

Bones and All: Cannibal Romance and the Ethics of Eating Well

Anna Kérchy

HJEAS

ABSTRACT

The contemporary paranormal fantasy romance genre targeting young adult readership has experimented with an impressive variety of interspecies pairings while recycling the trope of impossible/forbidden love as a means of self-discovery. However, after the human–vampire, human–werewolf (*Twilight*), human–angel (*Fallen*), human–cyborg (*Cinder*), and even human–zombie (*Warm Bodies*) couples, the latest coming-of-age fantasy romance budding between two teenage cannibals unable to control their meat-eating impulses seems to be breaking ultimate taboos, moving towards the abjectification of the subject to showcase ultimate moral dilemmas of our times. I wish to argue that the cannibal romance as a body-genre in Linda Williams’s sense of the term disturbs our ideologically disciplined cultured embodiment to foreground raw flesh, bloody meat, tremulous corporeal intensities which unleash anarchic Dionysian impulses to perform social criticism. The narratological patterns of the heteronormative romance plot are subverted, and the compulsory open ending of “living happily ever after” is mocked in a story about violent deaths and difficult survival, foregrounding precarity, vulnerability, and remorse as formative experience of humankind. I suggest that at the end of the Anthropocene we are likely to interpret the novel as a fictional reformulation of Derrida’s ethics of eating well, an apology of the carnivorous human in the era of the sixth mass extinction and an unredeemable environmental crisis he is responsible for, and also a call for the respectful relation to the other on the plate, or at the table—but also, in a deconstructive sense, “a respect for that which cannot be eaten, cannot be assimilated in a text, that must remain indeterminate, untranslatable, a remainder that cannot be read, that must remain alien.” (AK)

KEYWORDS: interspecies romance, cannibalism, ethics of eating well, gastropolitics, anthropocene, body horror



A generic mutant: YA dark fantasy failed-Bildungsroman

In her classic work, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, Rosemary Jackson insists that the social-historical contextualization of the literary fantastic genre is necessary to highlight the cultural-political implications and critical potentials of the speculative fictional writerly mode. According to the symptomatic reading propagated by her, far from shallow escapism, each era documents the imprint of its collective cultural unconscious, recording the communal anxieties and desires in fictionalized forms in these sublimatory narratives.

Monster figures, in particular, spectacularly embody the paradigmatic psychic malaise of the era when they have been imagined into being. Accordingly, Frankenstein impersonates the dangerous side-effects of industrial revolution and the hybris of scientific curiosity; Jekyll and Hyde capture the dread of Darwinian degeneration; Dracula evokes the horrors of sexual promiscuity, syphilis, and foreign invasion; Godzilla stands for radiation fears, while revengeful robots and evil mutants reflect growing concerns about the rapid development of AI and GMO technologies; and zombies stage the mindless shopping addicts' dehumanization by capitalist consumer culture.¹

One of the most popular fantastic fictional trends of the first two decades of our postmillennial era has been a hybrid genre that could be best described by the complex label "young adult dystopic dark-fantasy failed-Bildungsroman." Besides generating unprecedented box-office success and intense fandom interaction, this generic mutant—mixing the trauma narrative tradition, the death-drive-motivated sublime of catastrophe movies, and the bittersweet yearnings of the coming-of-age story—fits the Jacksonian symptomatic-sublimatory agenda. The genre's mostly serialized novels thematize micro- and macro-cosmic-scale cataclysms, largely unresolvable conflicts interconnected on individual and collective levels. These stories concentrate on what John Clute (1997) calls "a thinning of the universe," the second in the four stages of the classic fantasy plot (Wrongness—Thinning—Recognition—Healing), a crisis period when magic and/or vitality are diminishing, dark powers are rising (with the advent of a supernatural evil or a despotic institution, and vague impending threats of natural disaster and/or civilizational collapse), and the hope for a better world is gradually vanishing.

Rebellious teenage heroes and heroines do their best to fight against this thinning of the universe. Yet according to the logic of the dark fantasy genre, even if the status quo can be momentarily reestablished, real healing never comes for good, the world can never be fully cured. The traditional

“happily ever after” seems impossible, problematized in a postmodern vein for its classist, sexist, racist, ableist ideological implications, as it is scrutinized in Cristina Bacchilega’s analysis of the disclosure of systemic hegemonic oppression in transmedia repurposings entwined in the twenty-first-century fairy-tale web (Bacchilega 2013). Maturation for the twenty-first-century fictional adolescent protagonist simply means coming to terms with the constantly changing (never fully grown, hence fallible) nature of the self and society, the understanding of the unpredictability of changes which can equally be for better or for worse. This acknowledgment of precariousness coincides with the questioning of the teleological improvement and the doubting of the idyllic option for a satisfying closure traditionally implied in the *Bildungsroman* life-narrative and the Enlightenment myth of progress. Maturation also entails a realization of the moral compromises one must make as an adult, of the shortcomings of humanist values (condemnable for its speciesist and narcissist dimensions, among others), and of the arrested development of a humanity in crisis.

To mention a few examples from YA fantasy hits, Bella must fully abandon her humanity and transform into a vampire to win the true love of her undead groom in Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight*. Her dehumanization is the price of her paranormal empowerment. Harry Potter can defeat Voldemort only if he first accepts his kinship with the Dark Lord: the boy’s self-recognition as an horcrux also recalls the melancholic acceptance of the complex entanglement of good and evil, life and death, ego and shadow-self. After his cleansing from the demonic doppelganger, Harry is still doomed to navigate as an in-between figure, unable to bridge the gap between the wizarding world and the human realm ruled by muggle ignorance. He remains an outsider in both realms. Katniss Everdeen stays psychologically wounded for life as a result of the deadly competition in the hunger games. Founding a family is a small consolation, a weak attempt to make bearable a life rendered fundamentally unbearable by human injustice. Coming of age in these postmillennial popular cultural YA classics means facing the evil to momentarily defeat it, but also accepting the beast within, and admitting the incurable inhumanity of the human race itself.

In a Jacksonian interpretation, these stories reflect the apocalyptic Angst that resonates with our current *Zeitgeist*: an omnipresent sense of vulnerability and helplessness incited by the increasing awareness that humanity today is fatally threatened by epidemics, wars, global warming, economic collapse, and overpopulation. These irreversible and unredeemable processes make us realize that the Unthinkable practically emerges on so

many levels that it is becoming an integral part of our daily lived realities. As a result, the Western world suffers from psychic disorders, paranoid phobias, maladies of the soul which proliferate on a mass scale and are gradually accepted as the new normal. Climate anxiety, flight shame, FOMO, hypochondria, agoraphobia, depression, alienation, sociophobia (triggered by the Covid pandemic), eating disorders, techno-addiction, attention deficit disorders are tormenting a despairing proportion of the populace today. These mental problems afflict particularly harshly teenagers and young adults who already experience the identity crisis naturally concomitant with their maturation. The global premonition of an impending catastrophe is aggravated by the press's sensation-seeking doomsday heralding headlines and a remorse felt over our compassion fatigue, our increasing numbness to the indigestible information-overdose of televised tragedies.

The general sense of precarity, a mood of affective/cognitive confusion in the face of uncertainty and insecurity, characterizes our postmillennial times. Rosi Braidotti associates the posthuman condition with an internally contradictory alternation of emotions: "excitement and exhilaration in view of the advanced technologies that drive the Fourth Industrial Revolution's age," flipping into "anxiety and fear at the thought of the huge costs and damages inflicted by the sixth mass extinction, on both human and non-human inhabitants of the planet" (465). This emotional imbalance evokes in all, regardless of age, a feeling of disorientation reminiscent of the growing pains of adolescence's transitional state. This is a potential reason that accounts for the popularity of the YA² dystopic dark fantasies: the genre resonates with the crisis state we are inhabiting today and oddly may even help us to make sense of our gradually unthinkable realities at this geological moment at the end of the Anthropocene.

Interspecies romance in the Eremocene

If young adult novels as coming-of-age stories stage the struggles of a crisis-period on an individual level, presented from a subjective perspective—while mirroring collective anxieties—YA romances also hold interesting affective narratological implications. They stage the difficulties of verbalizing emotions, passions, and carnal desire. They reveal the hardship of harmonizing the enworlded public and embodied private experience of the obsolete notion of romance. It also critically reflects on the ethical challenges of conceptualizing love in our gradually dehumanizing era.

Both intraspecies and interspecies Young Adult romance thematize the dreadfulness of desire, the struggle between the urges to find oneself and

to find someone to belong to. This desire for one's other half, in the Platonic sense, coincides with the melancholic recognition of isolation, implying that we are not complete but fractured on our own. The focus falls on the antagonistic pull between the yearning for freedom and the yearning for the possession of/by another. In interspecies romance fantasy, the other is often portrayed as otherworldly, supernatural, demonic, or monstrous because of the threat the desiring/desired alterity imposes on the integrity of the self. In such a couple, there is no longer "me" and "you," just "us" via a mostly romanticized cannibalistic engulfment of the self.

Elaborating on Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's monster theory, Ildikó Limpár argues that monsters are cultural symbols that guard the borders society creates to protect its normative values, and since adolescence is a time for border-crossing explorations meant to test the viability of these cultural rules, fantastic coming-of-age narratives' leitmotif of the encounter with monstrosity facilitates the mapping (and transgressing or, rather, fluidification) of one's identity boundaries (2–4). I believe that the guilty pleasures of these YA monster stories come precisely from the taboo-breaking destabilization of boundaries between self and other, us and them, human and monster, normal and pathological, and the resulting painful-pleasurable recognition of our very own monstrosity. This is what Julia Kristeva's psychoanalytically informed semiotics in her book *The Powers of Horror* (1982) calls the potential "abjection of subjectivities" (5). In this process, the repressed carnal desires and dreads surface through the disclosure of our tremulous private corporeal realities' fleshly non-beings beneath our cultured embodiments. The abjection culminates in the crisis of identity and rationality as well as the predictably unpredictable "collapse of meaning" (2).

The contemporary paranormal fantasy romance genre targeting young adult readership has experimented with an impressive variety of interspecies pairings while recycling the trope of impossible/forbidden love as a means of self-discovery. We have seen human–vampire, human–werewolf (*Twilight*), human–angel (*Fallen*), human–demon/hunter (*City of Bones*), human–cyborg (*Cinder*), human–zombie (*Warm Bodies*), human–amphibian (*Shape of Water*), human–thing (*Stardust*), humanoid witch–vampire (*A Discovery of Witches*) couples fighting to overcome the difficulties delaying their union.

Interspecies romance recycles archaic tropes familiar from fairy tales: the Beauty and the Beast and the animal husband/bride themes are often coupled with a "from rags to riches" plot and magical metamorphosis motifs

as human and non-human life forms mutually affect one another through their amorous interactions. The genre's assumption that the interspecies bond entails reciprocal embetterment of the partners involved highlights the moral pedagogical implications.

Already in the case of postmodern recyclings of the fairy-tale genre we can sense a paradigm shift, a change in the use and moral evaluation of the metamorphosis trope, which paves the way for the confusing genre of the cannibal romance. In classic fairy tales, the happy ending often involves the transformation back into a human form: the Frog-Prince-like characters are relieved—usually by courtesy of the “kiss of true love”—from their cursed bestial anatomy at the stories' satisfying finale. Elsewhere, as for instance in the Celtic and Norse legends of the seal folk, the magical shapeshifter's animal-skin is stolen while she is bathing in the form of a beautiful woman; unable to transform back into animal form and join her sisters, she is left behind, marries her thief, and much later (mostly after bearing children) she finds her skin and is confronted with the moral dilemma whether to return to her kin or to remain trapped in the human shape for good. Shapeshifting is even more complex in other stories: throughout her adventures, Andersen's original Little Mermaid transforms from half-fish half-human aquatic hybrid to human girl and then to seafoam and to a nature spirit, “a daughter of the air” awaiting to metamorphose into a pure, immaterial, immortal soul. Her journey (incompletely portrayed by the Disney animation adaptation) leads from animal to human to thing to force of nature to spiritual essence. While these multiple transfigurations are invested with Christian religious significance for Andersen, they also carry posthumanist implications. In postmodern revisions, as in Dreamworks' 2001 blockbuster 3D animation movie *Shrek* or Angela Carter's numerous feminist fairy-tale rewrites, tables are turned: human characters reject the anthropomorphic metamorphosis and choose to keep their animal hides,³ implying that a bit of bestiality might be necessary for experiencing the intense richness of the vitality of being.

Stories about human-beast shapeshifting—regardless of the fact whether wearing the other species' skin is a curse, a reward, an accident, or a choice—invite us to challenge our anthropocentric worldview, to suspend our sense of speciesist supremacy, and to consider ethically charged existential philosophical issues. Interspecies romance revolving around the issue of empathically identifying with the desired/dreaded other urges us to confront questions concerning humanity, trying to understand what our relations and responsibilities towards one another are and what we may learn

from other species. Hence, interspecies romance necessarily opens the way for reevaluating ideological strategies of normalization or pathologization, of integration or exclusion, and it pushes readers to rethink normative social constructions of mental health, body image, identity scripts, interpersonal bonds, collective scapegoatings and solidarities.

Among the many posthumanist critical dilemmas raised, it is exciting to consider how the essential motivation for interspecies romance is a desire to connect with other life forms. This reaching out to others might be interpreted as a compensatory gesture characteristic of the Eremocene, our era named an “age of loneliness” by evolutionary biologist Edward O. Wilson (Trachsel 69). According to Wilson, today, in the age of the sixth mass extinction, the escalating environmental damage (pollution, overconsumption, overpopulation) is attributable to the original sin of humans’ dissociation from the non-human, the unraveling of the “web of life” constituting the ecological system. Results of this alienation are cli-fi fantasies of a barren, hostile, or disintegrating nature, which reveal the human atonement felt over environmental destruction and the loss of the illusion of human control over nature. In interspecies romance the very controllability of human nature, the knowability of the self, is questioned through the encounter with the other. In both speculative fictional genres the question remains the one raised by Wilson: will we go on exploiting the planet to meet the immediate needs of humans, and guarantee the well-being of our species (and only our species) even at the cost of violent undue interference in ecological balance and the lives of multiple life forms, or will we consider stopping the destruction for the sake of future generations, trusting in mutually enriching potentials of solidarious “interspecies dependencies” (Haraway 11) and multispecies cohabitations?

Bones and all: eat the one you love?

A recent coming-of-age dark fantasy romance, *Bones and All* by Camille DeAngelis (2015), encapsulates the postmodern mood of disorientation—alienation, heartbreak, and a questioning of the self through the encounter with monstrous otherness—in a road trip narrative set in a distant, vaguely familiar US. This is a dystopic realm where the dehumanization of the human race is numbly accepted as natural humanoid cannibalistic monsters are imperceptibly integrated within the society of human beings they feed upon. The monsters, laconically called “eaters,” are reminiscent of the Arabic folklore’s ghouls, demonic beasts (originally

sometimes pictured as humanoid creatures shapeshifting into hyenas) who snatch corpses from cemeteries or lure people away to devour them.⁴

However, the troubling strangeness of DeAngelis's cannibals is due to the incertitude surrounding the origins of monstrosity in her storyworld: we never learn whether the insatiable hunger for human flesh is a result of a magical curse, a mysterious epidemic, or a hereditary degeneration, whether it is a supernatural power or a disempowering disability, whether anthropophagic acts are elicited by biological needs, psycho-sexual drives, ritualistic motivations, decadent deviation, or criminal behavior. Moreover, cannibals bear no physical marks of difference, so they are indiscernible from others and cannot be spotted in public. Although (and precisely because) they look like the rest of us, they embody the uncanniness of gothic horror by slyly introducing the radically alien perspective of the animal gaze within the anthropocentric visual economy to enact the meatification of the human subject, and to trouble the ordered system from within.

The uncanny effect is enhanced by DeAngelis's conjoining of the gothic horror and the teen romance genres, as well as her sympathetic portrayal of her cannibal protagonists as vulnerable teenagers who are isolated as outcasts because of their monstrous differences but desperately keep longing for love. Emotional confusion is created in readers confronted with the relatable tenderness of the bestial anti-heroes. The non-homogenizable nature of the cannibal race equally creates cognitive dissonance: anthropophagic addiction is sometimes explained by necessity and sometimes by choice, hence making moral judgments difficult if not dubious, while revealing the multi-faceted variety of differences.

The plot of *Bones and All* can be summarized as follows: sixteen-year-old Maren is abandoned by her mother, who cannot bear any longer the psychological burden of her daughter's cannibalism. She is tired of secretiveness and culpability, of having to pack their car to move after each time Maren half-accidentally commits a murder whenever she is about to fall in love and ends up devouring her unknowing potential future partner. Maren embarks on a journey of self-discovery in search of her origins, looking for her father, whom she has never met, desperately trying to come to terms with her own monstrous self. During her hitchhiking across the US, she meets kind humans and enemies—some of both get eaten—and fellow eaters addicted to human flesh. This latter group includes her own grandfather, who is a predatory, perverted paternal figure; some hobos loitering on the margins of society; and a mysterious wanderer Lee, who, presumably, teaches Maren the meaning of true love by offering himself to be eaten up by her.

The budding romance between the two adolescent cannibals is a curious case of interspecies romance.⁵ We learn from their reminiscences that both Maren and Lee have had human love interests, failed fatal flings (which all ended up with deeply traumatizing, or straightforward eating up human partners). After their tragically absurd romantic prehistory, the pair apparently make each other's perfect match: both are in-between creatures, humans (or humanoid mutants?) turned bestial by their irrepressible meat-eating impulses. They are outcasts on the fringes of their society, holding on to the last morsels of their humanity manifested in the atonement felt over their hideous cannibalistic acts, as well as the desire to take care of each other and to share the quest for the meaning of life and death.

In fact, because of their constant remorseful self-reflection, Maren and Lee seem more morally mature, more humane than members of the non-cannibalistic human society, the normal citizens who seem aware but negligent or forgetful about cannibalism proliferating in the storyworld. Although anthropophagy violates the ultimate taboo of our species, this perversion remains imperceptible and non-persecuted in the narrative: cannibals can pass as/among people, they are more on the run because of their guilt than criminal prosecution that somehow never manages to detect them. Human society either lives in full denial in the face of the traumatic impossible turned real in the figure of the human-eating-human, or it chooses to remain consciously blind to the otherness lurking within the self-same. The young cannibals are like cancerous cells ravaging invisibly from the inside the healthy body of human society built on the collective consensus of mutual trust. In this respect, they evoke the "enemy within" rhetoric commenting on the malignant activities of the terrorist cells during a 9/11 press coverage (see Mitchell): they embody metaphorically the internal ills of society.

The cannibal romance as a "body-genre" in Linda Williams's sense of the term (2) disturbs our ideologically disciplined cultured embodiment to foreground raw flesh, bloody meat, tremulous corporeal intensities, which unleash anarchic Dionysian impulses to perform social criticism. The narratological patterns of the heteronormative romance plot are subverted, and the compulsory open ending of "living happily ever after" is mocked in a story about violent deaths and difficult survival, foregrounding precarity, shame, mourning, and melancholy as formative experience of humankind.

The very genre of "cannibal horror romance" is both a cliché and a paradoxical misnomer. Its cliché aspect relates to the embodied metaphor of passion, expressed through excessive terms of endearment: "I love you so much I could devour you."⁶ On the other hand, cannibal romance is also an

ultimate paradox: it annihilates the couple, leaves only one partner behind, and only the haunting memory of the consumed partner remains. Readers are overwhelmed by a sense of perplexion because of the brutal abortion of the conventional closure of the romance narrative.⁷

The ancient Greeks distinguished between eight different kinds of loving: *eros* is romantic passion, *philia* is fondness between friends, *storge* is an empathic tie between family members, *agape* is unconditional adulation of God, *mania* is possessive love, *pragma* is accepting love, *ludus* is playful love, *philautia* is self-love (see Soble). *Bones and All* meticulously stages the failure of all these affective relational varieties: the mother abandons the daughter, the lover feeds on her partner, divine providence is absent from this world. This is an anti-love story portraying a world where tenderness is doomed to become twisted, perverted, ephemeral—yet, it remains the only reason to live or to die for.

Reasons to bite

The proliferation of the reasons why the cannibal characters kill and eat in DeAngelis's novel illustrates the moral panic and cognitive dissonance caused by these terrifying yet fascinating monster figures' taboo-breaking trespassings. Maren is responsible for the horrific revitalization of the romance trope: she is like a female praying mantis, a monstrous "*femme castratrice*" (Creed 85);⁸ whenever a boy approaches her romantically or sexually, their intimate encounter is abruptly ended by her eating him. For Maren hunger is associated with erotic excitement and amorous attachments, which clearly surpass and subvert the heteronormative reproductive sexual economy's romance scenario and are closer to the dangerously unstoppable, femme fatale-ish, queer desires. Maren's first prey was her babysitter via an instinctively aggressive enactment of an infantile libidinal longing for the primary caretaker, followed by a bloody "accident" in a summer camp when she was eight and first experienced half-unknowingly the irrepressible nature of her predatory appetite. Afterwards, hunger overwhelms her each year once, when she cannot help eating the boy who romantically advances her and could have become her boyfriend.

Luca Guadagnino's filmic adaptation of the novel (2022) makes the queering of Maren's desires even more explicit: her journey from abandonment (this time by her father, not her mother) to self-discovery begins with her involuntary coming out as a cannibal at a sleepover party when after painting each other's nails she kisses and then suddenly bites off the finger of one of her girlfriends. Shocked, she runs away from the scene spectacularly troubling the ideal image of girlhood: the innocent glee turned into ravaging violence is

metonymically represented by the colorful claws (painted nails) and bloody teeth. In both the novel and the film, Maren keeps on suffering from guilt, shame, and loneliness. She is endlessly pitying her victims' ruptured lives and is tormented by an undefinable longing for companionship.

Lee, the boy she befriends on her journey—and whom she meets, ironically, in a foodstore—eats bad guys who deserve death, people without whom the world would be a better place. He is a heartbroken Byronic character full of spleen, grieving his former girlfriend, who ended up in a psychiatric hospital because she could not cope with the sight of seeing him eating fellow humans. His figure is heavily indebted to Anne Rice's Lestat from *Interview with a Vampire*, perhaps the first bloodsucker with a human self-conscience, a remorseful, brooding villain hero. In the end, as in an ultimate act of love, he offers himself up for consumption for Maren. During a stoic acceptance of the predator-prey hierarchy, his only means of rebellion—like suicide was a means of escape for modernist poets—is choosing to be eaten instead of remaining an eater.

Sully, an old man who turns out to be Maren's grandfather, is a petty criminal and a psychopath serial killer, who steals from the random victims he consumes, makes a fetish object of a braid (scalp) from their hair, and would even eat up his own grandchild, similar to how the titan Cronos/Saturn would consume his own children for fear they would destroy him according to a prophecy. Cronos as a god of time communicates a warning of no future in a fatally corrupted world. The novel could also be interpreted as a rewriting of the Little Red Riding Hood story, a cautionary tale of being lost in the dark woods, of erring and punishment. Bruno Bettelheim (166–83) highlighted in this "little girl lost" story the splitting of the Father figure into a protective good father (the hunter who rescues granny and Little Red), and the Bad Father (the predator wolf who wants to eat the girl up). They impersonate two sides of the same coin (like the witch and the good fairy in the female equivalent of the splitting into bad/good mother figures), since it is difficult for a child to conceptualize the ambiguity that the parent is both a nurturer and a punisher. Maren's biological father is a catatonic patient with amnesia when Maren finds him in a mental ward, but from his past notebooks it turns out that he had gentle affections for Maren's mother and their child (Maren), whom he never met. The grandfather, in contrast, is a ruthless murderer and a repulsive, abject creature with a bad breath smelling of putrefaction, rot, and death. While the deranged father is lost in time or rather timelessness, the grandfather appears as Father Time, the companion of the Grim Reaper, who brings death and ceases time. This splitting of the (grand)father figure also represents a rupture

in the patriarchal hegemonic system as noticed by the teen female focalizer, envisioning the falling apart of her world, and the disintegration of human reality on the whole.

Further intertextual echoes of Little Red Riding Hood's tale can be detected in the cannibalistic act that can be interpreted as an aggressive compensation of anxieties related to intergenerational rivalry, intrafamilial tensions, troubled bonds by blood-ties. DeAngelis's eater revives the hungry girl from Paul Delarue's early peasant folk oral version of the tale entitled "The Grandmother's Tale," in which Red Riding Hood is tricked by the wolf—representing all-encompassing desire and lust—to taste the flesh and drink the blood of her dead granny before climbing into bed with the predator to consummate bestial passions. Maren, like Delarue's Red, is always famished for more and is never anyone's meat.

Furthermore, the novel revives the dysfunctional family trope of classic Gothic fiction borrowed from the sensation novelistic tradition, cropping up in classics like Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, or E. A. Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," dark fantasies populated with villainous patriarchs, mad mothers, incestuous siblings, and virginal damsels in distress. The irony of DeAngelis's rewrite is that her young heroine is no less blood-thirsty than her adversaries, and instead of a specific Gothic setting like a doomed ancestral castle or a haunted mansion, all the world serves as the humanoid predators' hunting ground.

A symptomatic reading of carnalization

The insatiable hunger for human flesh can have a variety of different metaphorical meanings. It can be interpreted in terms of pathology, as addiction, contamination, eating disorder, or incurable illness. It can be a dark secret, a radically differing non-standard sexual orientation, uncontrollable queer desire, but it can just as well mean a vague search for the real flavor of life or an insatiable appetite endlessly stimulated by consumer culture. There is no real explanation provided for the origins or motivations of cannibalism—neither fantastic nor rationalistic. DeAngelis's cannibals are unlike the ghoul who eats human meat because of demonic possession, or the psychopath driven by mental disorder, or Papua-New Guinean tribes motivated by religious convictions. There is no cure and no resolution, either, for this deadly deviation.

For DeAngelis's young cannibal antiheroes, becoming a monster implies losing everything (home, family, friends), becoming vulnerable, realizing the fearfulness of a world in which they are identified/othered as

ultimate sources of fear. They impersonate the “enemy within” the self and society, the potential meaninglessness or latent nonsensification troubling meanings. They are the unexpected threat who feel remorse but cannot renounce their predatoriness: they perform the “abjectification of the subject” (Kristeva 5) by revealing a perspective from which human identity is reduced to prey, raw meat, consumable flesh.

This carnalization showcases major ethical dilemmas of our times. It problematizes the unsustainability and illusoriness of the ideologically prescribed, normativized divide between the normal (healthy/sane) self and the monstrous abnormal other, who prove to be imperceptibly inseparable, infiltrating into one another. It also reflects on the recognition of our vulnerable exposure to the natural lifeworld (Nature) and to our nature (the risk of becoming prey to our passions). It asks the age-old moral philosophical questions already tackled by Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*: who is to blame for the monster’s monstrosity, do monsters deserve love, and is the corrupted human race capable or worthy of love at all?

In a more pragmatic social critical vein, the story confronts us with the classist blindness of the majority human society that ignores the marginalized others on the fringes. The storyworld’s oblivion to cannibals and the pointless wondering of eaters resembles how the homeless, vagrant, poor, junkie, multiply marginalized social outcasts largely deprived of rights are nearly invisibly drifting out of the visible, respectable strata of the community. It also invites readers to ponder about how to come of age as an isolated outcast without any social network of protection, without any normative reference point in relation to which one may identify oneself.

DeAngelis admittedly aimed to convey a political message with her novel: her cannibal body-horror was meant to disclose the ethical crisis of our carnivorous culture by calling attention to the speciesist partiality that mourns the violence afflicted on human flesh but remains uninterested in the consumption of other life-forms (Sondermann). However, some of the novel’s most exciting passages are not necessarily the ones with explicit anti-carnivorous ideological implications, but rather those memory fragments which attest anti-heroine Maren’s troubled relation to eating. Besides her traumatic flashbacks of consuming human flesh as symptoms of her bestiality, she also recalls cherished memories of her dining with her mother as ephemeral—simulated?—instances of intimate family bonding. Meanwhile she is haunted by vague reminiscences of one of her early victims, a boy in the summer camp, who invited her for a weird secret snack of locust shells, wishing unsuspectingly that their shared appetite for “things that weren’t

meant to be eaten” (17) would serve as the foundation of a budding friendship grounded in the infantile pleasure of oral trespassing and culinary taboo breaking. The disastrous consequences of this innocently perverted gustatory delight (Maren eats the boy instead of the locust shells) are followed by a remorsefully self-punishing grief manifested in anorectic self-starvation, which sheds light on the complexity of Maren’s character (she is not a psychopath but a monster with a self-conscience) but also reminds us of the psychopathological problems lurking behind eating disorders. These embodied memories in Maren’s coming-of-age narrative illustrate the intricacies of our affectively charged cognitive responses to food. In a provocative interpretation, one may even wonder if the human prey to this teen cannibal serves as comfort food to alleviate loneliness and social isolation in an increasingly alienated, if not hostile, environment.

Speaking silences: meat guilt and a call to moral veganism

On the novel’s textual level, not much is said about the cannibalistic act itself. DeAngelis shies away from the explicit verbalization of bloodshed. In this sense, the book is closer to a suspenseful thriller than an actual horror story, not to mention the splatterpunk genre one would associate with the cannibal theme. Episodes culminating in manslaughter begin with a brief cataloguing of sensorial stimuli that arouse an irrepressible hunger decoded as passionate yearning overwhelming the self.

I didn’t want to. I really, really wanted to. I leaned in and sniffed him. Chili powder—rotten eggs—cotton lint. I pressed my lips to his throat and felt him stiffen with anticipation. He put a hand to my ponytail and stroked it, like he was petting a horse. He breathed on me, I smelled the chili, and just like that there was no going back.

* * *

I stumbled out of the red tent toward the lake, out to the edge of the dock, and flung the grocery bag into the water. Then I pulled off my pajamas and threw them out as far as I could. I watched my Little Mermaid T-shirt sink below the surface of the lake, heard the plastic bag gurgling as it filled. (21)

I put my lips to his neck, pressed them there, and drank him in. I could smell the cocktail sauce on his breath, the little pieces of shellfish rotting in the dark corners of his mouth. I stepped back and looked at him. His eyes were closed and he was smiling like I could do anything I wanted to him and he’d be over the moon about it. This won’t be what you have in mind, I thought. But it’s too late now. When I was finished I fell onto the scrap of

carpet in front of the dryer, shivering so badly I made the machine rumble like it was working. No one upstairs could have heard any of it. Through the speakers in the living room some sister act was crooning, "Take good care of yourself, you belooooong to me . . ." (45)

The subtle allusion to the first gentle tentative contact (a light caress of the hair, the touch of lips on skin, the mingling of breaths) is followed by a certain caesura, silence, a restrained reluctance to verbalize the act of consumption. The cannibalistic deed is typographically marked by three asterisks, iconically symbolizing the teeth ripping into human flesh, or a simple space, perhaps standing for a withheld breath, which is then followed by an ongoing text. Both asterisks and absences suggest the unspeakability of the cannibalistic act and the compassion fatigue of our world that goes on untouched by individual tragedies such as the loss of a random human life. These elliptical constructions integrate a pause in the narrative by intentionally leaving out the taboo-breaking episodes to express the burden on imagination to conceptualize the horrific unsaid. The passages succeeding the ellipsis mostly thematize the instant atonement felt after the killing and the clumsy attempts to hide the evidence of the crime; they also contain subtle ironic commentaries on the impossibility of romance with emblematic scenes, like the sinking of a blood-soaked Little Mermaid shirt in the lake, or the crooning of a kitschy love-song overheard, vibrating over a mauled corpse.

These speaking silences, gaps, blanks in the text can also be symptomatically connected to "meat guilt." This feeling is familiar to many consumers of today's capitalist market economies even if supermarkets strategically try to reduce our shame by selling prepacked meat products in which we no longer recognize fellow sentient beings. A cognitive/affective confusion is related to what psychologists refer to as "meat paradox" and philosophers call "the omnivore's akrasia" (Aaltola). Many people both love and eat animals; they believe in the value of animal wellbeing yet forgetfully consume meat products which have caused suffering and death to nonhuman creatures.

Similarly, in the cannibal romance, love and destruction, care and consumption are not incompatible experiences either. A coming-of-age rite of passage might imply consuming your beloved to celebrate love and learn to love yourself while rebelling against your norm-setting community. (Note that eating an Eater breaks the laws of the cannibal community too.) By creating affective confusion with her absurd, dark, cautionary (anti)fairytale of consumption, DeAngelis aims to promote a vegan ideology⁹ by provoking

audiences to think of their naturalized, unproblematized predatoriness, to consider how “every time we are eating meat, we are eating the body of someone who did not want to die” (Sondermann) and how even our romantic dates revolve around our food fetish and the eroticization of communally feeding on flesh.

On the other hand, when the young cannibals listen to a radio broadcast of a midnight mass, we are reminded that one of the most significant religious ceremonies of Christianity, a major pillar of Western culture, is the holy communion that symbolically stages the drinking of blood and eating of flesh of Jesus Christ, the son of God, through a transubstantiation that merges the holy and the profane, and turns sacred the straightforward monstrous. The preacher on the radio also raises the theological question concerning the culpability of sinners and the believers’ moral responsibility of forgiveness. This can be translated, in biological terms, to the meaninglessness of holding the predator accountable for its predatoriness and has interesting implications with regard to the ethical and political aspects of dietary choices. For the cannibal, consuming the totality of the body (hence the title “bones and all”) without leaving any remainders behind is a feasible option in the fictional world. Yet, this fantastic impossibility also evokes the amnesia regarding the violence that is necessary for the remorseless pleasures of meat production/consumption.

The ethics of eating well

In our era, at the end of the Anthropocene, we can easily interpret the novel as a fictional reformulation of philosopher Jacques Derrida’s “ethics of eating well” (1991). This is an apology of the carnivorous human in the age of the sixth mass extinction and an unredeemable environmental crisis he is responsible for due to his greedy overconsumption. The Derridean critique of carnophallogocentrism discloses how interconnected networks of hegemonic oppression systemically “cannibalize” otherness: it problematizes the ruthless exploitation of marginalized minorities, and argues that intersecting patriarchal/carnivorous means of domination (of women, animals,¹⁰ Queer, poor, disabled, Black, etc.) are foundational in the constitution of the Western subjectivity grounded in a sacrificial logic of self-identity that devours and regurgitates differences of all kinds to solidify standards of normativity. Although Derrida argues for an inalienable carnivorous nature of mankind—even the comprehension of the Cartesian cogito enacts incorporation, digestion, “a kind of sublimated eating” (Olsson and Birnbaum)—his ideology criticism invites the recognition of a moral responsibility to relate respectfully to the other at the table or on the plate. In

a deconstructive sense, Derrida's philosophy and DeAngelis's story equally urge "a respect for that which cannot be eaten, cannot be assimilated in a text," which must remain indeterminate, untranslatable, a remainder that cannot be read and must remain alien (Derrida qtd. in Olsson and Birnbaum). Hence, the acceptance of incertitude, vulnerability, and the burden shared by all living things of the potential of becoming meat may serve as a foundation of solidarity, too.

The carnalization/meatification of humans is equally humiliating and liberating: it awakens us from the slumber of our human vanity and instructs to empathize with the horror of the victimhood, of sentient, intelligent animals' being reduced to edibles. In a way the message of DeAngelis's cannibal romance resonates with environmental activist, ecofeminist philosopher Valerie Plumwood's emphatic rejection of the anthropocentric illusion of the master/monster divide after a kayaking accident when she was attacked and nearly killed by a crocodile. The experience of becoming prey made her rethink her human self, "as part of the food chain, eaten as well as eater," necessarily "coexisting with the otherness of the earth," defined not only by its privileged agency but also in terms of its usefulness for other nonhuman members of the ecosystem within the shared nature-culture continuum of our terrestrial milieu. Similarly to Plumwood's story of her crocodile encounter, *Bones and All* functions as "a humbling and cautionary tale about our relationship with the earth, about the need to acknowledge our own animality, and ecological vulnerability" (Plumwood, "Prey to a Crocodile") from a pseudo-"posthumous posthumanist perspective" (Lovász on Plumwood 84) in line with the *ars moriendi* tradition.

However, the posthumanist message of DeAngelis' book is not entirely optimistic. With a touch of postmodern self-destabilization, the novel's open ending offers a bitterly sarcastic finale. The farewell scene is located in a library—a place often portrayed in dystopic fiction as a last refuge of survivors, a symbolic sacred site of our civilization, a Foucauldian heterotopia encapsulating all the wisdom of humanity beyond spatio-temporal limitations. However, Maren decides to work in the library on the university campus only to shed the last remnants of her humanity, to gain easy access to prey, to fully give in to her cannibal instincts and submit to the utter monstrification of her self. The bookwormish look, the nostalgic reenactment of epistemophilia is a camouflage of the carnivore predator to deceive its victims. With a cheap horror twist, the hunger for knowledge turns into a hunger for blood, brains, bones. The fleshliness of metaphorical language, the acquired taste for the savoriness of writing theorized by

Derrida, ironically becomes literalized here through the connection of body and book.

Bones, of course, belong to the skeletal structure of the human body, to the invisible abject depth beneath the visible, culturally disciplined surface of the skin ego. They are metonymic markers of impending death in the *memento mori* tradition, the pieces of our anatomy which resist most the passing of time. In the novel's fantastic storyworld, no bodily remains whatsoever are left behind after the cannibal attacks, as the predators eat bones and all, as if they just could suddenly erase their prey from the realm of the living via an act of forgetfulness mirroring the denials involved in the meat-eaters' guilt.

Among the many exciting (and dramaturgically beneficent) modifications of the novel's cinematic adaptation, director Luca Guadagnino changes the significance of the title to emphasize the romance plotline, the love between Maren and Lee. In the film, an Eater has to really, really love someone to eat their bones and all, in their integrity, not leaving any morsels behind. Hence being consumed becomes a privilege, and eating a tender act of love, a touching fusion of self and other, a romanticized encounter of omnivorous edibles in the food-chain.

In conclusion, DeAngelis's *Bones and All*, as a disturbing cannibal romance, fits into the popular fantastic fictional trend of YA dystopic dark-fantasy failed-Bildungsroman. This chimeric hybrid genre expresses the emotional imbalance characteristic of adolescence and also captures the sense of disorientation defining the postmillennial Zeitgeist of the Eremocene, our age when the lonely species of humankind suffers from the alienation from the lifeworld it feeds on. The consumption of human flesh for different reasons, but especially and most importantly as an act of love, raises a wide variety of ethical questions from theological dilemmas (involving the clashing of the symbolical and literal meanings of sacrificial dietary ritualistic practices) to vegetarianism/veganism as an ideology of non-violence, the affective-cognitive dissonance of the carnivore's meat-guilt, and even to the Capitalocene's commodification of food sold as a token of love, and love sold as food, a nutrient necessary for humankind's survival endlessly devourable, digestible, dischargeable; rapidly reducible from worthy to waste, like flesh is to meat.¹¹

Far from being a light YA chiller, *Bones and All* represents a beacon of hope that sheds light on the transformative powers of literature and paves the way for increasingly politically self-conscious trends of humanities like vegan philosophy (see Quinn and Westwood). Besides provoking horror with hideous cannibalistic crimes, the novel urges intersectional self-reflection on

neoliberal capitalism's carnophallogocentric web of systemic exploitation to reject the "consumption" of the marginalized many by the powerful privileged few, and to promote veganism as a worldview grounded in intra- and inter-species solidarity.

University of Szeged

Anna Kérchy, Professor of English literature at the University of Szeged, Hungary, does research in feminist narratology, body studies, humanimal encounters, Victorian and postmodern fantastic imagination, and children's/YA literature. She authored the monographs *Body-Texts in the Novels of Angela Carter*, *Alice in Transmedia Wonderland*, and *The Poetics and Politics of Victorian Nonsense*, and (co)edited thirteen essay collections.

Notes

1. See among others: Christa Knellwolf and Jane Goodall, eds. *Frankenstein's Science: Experimentation and Discovery in Romantic Culture, 1780–1830*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008; Sally J. Kline, *The Degeneration of Women: Bram Stoker's Dracula as Allegorical Criticism of the Fin-de-Siècle*. Rheinbach-Merzbach: CMZ Verlag, 1992; Julia Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the "Fin de Siècle"*. New York: Palgrave, 2006; Henry A Giroux, *Zombie Politics and Culture in the Age of Casino Capitalism*. New York: Peter Lang, 2011; Hódosy Annamária, *Klímaszörnyek*. [Climate Monsters] Szeged: Tiszatáj, 2023; Csetényi, Korinna, "The monsters are us: Mad Scientists and Mutated Beasts in Contemporary Natural Horror Fiction," *Posthumanism in Fantastic Fiction*. Ed. Anna Kérchy. Americana E-Books, 2018. 158–72.

2. On the other hand, the infantilization of new generations, a sort of perpetual puberty, the Peter Pan syndrome is a sociological phenomenon. Youngsters stuck in the mommy hotel of the parental household for financial and psychological reasons experience difficulties in separating from parents. These longer stages of belonging extend the transitional stage between child and adulthood. This is another factor that provides a potential explanation for the sweeping success of the recent YA/new adult reading category labels of the book publishing/marketing industry.

3. Anthropomorphic metamorphosis is rejected either literally as in the feline finale of "The Tiger's Bride," or metaphorically, as in the case of the "wolfish," predatory Little Red Riding Hood in "The Company of Wolves." Both stories feature in *The Bloody Chamber*, Angela Carter's collection of feminist fairy-tale rewritings.

4. Further human-eating mythical monsters include zombies and ogres.

5. The romanticization of cannibalism is a common trend in popular youth culture today: there is an increasing fandom admiring the dark lyrics of Lana del Ray's passionate ballads, the psychopathology of twisted minds raised by series like Netflix's *Dahmer*, the latent sado-masochistic queer subtext in NBC's by-now cult classic *Hannibal* crime television series, or taboo-breaking grotesque-cute gurokwai manga-inspired art by artists like Japanese Kurokawa Inuko.

6. This ironic, backwards phenomenon of heightened affections stimulating a violent response is called "cute aggression" in social psychology and is meant to balance the emotional equilibrium after someone has been overwhelmed by very strong emotions.

7. “Sick-lit” is a popular subgenre of YA novels where the romanticization of the illness narrative and the medical recontextualization of the literary cliché of “tragic love hindered by the death of a hero/ine too young to die” is an ethically equally questionable gambit. We keep asking ourselves if novels like *The Fault in Our Stars* or *Five Feet Apart* are responsible representations of challenging topics including teen mortality, disability, grief, mental illness, or just senseless “torture-porn” appealing to our worst voyeuristic impulses? Yet, at least in these stories, untimely death is to be blamed only on unjust Fate and not the partner involved in the romance.

8. Barbara Creed’s seminal book offers a typology of the monstrous-feminine in contemporary horror film from a feminist psychoanalytical perspective focusing on tropes of the archaic mother, the vagina dentata, the vampire, the witch, the possessed body, the monstrous mother and the femme castratrice. She agrees with James B. Twitchell that modern horror myths function as fables of sexual identity and often help teenagers cope with the anxieties related to reproduction (5).

9. With a similar political motivation, the Mormon author of *Twilight*, Stephenie Meyer, used the trope of infinite yearning fuelling the interspecies romance to advocate chastity and premarital celibacy and promote an “undead abstinence ideology” (Siegel 261). The apple on the book’s cover refers to the Mormon reinterpretation of the Fall of humankind, the theme of overcoming the natural human by wrestling with one’s earthly desires to gain eternal holiness.

10. Carol Adams’s *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* advocates a vegan lifestyle by drawing a parallel between women’s and animals’ bodies as consumable objects meant to satisfy a male diet and gaze. According to Adams, meat-eating contributes to violence against women, feminized men, and animals; hence dietary choices have moral and political stakes and are directly connected with questions of social and environmental justice, and animal rights and welfare. For the abusive sexual politics of meat, Adams blames patriarchal institutions of food-production/consumption rather than individual consumers. This theme is elaborated on in Argentinean Agustina Bazterrica’s dystopian novel *Tender is the Flesh*.

11. I thank the anonymous reviewer for their thought-provoking remarks on love as food, a cherished commodity of the Capitalocene.

Works Cited

- Aaltola, Elisa. “The Meat Paradox. Omnivore’s Akrasia, and Animal Ethics.” *Animals* 9.12 (2019): 1125. Web. 22 Dec. 2023.
- Adams, Carol J. *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist Vegetarian Critical Theory*. New York: Continuum, 2010. Print.
- Adams, Carol. “Ecofeminism and the Eating of Animals.” *Hypatia* 6.1 (1991): 125–45. Print.
- Bacchilega, Cristina. *Fairy Tales Transformed? Twenty-First-Century Adaptations and the Politics of Wonder*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2013. Print.
- Bazterrica, Agustina. *Tender is the Flesh*. Trans. Sarah Moses. London: Pushkin, 2020. Print.
- Bettelheim, Bruno. *The Uses of Enchantment. The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1976. Print.

- Braidotti, Rosi. "‘We’ Are In This Together, But We Are Not One and the Same." *Bioethical Inquiry* 17 (2020): 465–69. Print.
- Carter, Angela. *The Bloody Chamber*. London: Gollancz, 1979. Print.
- Clare, Cassandra. *City of Bones*. (The Mortal Instruments Series 1.) New York: McElderry, 2007. Print.
- Clute, John. "Thinning." *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*. Eds. John Clute and John Grant. London: Orbit Books, 1997. 942. Print.
- Cohen, Jeffrey Jerome. "Monster Culture." *Monster Theory*. U of Minnesota P, 1996. 3–25. Print.
- Collins, Suzanne. *Hunger Games*. (The Hunger Games Trilogy 1.) New York: Scholastic, 2008. Print.
- Creed, Barbara. *The Monstrous-Feminine. Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Csetényi, Korinna. "‘The Monsters Are Us’: Mad Scientists and Mutated Beasts in Contemporary Natural Horror Fiction." *Posthumanism in Fantastic Fiction*. Ed. Anna Kérchy. *Americana E-Books*, 2018. 158–72. Print.
- DeAngelis, Camille. *Bones and All*. New York: St Martin’s, 2015. Print.
- Del Toro, Guillermo, dir. *The Shape of Water*. DDY-Searchlight-TSG Entertainment, 2017.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Eating Well, or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida." *Who Comes After the Subject?* Eds. Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, Jean-Luc Nancy. New York: Routledge, 1991. 96–119. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Space." *Diacritics* 16.1 (Spring 1986): 22–27. Print.
- Gaiman, Neil. *Stardust*. New York: Avon HarperCollins, 1999. Print.
- Giroux, Henry A. *Zombie Politics and Culture in the Age of Casino Capitalism*. New York: Peter Lang, 2011. Print.
- Green, John. *The Fault in Our Stars*. London: Penguin Random House Children’s UK, 2014. Print.
- Guadagnino, Luca, dir. *Bones and All*. Frenesy Film Company, Per Capita Productions, 2022.
- Haraway, Donna. *When Species Meet*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2008. Print.
- Harkness, Deborah. *A Discovery of Witches*. (All Souls Trilogy.) New York: Penguin, 2011. Print.
- Hódosy, Annamária. *Klímaszörnyek* [Climate Monsters]. Szeged: *Tiszatáj*, 2023. Print.

- Jackson, Rosemary. *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. New York: Routledge, 1981. Print.
- Knellwolf, Christa, and Jane Goodall, eds. *Frankenstein's Science: Experimentation and Discovery in Romantic Culture, 1780–1830*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008. Print.
- Kline, Sally J. *The Degeneration of Women: Bram Stoker's Dracula as Allegorical Criticism of the Fin-de-Siècle*. Rheinbach-Merzbach: CMZ Verlag, 1992. Print.
- Kristeva, Julia. *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*. Trans. Leon S. Roudiez. New York: Columbia UP, 1982. Print.
- Lauren, Kate. *Fallen*. (Fallen Series 1.) New York: Delacorte, 2009. Print.
- Limpár, Ildikó. *The Truths of Monsters. Coming of Age with Fantastic Media*. Jefferson: McFarland, 2021. Print.
- Lippincott, Rachael. *Five Feet Apart*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2018. Print.
- Lovász, Ádám. “Az ökofeminista és a krokodil esete: A ‘hússá válás’ mint extrofenomenológiai redukció” [The Case of the Ecofeminist and the Crocodile: “Becoming Meat” as a Means of Extrophenomenological Reduction]. *Társadalmi Nemek Tudománya Interdiszciplináris eFolyóirat* 12.2 (2023): 80–103. Print.
- Marion, Isaac. *Warm Bodies*. New York: Emily Bestler, 2011. Print.
- Meyer, Marissa. *Cinder*. (Lunar Chronicles 1.) London: Macmillan, 2012. Print.
- Meyer, Stephanie. *Twilight*. (Twilight Saga 1.) Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2005. Print.
- Mitchell, W. J. T. “The Unspeakable and the Unimaginable: Word and Image in a Time of Terror.” *ELH* 72. 2 (2005): 291–308. Print.
- Olsson, Anders, and Daniel Birnbaum. “Interview with Jacques Derrida.” *E-Flux Journal* 2 (2009). Web. 22 Dec. 2023.
- Plumwood, Valerie. *The Eye of the Crocodile*. Ed. Lorraine Shannon. Canberra: Australian National University, 2012. Print.
- . “Prey to a Crocodile.” *The Aisling Magazine* 30 (2022). Web. 22 Dec. 2023.
- Quinn, Emelia, and Benjamin Westwood, eds. *Thinking Veganism in Literature and Culture: Towards a Vegan Theory*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, Palgrave Studies in Animals and Literature, 2018. Print.
- Reid, Julia. *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the “Fin de Siècle.”* New York: Palgrave, 2006.
- Rice, Anne. *Interview with the Vampire*. (The Vampire Chronicles 1.) New York: Knopf, 1976. Print.

- Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. (Harry Potter Septalogy 1.) London: Bloomsbury, 1997. Print.
- Siegel, Carol. "The 'Twilight' of Sexual Liberation: Undead Abstinence Ideology." *Counterpoints* 392 (2011): 261–76. Print.
- Soble, Alan, ed. *Eros, Philia and Agape. The Philosophy of Love*. New York: Paragon, 1989.
- Sondermann, Selina. "Camille DeAngelis on *Bones and All*, Guadagnino's adaptation with Timothee Chalamet & Taylor Russell." *YouTube*, uploaded by The Upcoming, 29 Nov. 2022. Web. 13 Feb. 2024.
- Trachsel, Mary. "Stories of 'Being-With' Other Animals." *Interrogating Boundaries of the Nonhuman: Literature, Climate Change, and Environmental Crisis*. Eds. Matthias Stephan and Sune Borkfelt. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2022. Print.
- Williams, Linda. "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess." *Film Quarterly* 44.4 (Summer 1991): 2–13. Print.