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Sparkles Are Not a Girl's Best Friend: Domestic Violence and Gothic Heroes in Young Adult Vampire Fiction

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Title: Sparkles Are *Not* a Girl's Best Friend: Domestic Violence and Gothic Heroes in Young Adult Vampire Fiction

The forever young lover has invaded the young adult genre. This essay examines the hidden anti-feminist themes in the female driven narratives of this genre. It investigates how the Gothic/Brontean hero, like Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*, takes a new more empathetic shape, yet is increasingly more anti-feminist in nature, due to the hidden domestically violent tendencies of his actions. Although there are a vast number of novels within the genre which feature coercive and controlling teenage vampire lovers, evidence is specifically taken from three series written by adult female authors, *The Twilight Saga* by Stephenie Meyers, L.J. Smith's *the Vampire Diaries*, and Gayla Twist's *Call of the Vampire: the Vanderlind Castle Series*. While most of the essay's attention is given to the behavior of *Twilight's* vampire protagonist Edward, evidence from the other two series is included to display how these anti-feminist characteristics are represented throughout the genre. Albeit literary scholars have pointed to the male vampire lover's behavior as abnormal or controlling, they have failed to make the connection to its resemblance to emotional domestic violence in relationships. In fact, some feminist scholars have argued that readers are attracted to the novels because of the vampire lover's "old-fashioned" attitudes. With the use of sociological studies, literary criticism, and textual evidence this essay offers a feminist critique of the genre revealing that although these narratives are female-written and female character-driven, they reinforce patriarchal attitudes surrounding control and romanticize behavior which imitates emotional coercion and abuse.