

Edgy Un/Intelligibilities: Feminist/Monster Theory Meets *Ginger Snaps*

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Abstract

This article analyzes the Canadian werewolf film *Ginger Snaps* (2000) through various feminist lenses at the intersection of sex, gender, and sexuality. While academic scholarship on the film at this particular intersection is extremely limited, articles that read Ginger Fitzgerald's transformation into werewolf and menstruating female as empowering dominate the field. The following, however, moves to trouble such structural readings based in identity-politics and offers, in addition, a reading of political possibilities generated from poststructural approaches to monstrosity.
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Résumé

Cet article analyse le film de loup-garou canadien *Ginger Snaps* (2000) par le biais de différentes optiques féministes à l'intersection du sexe, du genre et de la sexualité. Bien que la recherche universitaire sur le film à cette intersection en particulier soit extrêmement limitée, les articles qui dominent le domaine interprètent la transformation de Ginger Fitzgerald en loup-garou et en femme menstruée comme donnant un sentiment de pouvoir. Ce qui suit, toutefois, cherche à déranger ces lectures structurelles ancrées dans la politique identitaire et offre, en outre, une lecture des possibilités judicieuses générée des approches post-structurales à la monstrosité.

Caelum Vatnsdal (2004), in his history of Canadian horror cinema entitled *They Came from Within*, credits *Ginger Snaps* (2000) for giving some “badly needed” relevance to the words “Canadian horror movie” in the twenty-first century. The werewolf film, according to Vatnsdal, is “good, solid, intelligent entertainment” that also “redress[es] the vast gender imbalance in the Canadian horror field” (222). The film focuses on the teenaged Fitzgerald sisters who reside in Bailey Downs—a fictitious Canadian suburb in which neighborhood dogs are being eviscerated by an unknown creature that prowls at night. One evening, after the sisters ignore parental advice to stay inside, a werewolf attacks and bites Ginger, the eldest who has recently begun to menstruate. Her sister Brigitte frightens off the creature with a flash from her Polaroid camera, and the werewolf runs onto a nearby road and is then killed by Sam, a local marijuana dealer who hits the creature while driving his van. The remainder of the film focuses on Ginger's linear transformation into a werewolf, Sam's and Brigitte's attempts at curing Ginger, and the alterations in the sisters' relationship that ultimately ends with Brigitte stabbing and killing Ginger once she has fully transformed.

“With *Ginger Snaps*, which was directed by John Fawcett, a man, but written by Karen Walton, a woman,” notes Vatnsdal (2004), “at least a strong female point of view is getting a look in” (222). While Vatnsdal does not elaborate on this apparent female gaze, the film most obviously features two sisters—Ginger and Brigitte Fitzgerald—and focuses predominantly on their intimate relationship after Ginger is bitten by the Beast of Bailey Downs and is infected with a werewolf virus. Humorously, Ginger reads her body's linear alterations, such as the hair that grows from her attack wound followed by her aggressive sexual desire, as effects of menstruation. Indeed, it is Ginger's bleeding female body that enables the comic relief generated out of the parallel between both “curses”—that of the werewolf and that of menstruation. *Ginger Snaps*, then, represents a necessary

feminist intervention into what Vatnsdal refers to as a genre dominated by “adolescent-boy miasma” (222). Ginger’s menstruating body accentuates female rather than male adolescence, and, in the process, her female anatomical maturation acts, at least superficially, as the foundational axis of the werewolf film.

Modern feminist readings of *Ginger Snaps* that expose and emphasize the gendered and sexed gap in the predominantly male-centered werewolf film, however, tend also to repeat the practice of exclusion so inherent in any identity-based reading. Like any sign, an identity, regardless of its representative marginalized status, gains its meaning through difference, or through what it is *not*. Signification, then, intrinsically excludes and tends to sustain individuation and a divide-and-conquer logic. Scholarship that focuses specifically on representations and readings of “woman” in *Ginger Snaps*, while recovering a sexed/gendered presence formerly neglected in the werewolf genre, also tends to sidestep such problematic dimensions of identity formation. This article, then, first maps feminist scholarship on *Ginger Snaps* that shares a specific focus on woman/female embodiment at the site of the werewolf. Such identity-based readings are significant in that they reveal the erasure of women as central, agential characters in a genre dominated historically by hyper-masculinity (Oswald 2013). The article then moves to consider the complications that result from reading the film with such a specific, exclusionary focus.

While feminist identity-based readings work to recover female presence and empowerment, they also tend to stabilize identity as the core of subject-being. Feminist poststructural theory, however, has deconstructed the identity “woman” since the 1990s, arguing its instability as an identity sign as opposed to its recovery at the center of feminist politics. Significantly, this feminist theoretical approach to meaning production parallels the werewolf itself; with its emphasis on slippery signification, feminist poststructuralism like any monster is “dangerous” in that both threaten “to smash distinctions” and reject “any classification built on hierarchy or a merely binary opposition” (Cohen 1996, 6-7). Moving away from identity-based readings of *Ginger Snaps* that rely on systemic binary logic, the following argument delves into a survey of distinct historical shifts in feminist theory that enable readings of the film that emphasize not only variability, but necessary

mutability at the site of the monstrous body, an emphasis generated at the intersection of feminist poststructuralism and monster theory. *Ginger Snaps*, after all, is not simply a film with discernable girl/woman characters at its center; it is a werewolf film—a genre with an expectation of instability and transformation at the site of the body. It seems strange, then, to focus on the recovery of any static identity (or even identities) as the essence of such a monstrous ontological liminality. By far the most cited scholar of monster theory, Jeffrey Cohen (1996), argues that, historically, discursively-produced monstrous bodies including the werewolf’s actually “resist attempts to include them in any systematic structuration” (6). Judith Halberstam (2006) contends as well in her analysis of the Gothic that “monsters are meaning machines” that have been reduced to and subsumed by identities of sexuality and gender only since the early twentieth century (21). As all identity signs of marginalization gain meaning through difference and lose value through the binary logic so foundational to Western thought, the following argument moves away from recovering a litany of static identities of Other, including that of “woman,” at the site of the werewolf in *Ginger Snaps*. After all, according to Cohen (1996), monstrous bodies represent “harbingers of category crisis” (6). Offered up in the following pages, then, is an edgy reading of the werewolf in *Ginger Snaps*, a mapping of the un/intelligible as both threatening and politically productive in its liminality, its focus not on the Other but on the modern subject-viewer.

Identity Lost and Recovered

With regard to identity-focused readings of the film, there is little doubt that one of the primary reasons *Ginger Snaps* generates scholarship based in the identity of woman is its hard-to-miss focus on female adolescence, specifically Ginger’s menstruation. While the horror genre tends to include blood as a staple, this particular bleeding body, of course, is not the everyday-body that bleeds in horror films. Rather, through a feminist lens, Ginger’s body can be read as an example of Julia Kristeva’s (1982) concept of the abject in werewolf form. The abject, for Kristeva, consists not of the Other, but of that which consistently haunts the modern subject’s apparent stability and autonomy, both of which are dependent on the negation of the maternal (bleeding) body in psychoanalysis. Kristeva’s feminist

theory mapped in *Powers of Horror* (1982) represents a critical commentary on the mother-child relationship discursively produced as necessarily nullified in the pursuit of subjectivity, particularly according to the theories of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan.

Probably the most influential feminist intervention into the horror genre, Barbara Creed's (1993) theoretical concept of the "monstrous-feminine," of which Kristeva's abject is foundational, refers to the collapse of the cinematic monster and the bleeding female body as a visual embodiment that threatens the stability of the male subject/viewer. In exposing the fragility of the male subject and, in the process, locating the power to do such in the monstrous female body, Creed's monstrous-feminine generates a specific focus on female empowerment—not merely castrated, but castrator. Critical analyzes of *Ginger Snaps* at the intersection of sex, gender and sexuality, while extremely limited in number, also tend to read Ginger as a version of the female empowerment Creed recovers in her theory of the monstrous-feminine. This identity-based scholarship locates, positively, women marginalized by the parameters of proper female embodiment in a genre Vatnsdal (2004) refers to as lacking "where feminism and gender politics are concerned" (222).

April Miller (2005), for instance, argues that Ginger's simultaneous transformation into "menarchal woman and werewolf" in *Ginger Snaps* "contributes to the repressive discourses of sexuality that shackle women to reproduction," but the film also promisingly employs the werewolf as a metaphor "for the limits placed on female sexual subjectivity" (281). Throughout the film, menstruation is depicted as a transformation understood in terms of taboo, betrayal, biological necessity, celebration, medical mechanics, toxic waste, a curse and, predominantly for Ginger and Brigitte, a threat to self-identity. The sisters gain their sense of self through resistance to the middle-class normality of Canadian suburbia; in particular, they identify as different from other high school girls whose gender performance reflects the heteronormative, its primary objective the male gaze. In other words, while menstruation serves to differentiate "men" from "women," the process also "implies homogeneity of experience and implicates all women in the reproductive process" (290).

Ginger and Brigitte prioritize distance from such homogeneity through their perpetual resistance.

Complementary to the sisters' refusal to be contained by maps of normality, according to Miller (2005), is the deluge of discourse regarding menstruation that runs throughout the film, various references that actually expose not only blatant contradictions and inconsistencies regarding menses, but the fact that no single narrative can contain the meaning of such a transformation. Not unlike the lycanthrope that bites Ginger and sends Brigitte and Sam in search of a cure, no single discourse—not werewolf folklore, not biology, nor Hollywood cinema—works to contain Ginger's werewolf virus. Neither, as her psyche alters throughout her physical transformation, is Ginger's sexual subjectivity shackled to the reproductive process. Eventually not only does Ginger reject the "limited subject positions available" to her, but she "derives pleasure from her monstrous identity and the power and sexual satisfaction it affords" (281-282). Miller argues that *Ginger Snaps*, in demystifying both werewolf mythology and menstruation biology, enables "radical forms of female sexual consciousness" in the process (281). What Judith Butler (1990) refers to as the heterosexual matrix—in this specific case the disciplined interdependence between the natural maturation of the female body, proper womanhood, and procreative sexuality—is actually troubled by its connection to the werewolf. Such a parallel, after all, associates the heterosexual matrix *with* the werewolf, or, more specifically, *with* monstrous myth.

Tanis MacDonald (2011) agrees that *Ginger Snaps* magnifies the physical changes associated with menstruation to expose heteronormative femininity as socially constructed. In its connecting "the biological changes of puberty" with "transbiological metamorphosis," *Ginger Snaps* reflects a B-movie tradition, but one that recognizes that "becoming a woman is not the social or sexual equivalent of becoming a man" (66). For MacDonald, the "real horror show" foundational to the film is the "brand of gender normativity that threatens to trap" the sisters (61). In locating disciplined performative gender as heteronormative, MacDonald links Ginger's bleeding body to transgressive gender as well as to transgressive sexual desire and, in the process, enables a recovery of lesbian representation absent from scholarship on the film. MacDonald contends, along with Thomas Waugh (2006), that a "cultural refusal" to read lesbian existence in films, particularly those set outside urbanity, is nothing less than "our failure of the

imagination” (123). MacDonald (2011) further argues that locating the adolescent lesbian in *Ginger Snaps* is “urgent,” “given the growing concern over crises faced by queer youth” (63). While Miller (2005), referenced above, recognizes, but certainly also underplays, the possible “homoerotic undertones” of the sisters’ relationship (287), MacDonald (2011) argues that such an unnamed same-sex desire runs throughout the film, opening up a “choice to read the Fitzgerald sisters as an erotic couple,” rather than settle for “the film’s feminist examination of the menstrual monster,” which she argues is actually “arrested half-way through the film” (62).

MacDonald (2011) maps particular instances in *Ginger Snaps* to uncover a lesbian presence, despite the fact that the sexual identity goes unnamed in the film. The navel-piercing scene, during which Brigitte, attempting to cure her sister, straddles Ginger’s body to penetrate her navel with a silver earring—a scene which includes images of Ginger grasping the bedposts and writhing under her sister’s body to the “accompanying wail of an electric guitar”—is the most obvious (71). For MacDonald, the scene “confirms the subtext of lesbian desire” (71). Not only are the erotic undertones far more overt in this scene, but, as MacDonald notes, this display of seeming same-sex pleasure also directly follows (and undercuts) Ginger’s first heterosexual encounter. Notably a “disappointment,” this encounter with Jason McCarty is one in which Ginger eventually submits to the submissive, passive role she must occupy in heteronormativity despite her initial attempt at an aggressive “gender reversal” in the back seat of Jason’s Volvo station wagon (71). Additionally, MacDonald recognizes the sisters’ “incestuous homoeroticism” in their blood pact—“Out by sixteen or dead in this scene: together forever, united against life as we know it” (59). Read by MacDonald as an “erotic connection” “nearly ignored” by traditional scholarship, the author turns to social media to uncover the sisters’ blood oath of intimacy as an “open secret among fans of the film” (59). MacDonald reads the reference to “Out by sixteen” as the variety of ways in which the sisters can “defy containment”; in particular, the oath represents “an encoded speech act that conflates the state of being “out” (of the closet and suburbia)” (64). As well, despite her turning into a werewolf, Ginger does not kill “indiscriminately,” according to MacDonald, but rather “according to the

fractured logic of jealousy” (71). Ginger eviscerates only men whom she understands to be interested sexually in Brigitte, men she perceives as “barriers to her desire to be ‘together forever’” with her sister (72). Stated quite simply by MacDonald, “Brigitte is the love object here” (72).

These identity-based readings of *Ginger Snaps* produced by Miller (2005) and MacDonald (2011) represent scholarship crucial in locating marginalized female subjects of transgressive genders and sexual desires in more empowering roles. In such analytical approaches, Ginger and Brigitte Fitzgerald expose the disciplinary mechanisms inherent in what Butler (1993) refers to as the heterosexual imperative by destabilizing any single truth regarding a gender and sexuality for all girls and women, and they certainly represent a version of feminist empowerment through resistance. In recovering an embodied resistance at the identity sites of “girl,” “woman,” “lesbian,” and monster, these readings reflect what Simone de Beauvoir (1989) requested of women in the mid-twentieth century—that is, the refusal to be the devalued Other of sex/gender difference. Exposing sex/gender difference between men and women as far from symmetrical, Beauvoir argues such an apparently natural distinction acts as an illusion generated out of masculinist discourse historically. While “man” occupies the position of the Subject, the Absolute, in such a discursive binary scheme, “woman” is allocated the position of the object, or Other, which ensures her inferior definition in relation to man. Woman’s position of devalued Other is fixed, states Beauvoir, by the prevailing discourse of the Eternal Feminine that defines woman by her body alone, in particular by her reproductive capacity or her womb. In such a scheme, masculinist discourse of the Eternal Feminine (also referenced as the Myth of Woman) represents the female body as lack and is used to deny woman any authentic subject position, thereby ensuring her position as fixed Other. Both Miller (2005) and MacDonald (2011) recognize the association between Ginger’s bleeding body and monstrosity that frames the film. And, much like Creed’s (1993) theory of the monstrous-feminine, both scholars also locate various forms of empowerment in this bleeding female body. Perhaps, then, an answer to Beauvoir’s mid-twentieth-century request, readings that emphasize Ginger’s monstrous ability to embrace the sign of “woman” in anti-heteronormative ways re-

jects the discourse of the Eternal Feminine. This resistance and rereading dislodge the bleeding female body from its fixed position of object, enabling a far less stable signification of “woman” and, in turn, a far more complicated subject position.

The Body Destabilized

Such identity-based readings, as mentioned above, are limited in their scope of representation. Since the 1990s, feminist theory has included more contemporary understandings of identity politics as limited and exclusionary and has had to consider more poststructural approaches to identity that emphasize its provisionality rather than its essence. Building on Michel Foucault’s (1979) assertion that identity-subjects are discursively produced within juridical systems of power, Butler’s (1990) *Gender Trouble* notoriously challenges the term “woman” as a stable identity on which feminist theory and politics could be based. Her feminist scholarship insists that “woman,” the subject of feminism, is an effect of discourse, or “discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation” (354). Indeed, both “woman” and “lesbian” represent identity formations that are not only institutionally (and even communally) pre-determined, but are also inherently exclusive as both require significations historically dependent on what they are *not*. Butler (1996), then, calls not for the total erasure of political identity, but for a different foundation for feminist politics and the provisionality of the identity sign—an acknowledgment of “woman” as inclusive of its exclusions that have been determined by juridical regulatory regimes. As demonstrated above by Vatnsdal (2004) who credits *Karen Walton, a woman* with the female perspective and feminist content of *Ginger Snaps*, the stabilization of gender identity is dependent upon an assumed shared, authentic experience of “woman” (222). Not only does Vatnsdal’s argument stabilize what “woman” means in some apparently universalizing way, his statement also completely denies *John Fawcett, the man* any feminist savvy despite his having directed the film. As identity most often reflects a primary marker of difference, identity-based readings of any text often result in such exclusions due to their reliance on stable signifiers of difference more often than not generated out of binary (either/or) logic.

Feminist theory has, of course, complicated such a static logic of exclusionary difference by exposing the interdependency of absolute distinctions in signification processes. Hence, the apparent universal difference in the meaning of “woman” in Vatnsdal’s (2004) statement relies both on binary logic and on his assumed signification of “man.” This interdependence complicates any absolute difference between the two; “woman” and “man” are discursively relational, not entirely distinct. Inherent in the identity-based analyses of *Ginger Snaps* by both Miller (2005) and MacDonald (2011), then, is also a core reliance on absolute sex/gender difference that enables such readings. Stressed in this scholarship, first and foremost, is the female body that is *not* the male body of typical B-movie werewolf films. Granted, these scholars do recover a resistance to the Eternal Feminine in the menstruating body of Ginger who defies maps of normative gender and sexuality and, in the process, refuses her role of Other, or fixed sexed object, despite her bleeding body. Read together, the scholarship produced by Miller and MacDonald works to rupture any singular, static meaning of “woman.” MacDonald’s (2011) work more specifically maps a variety of “female relationships in all their queer(ed) intensity” (76), but both scholars locate and accentuate the denial to be contained that is foundational to the characterization of the Fitzgerald sisters. Heteronormative discourse is exposed as not a singular truth, but as a technology designed to secure understandings of menstruation, gender performativity, and sexual desire. And, in doing so, both Miller and MacDonald fracture the apparently fixed signifier of “woman” secured by historical masculinist discourse into a far more complex subject of multiple gender and sexual performances and various identity markers. But, ironically, their recovery of such empowered diversity also excludes as it includes, for such readings rely on the allegedly stable female form.

One of Butler’s (1990) most notable sub-arguments in *Gender Trouble* implicates feminists in their own destabilization of the identity “woman” foundational to feminist theory and politics. She locates the feminist distinction between gender and sex—gender understood as a social construction and sex as biological—as an example of how feminist theory has already destabilized the unity of the identity “woman.” But Butler then challenges this same binary opposition to further deconstruct the unity of “woman” “often invoked

to construct solidarity of identity” (356). She argues against the naturalization of the binary of sex by locating its production in an either/or logic generated from within the apparatus of gender. “Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex,” she argues; rather, “gender must designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established” (357). In other words, the binary logic inherent in the apparatus of gender—man and woman—also produces the knowledge of any pre-discursive and natural stable sex distinction—male and female. While Miller (2005) and MacDonald (2011) do destabilize the meaning of “woman” by mapping various gender and sexual performances that, in turn, recover positive representations of multiple embodied identity markers, they do so by inscribing these identities onto a stable (and assumed) female body. Ginger’s bleeding body is reproduced as a stable signifier, one historically and institutionally assumed pre-discursive and natural, a foundation onto which resistant gender and sexual performances can be read. Rather than a variable in itself, the female body is the foundation on which these readings of resistance rely.

According to Linda Nicholson (1994), the feminist “legacy” to read the female body as pre-discursive and, therefore, naturally stable comes from an historical production of theories designed to counter biological essentialism, or the masculinist discourse that anchors all knowledge about women to the female body (80). Attacking Freudian anatomy-is-destiny assumptions and building on the work of Beauvoir (1989) discussed above, feminists in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s undermined this discourse that fixed woman in the position of inferior Other by producing gender as a social construction while maintaining sex as a natural binary. Most feminists accepted the truth of biological discourse that differentiated women from men at the site of anatomy (and most still do). Producing gender as variable while maintaining the sex distinction worked to stabilize and yet complicate “woman” as the subject of feminist politics. As Nicholson (1994) states, such a perspective “enabled feminists to assert differences as well as similarities among women”; in maintaining “biological commonality” represented by the body—“that women have vaginas and men have penises”—sex could be considered a “cross-cultural phenomenon” between *all* women (81).

Nicholson (1994), like Butler, however, critiques this feminist reliance on the stability of sex, noting that “thinking of sex as independent of gender is the idea that distinctions of nature, at some basic level, ground or manifest themselves in human identity” (82). She credits feminists of the late 1960’s and early 1970’s for mapping gender as a social construction, but she also critiques their inability to deconstruct the stability of sex. This limited feminist approach Nicholson labels “biological foundationalism,” which differs from biological determinism in that the former does not read the female body as that which fully determines “woman” (82). However, biological foundationalism is limited in its inability to recognize the body as variable. Such an understanding, argues Nicholson, represents a “coat rack view” of subject-identity in that the body represents a stable form upon which differences in culture, personality, and behavior are “thrown or superimposed” (81). Key to Nicholson’s argument is her mapping of the discursively-produced and, therefore, unstable body. Referring to Thomas Laquer’s (1990) *Making Sex* that historicizes Western medical literature on the body since the Greeks, Nicholson highlights the body not as any singular and stable truth, but as a discursively-produced sign inherently variable. In reference to the reliance on the apparently natural bleeding female body in identity-based analyses of *Ginger Snaps*, Laquer’s mapping of the human body as *one sex* prior to the eighteenth century is telling. Rather than an “altogether different creature,” medical discourse produced the (soon to be) specifically female body as an inferior variant of the male body. Menstruation did not refer to a distinct female process, but simply to “the tendency of human bodies to bleed, the orifice from which the blood emerged perceived as not very significant” (Nicholson 1994, 87). For Nicholson, then, sex distinction is discursively-produced and, therefore, unable to act as a solid foundation for feminist politics. Any apparently fixed meaning of bodily difference is contingent not on nature, but on discourse produced in specific historical and cultural contexts. Such a feminist politic based in biological foundationalism, then, is, for Nicholson, both limited and exclusionary.

One reason Nicholson destabilizes the female body is to offer another perspective for feminist politics. Reacting to the exclusivity inherent in the sex distinction foundational to much feminist theory and

politics—in particular, the anti-transsexual rhetoric of Janice Raymond's (1979) *Transsexual Empire*—Nicholson (1994) calls for feminism to embrace a "coalition politics" that not only represents a political action feminists "enter into with others," but a political stance of alliance that is also always "internal" to feminism, one inclusive of MTF transsexual subjects (102). So, too, might identity-based readings that employ the natural female form as foundational, such as those of *Ginger Snaps* mapped above, benefit from further analyses of the text that destabilize the bleeding female body, those that recognize the body as discursively-produced and, therefore, always unstable. Such readings, not unlike Nicholson's proposed feminist coalition, could open up connections between marginalized subjects traditionally excluded from feminist politics due to rigid sex distinctions.

Granted, one of the reasons academic scholarship may not challenge the stable sexed body in *Ginger Snaps* is because, quite frankly, read superficially, the film seems to stabilize distinctions associate with the traditional female form. During a scene in which Ginger straddles and seduces Sam, for instance, Ginger removes her clothing and exposes an enlarged rib cage and a chest complete with three sets of teats. Ginger's body, despite its transforming from one species to another, seemingly maintains its female anatomy even on its way to the animal kingdom. Reading this image in conjunction with several other scenes, however, undermines the assumed stability of sex distinction—both male and female—in the film and within the werewolf body. For example, Ginger infects Jason with her werewolf virus after the two have sex without a condom. The following day, Jason begins to bleed from his genitals. Miller (2005) refers to Jason's bleeding body as his transformation into a "spectacle" of "the 'hysterical' menstruating woman" (294). Miller's reading is supported in a scene during which Jason's friends ask if he has his "rag on" (*Ginger Snaps* 2000) after noticing a blood stain on the front of his khakis. Crucial to note here, though, is Miller's conflation of bleeding with gender—menses with "woman." Rather, such a scene represents a discursively-produced and naturalized female sex-specific process imposed upon an apparently male body at its most significant and stabilizing site—that of the genitals. Perhaps, then, Jason represents, not the castrated male/hysterical woman, but the one-sex model Lacquer

(1990) locates as dominant prior to the eighteenth century. Such a reading destabilizes the sexed body distinction by blurring absolute difference and undermining discursive productions of stable sex distinctions.

Additionally, Ginger, complete with the three sets of nipples mentioned earlier, also possesses a phallus in the film. Peeking out from her underwear while she sleeps is an animated tail that grows as Ginger transforms into werewolf. Restabilizing the female form and its conflation with specific gendered elements, MacDonald (2011) reads Ginger's tail as a failure, as reflective of the inability to mesh the "fabulously femme Ginger" with the werewolf body in its masculine form—bestial, muscular, hairy (70). Such a "visual strategy is used to sidestep the issue of the animal body and femininity" (70), states MacDonald. She argues that Ginger's tail actually acts as a "feline codification of femininity"—similar to that used in other horror films—that reflects Ginger not as half woman, half wolf, but a less threatening visual of "half-woman, half-cat" (70). In thinking beyond the static binary of sexed difference and its conflation with scripted gendered performativity, however, what is so intriguing about Ginger's tail is that the phallic appendage is an unnecessary addition to the werewolf formula. Werewolf historian Adam Douglas (1992) argues that, since the twentieth century, werewolf films have employed the distinction between the wolf and the werewolf popular since the sixteenth century; the most common distinctive mark between the two is that the werewolf has *no* tail. *Ginger Snaps*, however, accentuates the tail; it continues to grow in length and width, making it necessary to be bound or else discovered. With black electrical tape in hand, Brigitte tapes down Ginger's tail, attempting to make the bulge it produces invisible before gym class. And later during her transformation, Ginger, in a vulnerable state of self-loathing, attempts an amputation of her symbolic penis. But the werewolf body in transition, despite its residual human desire to adhere to the proper map of absolute sex distinction, refuses to be contained.

Both Jason and Ginger in werewolf transition can be read as monstrous embodiments of opposites able to destabilize the binary inherent in sex difference foundational to Miller's (2005) and MacDonald's (2011) analyses of empowered gender (woman) and sexual variance (lesbian). They are, rather, monstrous bodies that *smash distinctions*, that refuse categorization. Af-

ter all, during transition into werewolf, each embodies sex characteristics typically understood as male and female simultaneously, characteristics designed traditionally to stabilize distinctions *between* the sexes. Their bodies represent not stability, but liminality, a suspended form of both and, therefore, neither. Their monstrous forms challenge the two-sex model discursively-produced in and dominant since the eighteenth century, and, by extension, their bodies have the ability to threaten discourses of bodily integrity overall. In destabilizing the absolute body of sex distinction, the werewolf body threatens not only the binarized identity categories of man/woman, male/female, and human/animal, but also the entire system of identity signs. The body, in other words, has been dislodged from its foundational axis traditionally secured by discourses based in binary logic, inherently invested in not only exclusion through difference, but also in the devaluation of particular bodies (Heyes 2000). Arguably, then, not unlike the poststructural approach initiated by feminists such as Butler (1990, 1993, 1996) and Nicholson (1994), readings of *Ginger Snaps* that deconstruct the static female body can actually open up possibilities and connections between marginalized subjects under the trope of the werewolf. Indeed, what of the intersexed subject? What of the transsexual subject? Or the subject of self-demand amputation? Do these bodies and their subjectivities not surface once the body is no longer secured in stasis? That is, once it is no longer determined by discourses of bodily integrity that inherently exclude and devalue? Can *Ginger Snaps* be read as empowering various identity-subjects at the site of the werewolf body?

The parallels are there, for sure. Reading the body as an unstable variable threatens all institutionally-sanctioned truths that secure the body as knowable in Western discourse. Recovering further marginalized identity subjects at the unstable body, however, also participates in further identity-based analyses that inherently exclude and, unfortunately, those that may also stabilize identity at the site of the monster. Rather than “anchor” the monster, poststructuralism insists on its mobility (Halberstam 2006, 5). Identity-based readings tend to exclude not only Others external to the identity included, but can exclude from within identity formations as well. Poststructural feminist theory argues convincingly that there is simply no singular authentic

experience, commonality, body, or voice amongst women, for instance. So, too, there is no singular experience, representation, or reading that can possibly speak to all subjects who identify with any identity category. Even when considering Miller’s (2005) and MacDonald’s (2011) analyses that recover empowerment in women and lesbians, one must recognize that not all women of female embodiment menstruate, nor do all lesbians desire relationships “together-forever.” The recovery of various marginalized subject-identities at the site of the werewolf, in other words, may actually reestablish regulatory regimes of rigid definition inherent in identity formation. As Donna Haraway (1992) argues, identity formation perpetually “invites the illusion of essential, fixed position[s]” (300). She writes, “‘Who am I?’ is about (always unrealizable) identity, always wobbling, it still pivots on the law of the father” (324). Rather than emphasize the distinctness of identities, Haraway argues for a cyborg subject position generated from “the belly of the monster,” a subject that does not make sense of the world through the separation of “technical, organic, mythic, textual, and political threads,” but one that recognizes the “absurdity” of such distinctions (300). It is from within the monster, then, that the ability to deconstruct rigid distinctions is generated.

The Subject of Difference Dismantled

As mapped above, the werewolf body in *Ginger Snaps* has the potential to fracture the rigid identity distinctions against which Haraway (1992) writes. For as Butler (1993) argues, sex difference is a normative technology by which one actually *becomes* an identity-subject. And the identities of “girl,” “woman,” and “lesbian” recovered by Miller (2005) and MacDonald (2011) certainly wobble once the werewolf’s body reflects sex distinction as inconsistent and unstable. Deconstructing any singular truth of the body, therefore, reveals identity politics as limited. But is the exposure of identity as dependent on the discursively-produced stable body enough to forward a productive politic? Haraway (2008) builds on her previous cyborgian theory in *When Species Meet*, producing an intervention into posthuman theory that may prove productive here. She engages with the triptych of human-animal-machine (that the Hollywood werewolf embodies) and forwards the practice of “becoming with” as an ethics with an emphasis on the human subject’s responsibility for species

historically produced as sub-human and, therefore, inferior (35). At the core of becoming-with, then, is a process of deconstruction that implicates the human subject in not only re/producing hierarchical value systems of species, but also in the responsibility for rethinking the relationship between the subject and Others as one of accountable social connection, as one of companionship. At the intersection of feminist and monster theory, Margrit Shildrick's (2002) approach to deconstructing the monstrous generates a similar ethical stance, but does so by first recognizing what Cohen (1996) refers to as the monster's ability "to destroy...the very cultural apparatus through which individuality is constituted and allowed" (12). Shildrick locates the political power of the monster in its ability to eradicate difference between the subject and Other in order to destabilize the human subject.

Shildrick (2002) locates the ability to deconstruct particular distinctions at the site of the monster. "Unashamedly postmodern" in her approach, her primary objective is the dismantling of the "violent hierarchy" that Jacques Derrida refers to as the binary logic foundational to a Western logic of difference (4-5). While she recognizes feminist identity-based readings like those by Miller (2005) and MacDonald (2011) that locate empowerment in the monstrous female Other in *Ginger Snaps*, Shildrick (2002) argues that "the body that is recovered in its difference, remains highly normative" (2). These feminist approaches, "in their desire to establish an adequate alternative to masculinist standards," tend also to recover female bodies and subjects that "instantiate new norms of sexuality, production or reproduction" (2). Recovering (and celebrating) female empowerment in *Ginger's* monstrous anti-heteronormative practices, as Foucault (1979) has noted of identity-based narratives, participates in not only a counter discourse in which the female body seemingly gains value formerly denied, but also a process dictated by the regulatory regime of the normal in which liberation is merely illusory. And it is the discourse of normative embodiment, according to Shildrick (2002), that guarantees the modern subject "individual autonomous selfhood" at the expense of producing the body of the Other as abnormal, as monstrous (2).

Significantly, Shildrick (2002) notes that, as long as "the monstrous remains the absolute other in its corporeal difference it poses few problems" to the secure

modern subject (2). It is *only* when the monster blurs distinctions, when the monstrous represents an indeterminate location that is *neither Self nor Other* to the stable, valued (non-monstrous) modern subject, that the monster is "deeply disturbing" (3). Identity-based readings that recover and expand the new normal, then, act to re-stabilize, to fix, the difference between the modern subject and Other, generating such a distance between them that such a power dynamic is far from threatened. While Shildrick certainly recognizes identities of difference located at the site of the Other, her objective is not to recover each in its difference, but to deconstruct the systemics foundational to all monstrosity, which she locates in the process of exclusion that preserves the modern subject's hierarchical value.

Rather than "revaluing differently embodied others," Shildrick (2002) focuses on "rethinking" embodiment itself (2). She targets the discursively-produced subject as both an effect of the Subject/Other power dynamic as well as its perpetuator. Key to the discursive production of the modern subject since the seventeenth century is the prioritizing of reason and a "masculinist retreat from the body and embodiment" (1). The Cartesian mind/body split that privileges reason over corporality engenders an embodied subject position in which reason, and reason only, controls the inferior and potentially erratic body-object. The body of the valued modern subject is a body bound, its boundaries of definition allegedly secured and stabilized by unwavering reason. This traditional perception of the valued modern subject, according to Shildrick, maintains an understanding of the monstrous Other as always a body external to the self. It is only when the monstrous Other is perceived as *within* that the destabilization of modern subjectivity occurs. And it is only the encounter with the monster that "traverses the *liminal spaces that evade classification*" that has the "potential to confound normative identity" (5; emphasis added). The subject's self-presence, according to Derrida, is actually always-already unstable; it can never be fully secured because such a consciousness of presence is based on exclusions that it "must deny, and on which it relies" (5). The monster's liminal location as neither Self nor Other perpetually haunts the subject as a trace *within*, or as supplement to the subject. This encounter with the liminal monster "opens up" the modern subject to the "risk of indifferentiation" and enables, in the process,

“the hope that oppressive identities might be interrupted” (5).

Regarding *Ginger Snaps*, the werewolf, specifically the human subject in the midst of transitioning into werewolf, occupies such a liminal position, but only temporarily. Granted, the werewolf can be read as an embodiment of human and animal and, in representing this blurring of un/reasonable species serves the negative function to the modern subject of pure reason. There is no denying the most significant staple of any werewolf film is the dismantling of the Cartesian privileging of mind over body. Werewolf films reflect a mind/body split, but one that, in opposition to that of the modern subject, in the end privileges body over mind and, hence, monstrosity and distance are maintained. Working to stabilize the werewolf as Other, too, is the filmic formula in which characters infected with the werewolf virus perceive their uncontrollable alteration into a bestial body as a betrayal of the self. This traditional negative self-reflection included in the genre reestablishes what Susan Stryker and Nikki Sullivan (2009) argue is a somatechnics of bodily perception—a process of seeing and understanding determined by institutionally-sanctioned knowledges that enable certain bodies integrity while foreclosing others. However, specifically *during transition*, during the eye candy of the werewolf film that both attracts and repulses viewers, the monster occupies a physical state *in between* human and animal, *in between* subject and Other. The time and space of becoming-werewolf signify the residue of both subject and Other simultaneously in a singular body and, therefore, can be fixed as *neither*. Not unlike C. Jacob Hale’s (1998) theorizing of the borderland dweller, the transitioning body, if understood as having a subject at all in a culture dominated by binary logic, can occupy only the Undead subjectivity of liminality—subjects who do not embody the full status of the subject (Butler 1993). The werewolf’s embodied ambiguity during transition challenges divisions between subject and Other, human and animal, necessary to stabilize the modern subject whose body is allegedly self-contained, self-possessed, and, above all, bound by reason. During werewolf transformation, the modern subject/viewer confronts the illusory relationship of mind over body (which can never be sustained) and, in the process, recognizes the trace of the monster within—the failure of reason to control the body, or what Shildrick (2002) re-

fers to as the “vulnerabilities” of embodied being—that undermine any confirmation of secure subjectivity. The subject, in other words, literally loses ground and confronts “disorientation” (Ahmed 2006). In turn, the subject’s distance from the Other collapses: the devalued Other is exposed as supplement to the subject, as the monster within.

Unlike Shildrick (2002), Creed (1993) employs Kristeva’s theory of the abject—that which haunts the modern subject’s autonomy and, therefore, must be discarded—specifically to recover and empower “women” at the site of the made-monstrous maternal (bleeding) female body. Scholarship on *Ginger Snaps* with a focus on the parallel between Ginger’s menstruating body and werewolf transformation employs Creed’s monstrous-feminine in its emphasis on Ginger’s resistance to heteronormative maps and her empowerment in doing so. According to Shildrick, however, identity-based readings that celebrate the empowerment of difference tend also to participate in the regulatory regime of the normal. And Creed’s theory of the monstrous-feminine, or any identity-based reading reliant on rigid sex difference, also risks the biological determinism that Nicholson (1994) argues assumes the female body as fixed in normalized sex difference. Such a foundation limits feminism’s political scope with its inherent exclusion of other marginalized subjects not located in such an essentialized female form. But even in destabilizing Ginger’s (and Jason’s) body, the various subjects uncovered are contained by further identity markers that exclude. And, as Shildrick argues, stabilizing these subject-identities produces the Other/s as innocuous by extending the nonthreatening distance between subject and the (fixed) Other.

Perhaps, then, the final transformation scene in *Ginger Snaps*—a mere twenty two seconds dominated by the Undead subject—not quite Ginger, nor quite werewolf—can be read most productively as a scene during which the modern subject/viewer confronts the unbound body of the liminal Other, the subject/self formerly denied. Perhaps this is the political moment of the horror film during which the subject recognizes such an exclusion as illusory, a space in which privileged subjectivity can be interrupted. Shildrick (2002) dismantles hierarchical subject difference at the site of the body, but not to erase difference. Rather embodiment here is re-signified as ambiguous, no longer reflective of fixity and

hierarchical value. With such a poststructural approach, *all* bodies and, therefore, *all* subjects, fail the parameters of valued modern subjectivity based in the distinctions of binary logic. Such a failure, though, is what connects morphological diversity with the practice of diffraction, a mapping of “interference, not replication, reflection or reproduction” (Haraway 1992, 300). For, as Haraway (1992) contends, such is the promise of monsters.

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