

Romeo and Juliet's Gothic Space in YA Undead Fiction **From Capulet Crypt to Juliet's Body**

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ABSTRACT ♦ THE CAPULET CRYPT AS AN ARCHITECTURALLY GOTHIC SPACE ♦
THE CAPULET CRYPT AS A FOCUS FOR GOTHIC TROPES ♦
CHANGE IN SHAKESPEARE'S CAPULET CRYPT AND ITS ITERATIONS IN YA UNDEAD FICTION ♦
CONCLUSION ♦ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ♦ REFERENCES

ABSTRACT

Many previous works have demonstrated that Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* offers gothic authors, directors, and other artists a hospitable *topos*. I extend this critical corpus to consider the way in which young adult (YA) undead novels—written by American women writers, within a few years of each other, in the early twenty-first century—understand the Capulet crypt as a gothic space. I use the term “undead” throughout since although the focus of this fiction is on vampires, some texts also include zombies and other revenants. The chosen novels belong to a moment of extreme popularity for *Romeo and Juliet* vampire fiction, the best-known example being Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight* saga. The texts of Meyer, Claudia Gabel, Lori Handeland, and Stacey Jay include diverse elements from *Romeo and Juliet*, from fleeting quotations to sustained reworkings of characters and plot. I conclude that a shift away from the confining and distressing gothic space in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* as the Capulet crypt, to a more graphic containment in a variety of sarcophagi, or within Juliet's body itself, is discernible in most of these retellings. This shift is explained with reference to the growth in popularity not just of female, but feminist, gothic and the turn to the body in literary criticism from the 1990s onwards. In this way, *Romeo and Juliet* can be understood as providing a hospitable *topos* for the twenty-first century feminisms of these authors and their young, predominantly female, readers.



Many previous works have demonstrated that Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* offers gothic authors, directors, and other artists a hospitable *topos* for their works. Many monographs and collections on gothic studies no

longer open with a definition of the term, so vast has the terrain it covers become. Fear that the term will be stretched so thin as to become meaningless has been voiced by gothic scholars (Hogle). Many recent volumes instead tackle and define a subset of gothic: for example, Asian gothic (Soon 2008, Ancuta 2014), Global-gothic (Byron 2015), postmillennial and happy gothic (Spooner 2017). “Gothic” is a contested term, lacking consensus on whether it is a genre, mode, or style. For this article, I supply two local definitions of “gothic” in the order they will be encountered. First, an architectural style prevalent in medieval western Europe laden with pointed arches, ribbed vaults, and flying buttresses, fervently revived in England in the nineteenth century. Second, a body of literature most often identified as emerging in eighteenth-century Europe and especially resurgent during periods of political and social upheaval. The latter aspect has contributed to seeing gothic as a literature of “trauma and cultural anxiety” (Spooner 2017, 3). Gothic literature is frequently described as engaging and exciting the reader by the inclusion of extreme spaces, from wild, remote landscapes to confining, domestic structures; the, often violent, intrusion of the archaic into modern life; and obscene physical and sexual power belonging to despotic humans or supernatural beings (Bowen 2014). Usually, it involves some mystery around which of these forces is at play. Although authors of gothic literature include all sexes, it has been predominantly associated with female readers, resulting in much catastrophizing thought about its deleterious impact on them (Spooner 2017, 9). This continues well into the twenty-first century. Indeed, this article considers sometimes opposing moral panics around Stephenie Meyer’s *Twilight* saga (Spooner 2017; Wasson and Artt 2015; Brody 2014).

Playtext and productions of *Romeo and Juliet* manifest a predilection for the paraphernalia of death, mourning and burials, as well as the transcendence of death (Olive 2021). The Capulet crypt has been frequently cast as a gothic space in stage and film productions of the play, something well-documented in the review sections of journals and research publications (Desmet and Williams 2009, Drakakis and Townsend 2008). The same attention has not been given to YA undead *Romeo and Juliet* novels published, within a few years of each other, this millennium. I use the term “undead” throughout since, although the focus of this fiction is on vampires, some texts also include zombies and other revenants. This critical gap exists despite the argument that YA undead novels are more literarily innovative, and therefore higher “quality,” than their adult counterparts (George and Hughes 2015, 7); significant work on gothic Shakespeare (Desmet and Williams 2009, Drakakis and Townsend 2008); and considerable attention to YA popular culture within recent Shakespeare studies, in line with late-twentieth-century growth in children’s and YA literary criticism. Examples of Shakespeare studies in this vein include Abigail Rokison’s *Shakespeare for Young People*, Erica Hateley’s *Shakespeare in Children’s Literature: Gender and Cultural Capital*, Andrew Hartley’s *Shakespeare and Millennial Fiction*, and articles in *Borrowers and Lenders* in particular the special issues “Shakespeare for Children” (2006) and “Girls and Girlhood in Adaptations of Shakespeare” (2014).

Examples of neglected YA undead *Romeo and Juliet* texts considered in this article include Claudia Gabel’s *Romeo and Juliet and Vampires* (2010), her lone instalment in a “classic mash-ups” series from HarperTeen. They also include two duologies—Stacey Jay’s *Juliet Immortal* (2011) and *Romeo Redeemed* (2012) as well as Lori

Handeland's *Shakespeare Undead* (2010) and *Zombie Island* (2012). Handeland's works are arguably aimed at twenty-something women, rather than the teenagers that constitute the target audience for the other works in this article. The actual readership for all texts coalesces around, but is not limited to, both these groups. All the novels in this article belong to a spell of extreme popularity for *Romeo and Juliet*-inflected vampire fiction. They were published and marketed in the immense wake of Meyer's *Twilight* series (2005–2008), sales of which exceeded 70 million, 16 percent of all book sales, in early 2009 (Morley 2016, 1). Furthermore, in the mold of Meyer, the authors of these texts are all American women. The relative obscurity of these other YA undead texts, compared to Meyer's, cannot be explained by their being authored by women, narrated by young female protagonists, and concerned with the socialization "process by which teen girls become gendered subjects" (Pulliam 2014, 11). These are all qualities they share with Meyer's saga (Spooner 2017, 8–9). Perhaps their neglect can be explained by their failure to successfully compete with, and perceptions of them as derivative of, *Twilight*?

To redress gaps in critical attention to these authors of YA undead fiction, I consider the way that they read and write the Capulet crypt as a gothic space. These novels are clearly intertextual, some explicitly "embedding" *Romeo and Juliet* in their title and/or the body of their books: through quotation, following its plot to varying degrees, and using its characters (Sanders 26). "Embedded texts" are, suggests Sanders, one type of appropriation (26). She locates adaptation, as well as appropriation, under the umbrella concept of 'intertext' and breaks it down into various types such as:

- ◆ 'transpositional', transposing from genre and or medium: for example, turning Shakespearean tragic drama into a gothic novel or undead mash-up;
- ◆ 'amplificatory', involving a political 'commentary' on the source-text such as foregrounding a character from a marginalised group as narrator: for example, telling the story of the play entirely from Juliet's perspective;
- ◆ 'updating' the text: for example, in terms of language or setting;
- ◆ 'analogue', recognising texts that can stand-alone: for example, that do not require the readers' familiarity with Shakespeare's play, even though such familiarity can enrich the reading experience (18–20).

Aspects of each type of adaptation and appropriation outlined here can be seen in this collection of YA undead novels (18–20). These books are intertextually related to popular adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* beyond *Twilight*— such as Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet*, released in 1996 when these authors were in their twenties or thirties. Like that director's catafalque for Juliet, which was ringed with floral pedestals and candelabras, these authors lavish attention on Juliet in that space. Taking a cue from writers on adaptation including Sanders and Linda Hutcheon, I am not primarily interested in cataloguing similarity in and difference between, let alone the "fidelity" of adaptations and source texts as an end in itself. Rather, I am interested in what this cluster of

YA undead adaptations suggests by way of patterns in responding to the Capulet crypt and its resident Juliet: How are these authors rewriting these elements of the play for their imagined audience of young women? And how might we understand this using critical phenomena?

A shift away from the confining and distressing gothic space in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* as the Capulet crypt, to a more graphic containment in a variety of sarcophagi, or within Juliet's body itself, is discernible in most of these retellings. Analysis of the *Twilight* saga itself is largely absent from this article because the Capulet crypt, indeed memorial architecture generally, is notably absent from Meyer's writing. I draw on the saga towards the conclusion, however, to suggest that the fourth novel, *Breaking Dawn*, offers an extreme example of this shift. I argue this corporeal turn in representations of the Capulet crypt relates to the growth in popularity not just of female, but feminist, gothic and interest in the human body in the humanities and social sciences from the 1990s onwards (also known as "the turn of the body"), including gothic horror and body gothic (Horner and Zlosnik 2016, Bruhm 1994, Hurley 2004, Pulliam 2014, Reyes 2014). In this way, *Romeo and Juliet* can be understood as providing a hospitable *topos* for the twenty-first-century feminisms of these authors of YA undead fiction, and implicitly, their young, predominantly female readers.

THE CAPULET CRYPT AS AN ARCHITECTURALLY GOTHIC SPACE

What are the features of Shakespeare's playtext that establish the Capulet crypt as a gothic space? I am not suggesting that gothic architecture appeared on the early modern stage. Jennifer Low posits that the tomb would have been represented in the Lord Chamberlain's Men performances by the tiring-house at the back of the stage (2005, 2). A gothic revivalist aesthetic *was* adopted by Victorian directors, however, and a physical representation of the tomb space has been a mainstay of modern productions (Wetmore 2015, Dessen 1989). Nonetheless, the YA authors this article features understand Shakespeare as having a gothic architectural space in mind for the Capulet crypt, perhaps inferred from the Italian sources for his story and its setting in medieval Verona. Friar Laurence describes it ambiguously as an "ancient" structure (4.1.111). Juliet echoes his language, calling it "a vault, an ancient receptacle" (4.3.39). It is most frequently referred to in the playtext as a "vault," a space with an arched roof or ceiling within a building, usually "a lower or underground . . . portion of a building" (OED n.2a) but also a synonym for a crypt or burial chamber (OED n.3a and b). Other recurrent nouns for it in the play-text are "grave," "tomb," and "monument." It seems to have a well-sealed entrance since the Friar asks for an iron "crow" (bar) in preparation to enter it (5.2.21). Furthermore, Low identifies lines and stage directions showing Romeo prying the door open with a crowbar and a mattock, suggesting they are intended to "emphasize the claustrophobic nature of the place" (2). While such stage directions still appear in modern editions, Alan Dessen opined the omission of 'Romeo's mattock and crowbar' from 'modern productions' (Belsey 1993, 139). Several characters, however, find the entrance possible to break into single-handedly. Juliet dwells at length on its claustrophobic nature, also mentioned by Paris and the Prince. Description of its architectural features is outweighed by allusions to its atmosphere in the playtext (4.1.111).

If there is little in the play-text to identify the crypt's architecture as gothic, these twenty-first-century reincarnations lavishly construct the medieval or neogothic architecture of the Capulet crypt. In Gabel's *Romeo and Juliet and Vampires*, the Capulets are a powerful, noble vampire clan, opposed by the materially humbler, but nonetheless forceful, Montague slayer family. The action of the play is loosely retold with the altered premise that interspecies conflict—rather than two merely human feuding families—is disturbing society's peace. Gabel embraces the gothic architecture of medieval Europe, as imagined by the eighteenth-century gothic novel (2010). She provides a cell for Friar Lawrence within a monastery, tunnels under the Capulet castle leading to torture chambers—used by the vampire Tybalt for illicit, interspecies sexual couplings with human girls (55–57). Meanwhile the Capulet crypt is “an ornate structure made of stone and brick, with two large steeples and painted icons of vampires hovering over the front door” (206).

Handeland's *Shakespeare Undead* and *Zombie Island* are versions of *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Tempest* respectively. They have parallels to John Madden's film *Shakespeare in Love*, in portraying the writing of *Romeo and Juliet*; a romance between Shakespeare and a wealthy, young woman; women's use of disguise to enable their “unfeminine” activities; unexpected interventions from Elizabeth I; and glimpses of England's colonies. Key differences from Shakespeare and Madden are that this Will is a vampire, the Juliet-figure a zombie killer already in a loveless, arranged marriage with an ageing spouse, and the inclusion of a “voodoo” Nurse. Kate's husband's family crypt imagines an early gothic revival. It is portrayed as owing a debt of gratitude to medieval Italian custom, even if the family must make do with a materially British building, as the heroine Kate narrates: “Of late, anything Italian was the rage. . . My husband had taken the Italian fascination a step further and purchased an ancient vault to use in the Italian manner for a private family tomb” (2012, 9).

In a twist, however, this Juliet-figure wakes not in the family crypt, but in a wooden coffin onboard a boat. The jealousy of her husband, a patriarchal composite of Paris and Lord Capulet, stoked by her affair with Shakespeare has not abated after her “death.” Not wanting to leave a place for the bereaved lover to mourn her (apparent) death, in *Zombie Island*, her husband spitefully plans “to bury her in Virginia” and has her coffin loaded on a ship headed across the Atlantic, not realizing that she is merely temporarily unconscious (2012, 17, 29). Hence, the gothic architecture this Juliet-figure expects to awaken into is replaced with a frightening experience envisaged by Shakespeare's Juliet, that also appears in gothic novels: being buried alive. This is a recognizably gothic experience of female imprisonment. In both Shakespeare's play-text and these YA, undead fictions, Juliets portray their entombment as stifling (4).

In *Juliet Immortal*, one of Jay's Juliet characters experiences a similarly alternative crypt when the car in which she is travelling, with her Romeo-counterpart, crashes off the road into a ravine, trapping them inside the vehicle smeared with their blood (2011). The premise of Jay's *Juliet Immortal* (2011) and *Romeo Redeemed* (2012) is that Juliet was murdered by Romeo so that he could gain immortality from a supernatural society whose evil purpose is to tempt one partner to murder the other, in return for eternal life. An opposing supernatural society then immortalized Juliet too, on the condition that she dedicate her afterlife to combatting Romeo.

In the books, the pair find themselves head-to-head trying respectively to destroy, and preserve, the romantic partnerships of teenagers at a modern-day California high school. In Juliet's flashbacks to her former life, the Capulet crypt is housed in a church in medieval Verona. Juliet revives in the "Cool and damp, with the scent of old stone and murder lingering in the air . . . I still have a body. One with which to feel the press of unforgiving marble" (2011, 290). She realizes that she is "buried alive," a phrase repeated throughout the two books: "The stone beneath me bruises my spine; my fingertips pulse from where I've ripped my nails trying to claw the lid of the sarcophagus away. I draw in stale air, pungent with the stink of Tybalt's body rotting in his own deathbed a few paces away" (2012, 68). Repeatedly, this Juliet violently injures herself trying to escape from her medieval, stone prison.

THE CAPULET CRYPT AS A FOCUS FOR GOTHIC TROPES

Insanity, transgressive relationships, and perverse juxtapositions have all been identified as common motifs in gothic literature (Bowen 2014, Cartwright 2010, 83, Talairach-Vielmas 2016, 39–40). A protogothic text, the crypt in *Romeo and Juliet* is a site for mourning lost loved ones, musing on sanity and madness, escaping and furthering transgressive relationships, and enacting perverse liveliness. The abundance of these features, which I flesh out below, predisposes the playtext to gothic "transposition" (Sanders 18).

Insanity

Exploring, and problematising, the binary of sanity and madness is a characteristic of gothic literature foreshadowed in Shakespeare's playtext. The Capulet crypt provokes musing about madness. For example, preparing to fake her death by taking a sleeping potion, Juliet articulates her fear that she will waken prematurely in the Capulet tomb, surrounded by ancient and fresh corpses including her cousin Tybalt, and that such an eventuality will unhinge her:

"Alack, alack, is it not like that I,
So early waking—what with loathsome smells,
And shrieks like mandrakes torn out of the earth,
That living mortals hear them, run mad-
O, if I wake, shall I not be distraught,
Environed with all these hideous fears,
And madly play with my forefathers' joints,
And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud,
And, in this rage, with some great kinsman's bone,
As with a club dash out my desperate brains?" (4.3.45–53)

Jay's Juliet, imprisoned in her sarcophagus, is sometimes lucid and focused on her survival: "I don't let fear or pain distract me. I reach out, find the trickle of water through the marble with shaking fingers, and press my mouth to the stone" (2012, 129). At other times, she depicts herself as: "A trembling girl with blue lips, eyes rolling back in her head, half mad with thirst and the terror of being locked in the dark" and "mad with grief, weeping despite the fact that her body can produce no tears after three days in the tomb" (2011, 260). Like her Shakespearean prototype, Jay's Juliet constructs her ability to survive as predicated on her ability to will herself to continued rationality. This reworked crypt however is a site where the Juliet character gains consciousness while buried and narrates struggling on the borderline of sanity and madness, rather than merely imagining doing so in the tradition of her Shakespearean precedent. This is an example of Sanders' categories of adaptation as "amplification". In this case, the source text's protogothic qualities are heightened into something fitting the tradition of gothic horror.

Transgressive relations

Used to escape a transgressive relationship (a bigamous marriage to Paris), foisted on her by a brutal older man (her father, perhaps also Paris), and facilitate married life with a chosen other (here, Romeo, against the wishes of her family), Shakespeare's Capulet crypt creates a protogothic space for Juliet that will be echoed by later gothic authors for their fleeing heroines. More transgressive, and more gothic than the physical space, is Shakespeare's imagery which sees "Death" repeatedly figured as Juliet's bridegroom, lover, arguably rapist: "Shall I believe/. . . that the lean abhorred monster keeps/ Thee here in dark to be his paramour?" (5.3.102–5). This personification of Death is invoked by multiple characters, in contexts that range from a jest to cursing Juliet, and includes lines spoken by Juliet herself. Of her love-at-first-sight meeting with Romeo, Juliet exclaims: "If he be married,/ My grave is like to be my wedding bed" (1.4.134–35). To Juliet's initial refusal to marry Paris, Lady Capulet responds: "I would the fool were married to her grave!" (3.5.140). While Juliet tells Friar Lawrence that if she is forced to marry Paris, he should "make the bridal bed/ In that dim monument where Tybalt lies" (3.5.201–2)—implicitly to receive her self-slaughtered body. The specter of necrophilia is again raised by the exiled Romeo's vow on being told that his bride is dead: "Juliet, I will lie with thee tonight" (5.1.34). It resurfaces in Paris' adoration of Juliet's corpse. Mourning Juliet in the crypt, he figures her deathly couch as a bed: "Sweet flower, with flowers thy bridal bed I strew" (5.3.12). He follows this with pledges to his (apparently) dead fiancée's body:

"O woe! thy canopy is dust and stones!
 . . . with sweet water nightly I will dew;
 Or, wanting that, with tears distilled by moans.
 The obsequies that I for thee will keep
 Nightly shall be to strew thy grave and weep" (5.3.13–17).

There is a sexual echo in Shakespeare's choice of the word "moans" here. Belsey describes Romeo's actions after breaking into the crypt as a 'grotesque parody of a wedding night' (1993, 139). The association between sex and death has already been invoked multiple times in the play. Amy Kenny offers a sustained analysis of Capulet's personification of death as a sexual partner and spouse of his daughter (2019). The imagery that saturates the play repeatedly connotes transgressive sexual relations including necrophilia, incest, rape and voyeurism (Low 2005, 4; Watson and Dickey, 2005; Kenny, 2019). These are common features of, though by no means exclusive to, gothic literature (Cartwright 2010, 83, Talairach-Vielmas 2016, 39–40).

The crypt is still initially imagined by the Juliet figures of Gabel, Jay, and Handeland, as an escape route from undesirable marriages into relationships with a Romeo-figure. These relationships are figured as transgressive because of their adulterous or cross-species nature, or because of interfamilial conflict. Shakespeare's perverse play on sex and death is also taken up in these novels. Echoing Friar Laurence's line in Shakespeare "Thy husband in thy bosom there lies dead" (5.3.155), Gabel has her Juliet reach "down towards her belly and felt Romeo's head, lying there, still" (2010, 219): in both the source and its adaptation here, Romeo is in the position of a lover, but is perversely dead, not merely physically spent from love-making. Meanwhile, Handeland graphically invokes the Friar's line, using the phrase "He buried himself within her" in Kate's description of Shakespeare penetrating her during the passionate reunion that follows her apparent death (2012, 83).

Perverse liveliness

I have suggested ways in which the language used by Shakespeare and some of these novelists around the crypt connotes the sexually perverse. Now I want to expand this consideration of the Capulet crypt as perverse to include the sense of *contrary*: dualisms, oxymorons, antitheses are typical of the gothic. In "As One Dead," Glennis Byron elucidated the ways in which paradoxical imagery contributes specifically to this play's gothic nature (2008; see also Spooner 2016, 199, 212; Wisker 2016, 150, 154; Talairach-Vielmas 2016, 33, for non-Shakespearean gothic examples). As well as being the site of death for the star-crossed lovers and Paris, the resting place of Juliet's kinsmen recently and long-since departed, the Capulet crypt is recurrently populated with living beings—first and foremost the comatose Juliet, oxymoronically described by Friar Laurence as a "Poor living corse, closed in a dead man's tomb!" (5.2.29). Friar Laurence seems set to lead a crowd to the crypt when Juliet's seemingly lifeless body is discovered, and he announces: "Every one prepare/ To follow this fair corse unto her grave" (4.5.92–93). It subsequently throngs with those who come to see the "dead," weep over them, decorate them with flowers, strip jewelry from their body (5.3.28–31), and keep the corpses company. Juliet's visitors alone include Romeo, her fiancé Paris, the watch, and Balthazar, Romeo's serving man. Like Shakespeare's playtext, the Capulet crypts in YA undead fiction house a host of other activities besides mourning. These range from incidents in the Shakespearean source, such as the fatal brawl between Romeo and Tybalt (Gabel 2010, 177, 211), to innovations including the woken Juliet's rescue (Gabel 2010; Jay 2011, 2012; Handeland 2012); vampire Shakespeare fighting his zombie enemies (Handeland 2010, 2012); Juliet's attempt

to stab a feckless, apparently living, Romeo with the same knife she has just plunged into her own chest (Jay 2011, 260); grave robbing (Jay 2011, 2012); and a sadistic Friar Lawrence's torture of Juliet (Jay 2011, 2012).

The crypt, and the ground more generally, are figured multiple times in Shakespeare's play as perversely animate. Capulet explains early in the play that Juliet is his only living child, saying "Earth hath *swallowed* all my hopes but she" (1.2.14). Romeo figures death's mouth as stifling Juliet in vampiric terms, accusing it of having "sucked the honey of thy breath" (5.3.92, see Kenny for a detailed analysis of this blazon as "dehumanising" and "dissecting" Juliet). His speech echoes Juliet's question in her earlier soliloquy: "Shall I not then be stifled in the vault,/ To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breathes in,/ And there die strangled ere my Romeo comes?" (4.3.33–35). Handeland's Kate is swallowed up by the earth and comes close to being stifled when she is submerged in a landslide. Kate narrates: "Dirt and pebbles filled my mouth as I screamed. I snapped my lips closed and attempted to breathe. I inhaled dust and mud but little air . . . I had not planned to die beneath the earth. Buried. Alone. Lost forever" (2012, 209). Here, however, the ground has been magically animated by the novel's female Ariel, jealous of Kate's desirability to Will. Both the playtext and the novels exhibit a gothic concern with perverse spaces that accommodate the antitheses of life and death, chaos and stillness (Hogle 2008).

CHANGE IN SHAKESPEARE'S CAPULET CRYPT AND ITS ITERATIONS IN YA UNDEAD FICTION

In the continuities between Shakespeare's Capulet crypt and these reworkings, an anxiety approach to the gothic perceives the "soil of communal insecurity" that best grows the gothic (Twitchell 1987, 50): the fear of the dark; insanity; being suffocated; buried alive; cuckolded; betrayed by someone you trusted; deserted by loved ones; unable to protect loved ones; and bereaved. These cultural anxieties have crossed a timespan of four hundred years and the Atlantic (in terms of authorship, further across the world in terms of readership). They continue to coalesce around the gothic space that is the Capulet crypt in YA undead fiction. In this section, however, I will articulate some differences from Shakespeare that these texts' reworked Capulet crypts feature, suggesting that they reflect changing cultural anxieties, particularly in relation to women writers and their imagined young female readership.

Being physically constrained is an implicit fear of Shakespeare's Juliet's as she takes the sleeping potion. Her constraint, however, occurs much more explicitly in these novels. Jay's Juliet regains consciousness, not merely on a bier in a vault, but inside a sealed coffin or, here, a heavy, stone sarcophagus that she cannot open: "I shake my head, whimpering as my skull rolls against more hard stone . . . My heart slams inside my chest even as my hands reach out, pounding against the roof of my prison, striking hard enough to make me cry out in pain as my knuckles hit and come away bruised" (2011, 290). Similarly, Handeland's Kate, expecting to wake in the family crypt, describes how she: "tried to sit up and encountered resistance . . . My indrawn breath seemed overly loud, as if the sound had gone forth and been thrust back. As if I were confined in a very small space" (2012, 8). She subsequently realizes that she is in a wooden coffin. Having survived being buried alive

twice, a final restriction on her body is that Will refuses to turn her into a vampire like him; refuses to make her body immortal. This is something she desires so that they can share an unending life together. Rather, he trades a favor with the magician Prospero to be rendered mortal, only somewhat pacifying Kate who must remain in her human body. There is a clear tonal shift in the description of the material spaces in which these Juliets find themselves trapped from the monologue Shakespeare writes for Juliet as she muses over the sleeping draught: these are the architectures of horror, not merely of terror. Jerrold Hogle differentiates these two gothic modes as distinctly involving “gross violence of physical and psychological dissolution,” as opposed to “anxious suspense about threats to life, safety and sanity kept largely out of sight or in the shadows” (2008, 3; these definitions are reiterated and problematized in Reyes 2014, 2).

Gabel's Juliet, like Shakespeare's, is a teenager. She is, however, aged up a few years from the playtext to a 16-year-old in this novel—perhaps to make her sexual desire for Romeo more acceptable to the guardians of YA readers in societies with a higher age of consent than Shakespeare's. Like Handeland's Kate, Gabel's Juliet also experiences horrific physical constraint. Part of her horror stems from being conscious throughout her imprisonment in the Capulet crypt. It is, however, bodily, rather than external, limitations that most trouble this Juliet-figure. The following is narrated by Juliet from her tomb as, conscious, sighted, and hearing, but unable to physically move or react in any way: “she witnessed her nurse unravel at the sight of her seemingly dead body, a hundred memories of the tender moments they had shared flashed across Juliet's mind . . . She was so touched by the nurse's intense and all-encompassing grief that she wanted to break through her trance and hug the women . . . but it would be several more hours before Juliet could move a finger. Her hearing, though, was still acute” (195). Later, she describes how, since she regained consciousness into a locked-in body, “The clergyman had closed her eyes before he began the proceedings, so all she could do now was hear . . . the whisperings from the other vampires who had come to her funeral to pay their respects” (215). She is now frustrated by the loss of sight in addition to loss of movement but continues to offset her discomfort against the pleasure she will receive when this ploy reunites her with Romeo. This changes rapidly as “. . . the sound of footsteps created a large booming echo inside the crypt. Juliet knew that it was Romeo, coming to fetch her . . . Oh, how she wished that she could move any part of her body. She would have given anything and everything to wake up from this trance and run to her husband. She couldn't bear being in this strange state much longer . . . Juliet tried to move her lips and respond to Romeo, but she was still paralysed, from the tips of her toes to the crown of her head. [Romeo begins a suicide speech along the lines of Shakespeare's play]. Juliet let out a bloodcurdling scream, and yet there was nothing but silence . . . These words of misery and hopelessness gave Juliet a new wave of panic. Inside, she was wailing and begging God to spare her husband. If she could open her eyes and mouth, everything would be fine” (216).

I quote this scene at length because it captures the accreting horror Juliet experiences in her total loss of voice (like that of the stone-stifled Kate above), unable to move or communicate, yet all the while experiencing and being able to comprehend the threat to Romeo's life. This part of the novel realizes some of the paradoxes that Shakespeare's Friar Laurence tells Juliet will be a consequence of taking the potion, that characters who

observe her corpse remark on, and that are also evident in descriptions of the crypt and its use by characters in the playtext. It also, however, heightens the horror of Juliet's lived experiences from the playtext, since the awful premonition of Shakespeare's Juliet only partially eventuates there: his Juliet sleeps peacefully and does not awaken early and alone, before finding Romeo dead. Gabel's depiction of her Juliet is reminiscent of descriptions of locked-in syndrome. Those afflicted are paralyzed from head to toe, unable to speak or move, but with their consciousness intact. The imprisonment this Juliet experiences in the crypt, but most painfully, inside her own body, is even more harrowing given that her express motivation for taking the potion was her sense of horror at, and urge to resist, her changing body. Desiring to live a human life with the mortal Romeo, at the start of the novel, she was appalled by her paling complexion, sharpening teeth, disappearing reflection and shadow (2010, 193). She is from a vampire family and "race" where bodily changes from human to vampire begin in teenage years but must be cemented during a ceremony where she kills a human and consumes their blood. This novel is a graphic, supernatural analogue for the adolescent's horror at their uncontrollably changing body.

The *Twilight* saga has been popularly identified as a modern *Romeo and Juliet*. Meyer based *New Moon*, the second novel in the series, loosely on the play (different canonical inspirations have been identified by Meyer for each novel in the quartet). For Bella, its Juliet-figure, the saga dispenses with a crypt altogether. There is only a fleeting reference to Carlisle Cullen visiting a morgue while working as a doctor (2006, 41) and Bella's external, physical imprisonment amounts to occasional "grounding" and hospitalizations. Rather, Bella's monstrous pregnancy imprisons and "threatens to destroy her from the inside out" (Mulvey-Roberts 2016, 116). It lasts weeks, rather than months, as the fetus grows at a supernatural speed "her torso ballooning out in a strange, sick way" in a matter of days from conception (2008, 174). Bella's pregnancy is depicted as imprisoning her through an immobility that has a semblance of being comatose, even dead: "Bella lay flat on the hospital bed, her belly a mountain under the sheet. She looked like wax—colourless and sort of see-through. You'd think she was already dead, except for the tiny movement of her chest, her shallow breathing. And then her eyes, following . . . us with exhausted suspicion" (2008, 241). Her supernatural fetus fights its way out of its own confinement in Bella's womb: she describes it as "kicking my ribs apart, breaking her way through me piece by piece" (2008, 376). The cracking noise of her fracturing ribs and pelvis echoes through the house, observed by other characters. Only when the baby has been delivered by Caesarian section—and Bella transitioned to a vampire—does she regain some control of her body, becoming able "to twitch my toes and twist my fingers into fists" (2008, 378). As the above quotations show, third person commentary on her death-like state during her labor and transformation are interspersed with sections where Bella narrates feeling literally trapped in her body, like Gabel's Juliet above. After years of petitioning Edward to turn her, Bella has been transitioned by the Cullens to save her from dying in this supernatural childbirth. Healing from the traumatic childbirth and transition process involves her lying "perfectly motionless" through sedation for weeks, rather than the playtext's hours. On regaining consciousness, however, Bella is plunged almost immediately into another struggle for corporeal control as she learns to recognize and master her vampiric desires (thirst for blood) and powers (speed and strength). Her reward for her "sacrificial motherhood" is that her vampiric, "post-maternal body

becomes an almost invincible shield”. Her body, however, is still a site (and sight) that is policed by the patriarchal Cullen family and, to some extent, the rules of the Volturi that govern all vampires (Mulvey-Roberts 2016, 116–17). In this way, *Breaking Dawn* contributes to YA undead *Romeo and Juliet* fiction that eschews the Capulet crypt as the confining and distressing gothic space, and instead locates it as the Juliet-type's body. It predates the publication of the other authors' novels and, given its immense international popularity, had the potential to spawn similar readings of Juliet's gothic space.

CONCLUSION

This article first demonstrated ways that the Capulet crypt—in Shakespeare's playtext and twenty-first-century, YA undead *Romeo and Juliet* novels—can be described as a gothic space or *topos*. Secondly, it teased out a cluster of changes in this space's representation across several of these novels. The most significant departure from the play's gothic *topos* is from a “place” (the original referent of the Greek word) to a *corpus*, from the crypt to the bodies of the Juliet figures, in the experiences of Meyer's and Gabel's heroines. Shakespeare's, Jay's, and Handeland's Juliets experience gothic confinement within social, familial, and external physical structures, such as a crypt or coffin (although, regarding Shakespeare, Kenny offers a counter-reading of Juliet's death in the play-text as a demonstration of the corporeal agency she attains during the course of the play). In contrast, Meyer and Gabel focus on the imprisonment of Juliet figures *within* their own bodies, as the result of supernatural pregnancy followed by vampire contagion and a rebooted potion respectively.

Xavier Aldana Reyes argues that the gothic is “always” and “inherently corporeal” (67, 9). Partly, this corporeality relates to gothic subjects (and objects), such as bodily changes wrought through puberty, ageing, and death; “the vulnerability of human flesh to attack, particularly from human beings, but also from corporations or institutions” (18); the body that cannot be controlled (18–19); and the inescapability of corporeality—especially for women, often figured as bereft of the level of rationality and consciousness that would enable them to transcend their physicality (Hurley 2004, 119–20). Gothic corporeality, however, also invokes its visceral, sensational, and thrilling appeal to its readers: “it relies on the embodied nature of the human and on our ability to experience fictional mutilation” and claustrophobia vicariously (Reyes 2014, 167, 170). Reyes points to an increase in the “number of contemporary gothic horror subgenres that have privileged the body as a site of fear” (2014, 167), referencing the turn of the body in academia in the 1990s. This was exemplified generally by Helene Cixous, Michel Foucault, Judith Halberstam, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray. In gothic studies specifically, it is demonstrated by Steve Bruhm's *Gothic Bodies* (1994) and Kelly Hurley's *The Gothic Body* (2004). Catherine Belsey began her 1993 article on desire in *Romeo and Juliet* with the question ‘Is the body inside or outside of culture?’ (126), partly answering it with the statement ‘the letter invades the flesh and the body necessarily inhabits the symbolic’ (132). The body's continued centrality to twenty-first-century gothic can be further explained by the moral panic around “what it means to be human,” in “our own bodies,” in “an increasingly decorporealized information society” (Reyes 2014, 168). These possibilities and fears have been

recently responded to by authors like Kazuo Ishiguro in *Klara and the Sun* (2021) to Ian McEwan in *Machines Like Me* (2019), to pick two prominent examples in English. The development that renders Juliet's body as the gothic space can be seen as both part of a gothic tradition *and* a contemporary upsurge in attention to the corporeal in the gothic. Where a more radical break from gothic convention is discernible is their tendency to eschew male characters' fears of these female bodies as "monstrous Others" (Pulliam 2014, 11; Mulvey-Roberts 2016, 106–7; Williams 2016, 91). An exception is Jacob in *Breaking Dawn*, whose disgusted response to Bella's superhuman pregnancy is rooted in his revulsion at her having a child with his love rival, rather than seeing Bella's pregnancy as intrinsically monstrous. These novels' discarding of this convention can be read as these authors' refusal of the "abject script" given to women (Wisker 2016, 163; see also Haefele-Thomas 2016, 177). Albeit not part of mainstream society, Meyer and Gabel's Juliet figures nevertheless become cherished centers of their vampire families and communities (Wasson and Artt 2015).

Gothic and feminist writing often features women placing "great emphasis on configurations of space" (Chaplin 2016, 139). They also intersect in their mutual concern with agency and its denial, something that has been fruitfully explored under the critical umbrella of "female gothic." This phrase is used in gothic studies to describe texts by women, for women, with female protagonists, and various combinations of these. Second wave feminism explored the many ways in which women are confined. "Imprisoned," "constrained," "restricted," and "controlled" are related terms that saturate both gothic and feminist theory (Horner and Zlosnik 2016; Pulliam 2014). It has been argued that "for many women authors, gothic has afforded the proverbial safe space in which to explore numerous and often overlapping social concerns . . . critique restrictive social and cultural conventions" and "the violations perpetrated against the female body which continue unabated today" (Haefele-Thomas 2016, 170; Mulvey-Roberts 2016, 117; Horner and Zlosnik 2016, 1). Even the most recent gothic writing depicts women "repeatedly to be vulnerable to male violence, in both the human and supernatural communities" despite "the law's claim to have successfully legislated for gender equality" (Chaplin 2016, 147). The corporeal turn enacted by these adaptations simultaneously maintains the relatability of female gothic texts, *and* renews Shakespeare's play, for their target audience of twenty-first century, young women, primarily in Anglophone societies (a type, or function, of adaptation described by Sanders, 2006). They update representations of physical imprisonment to symbolise many age-old social confines: these readers are more likely to grapple with worries about being locked in a body rendered uncooperative by illness, adolescence, pregnancy, or drugs than about being trapped in the castles and crypts of eighteenth-century gothic novels and Shakespeare's sixteenth-century playtext. Building on existing traditions of female gothic texts and feminist theory, Meyer and Gabel's Juliet characters make abundantly clear that 'each protagonist's body is the site of her struggle against being relegated to a confining gender role', her gothic space (Pulliam 2014, 17). Perhaps reception of earlier instalments of the *Twilight* saga as anti-feminist also encouraged this (Olive 2021, 2023). In this way, their popular YA books resonate with the feminist zeitgeist evident in popular movements occurring within a decade of their publication, such as *Me Too* (2006-) and *Everyday Sexism* (2012-), concerned in large part with women's bodily autonomy.

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