black Man, Who Lived Forty Years in Maryland, South Carolina and Georgia, as a Slave, under Various Masters, and was One year in the Navy with Commodore Barney, during the Later War. Containing an Account of the Manners and Usages of The Planters and Slaveholders of the South - A Description of the Condition and Treatment of the Slaves, with Observations upon The State of Morals Amongst the Cotton planters, and the Perils and Sufferings of a Fugitive Slave, Who Twice Escape from The Cotton Country*. New York: Brick Church Chapel.


The story is written from the perspective of African American with the main character an African American young girl. This girl is an escaped slave who stabs a rapist for self-defense. This girl is rescued by a vampire name Gilda and is brought into Gilda’s vampire family without a name. After being turned into a vampire, this girl is named as Gilda.

This story is written as historic records of Gilda’s 200 years, from 1850 to 2050, journey travelling from Louisiana to New Hampshire. Each chapter of the story is like a lesson of Gilda and a record of her personal growth. In the 1800s, Gilda learns the rules of being a vampire and develops her attitude towards equality. She learns to get along with vampires and human harmoniously. She also confronts with vampires who attempts to control and dominate others. In the 1900s, she starts to protect and influence African American women in her journey. She takes the role to enlighten African American women by raising their awareness to oppressions and rescuing them from harm and threats no matter whether she works in a shop or work as a writer of novels. In 2050, Gilda guides the readers to examine environmental issues. Gilda is being put into a polluted world where everyone attempts to escape from the planet. While the rich hunts vampires for extending their lives, the poor has to bear the cost of environmental destruction of the planet.

The main character of this story is Shori, a 12-year-old African American girl who is in fact a 53-year-old vampire from a vampire race named Ina. Shori is different from other Inas because she is being regarded as a failure of a bioengineered test. She has the genes of human and vampire at the same time. This allows her to walk under the sun during the day unlike other Inas. This evolution of Ina is not being appreciated by the race of Ina but resulted the elimination of Shori’s family.

This story begins with the waking up of Shori from a ruin. Shori lost her memory of the past including who she is. She is being rescued by a white human man called Wright. Wright takes good care of Shori and allows Shori to stay with him. Shori starts to search for her identity with the help of Wright and literary record of vampire in human libraries and on the Internet.

Later, Shori meets her father, Iosif. He brings Shori to his Ina family and explains the attack of Shori and her mother’s Ina family. He also helps Shori to learn about culture, tradition and language of Ina. However, Iosif’s family is being attacked by other Inas violently. Shori brings her symbionts and seeks help from her Ina alliance. Shori decides to sue the Silk family for attacking Shori’s family in the Council of Judge. During the pursuit of justice in the court, Shori has to confront with the Silk family and fight against threats and murders. At the end of the story, Shori wins the case and creates her own family while the Silk family is being sentenced to end their bloodline.
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November 2017