From villainous vixen to feminist icon: a critical analysis of Lilith in *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) and *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–).

By

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Abstract:

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the contemporary representation of the mythological figure Lilith. To complete this examination, this study briefly explores the intricate history of Lilith and her manifestations. This study investigates Lilith and how she is represented in a contemporary postfeminist media economy. Furthermore, the *femme fatale,* the abject and the female grotesque are explored. Lastly, this study examines two contemporary series that position Lilith as a prominent character. These series are: *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) and *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–). In the last section of this study, the concepts and tropes as outlined above are applied to the selected series. This dissertation aims to examine Lilith's ambiguous position in relation to contemporary feminist politics.

ANTI–PLAGIARISM DECLARATION:

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Dedication:

This is dedicated to my parents, Tiffany, Kevin and Stuart; to both of my sisters, Kelsey and Lauren; to Karin van der Mast and to my grandparents Beverly, Dave, John, Valerie, Allen and Pam. Thank you for letting me discuss Lilith during every meal, every TV show, every film and in all general conversations for the last two years. Without your support, I would achieve nothing, and I would be nothing. I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my incredible supervisor Jenni Lauwrens, thank you for listening, for guiding me and for helping me grow. I am very privileged to have you as a mentor.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 An introduction to the study

My first introduction to the figure Lilith was through the series *True Blood* (2008–2014). In the series Lilith is depicted as the first vampire in history and the queen of vampires altogether. Visually she is portrayed as a naked young woman in her twenties with long black hair. At the time, Lilith was not a figure that I was familiar with; however, after observing her in *True Blood*, her name began to surface for me in an array of popular culture mediums. In 2016, Lilith resurfaced in a series that I was watching, *Shadowhunters* (2016–2018). In Season 2 and Season 3, she is depicted as the antagonist of the series. She is portrayed as a greater demon of the underworld and as a young woman in her early thirties, with long dark hair – a similar visual representation to that of the *True Blood* Lilith.

After some research, I found that Lilith is a prominent character in contemporary popular culture. Lilith as a figure features in series that I had viewed countless times. In *Supernatural* (2005–2020), she is portrayed as a greater demon. In *Once Upon a Time* (2011–2018), Lilith is portrayed as the daughter of Maleficent. In *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–), she is the Mother of Demons and a powerful witch. In *Scooby Doo! Mystery Incorporated* (Doug Murphy 2010–2013) Lilith is portrayed as a phantom that haunts a mountain, and in *Lucifer* (2016–) she is, once again, depicted as the Mother of Demons. Lilith is represented as the biblical Cain's sister in *Year One* (Harold Ramis 2009); in *Darklight* (Padraig Reynolds 2004) she is the powerful protagonist who suffers memory loss. Moreover, Lilith has appeared in video games and computer games such as in *Malifaux,* where Lilith is portrayed as the "Mother of Monsters" and in *Final Fantasy,* Lilith is shown as a snake monster. In the computer game *The Sims 4*, Lilith is a pre–set sim. In addition, she is the only female vampire in the preloaded PC Sims world.

Lilith as a figure is evident in contemporary popular culture mediums such as film, television series, music, gaming, comic books, art, poetry and literature (Patai 1964; Fernandes 2015; Dennis & Dennis 2014; Martínez-Oña & Muñoz-Muñoz 2015; Grover 2016). However, Lilith's reach is not observed only in contemporary culture. She also exists as a figure in myths, legends and folklore. She is found in ancient Sumerian texts such as *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (2000 B.C.E.) and has been represented as a vampire, a witch, a demon and a temptress (Fernandes 2015:733–734). When examining the multitude of instances in which Lilith resurfaces, one notices that she has existed, does exist and has the potential to exist within a large array of mediums – historical or contemporary. This is why it is so important to

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examine the representation of Lilith; she is imbued with so many different meanings, and she has served various functions throughout history. These countless depictions and illustrations suggest that Lilith has resurfaced as both a villainous vixen and a feminist icon. For this reason, it is necessary to analyse Lilith to determine the values and characteristics that have been assigned to her and what she represents each time she is reincarnated.

1.2. Aims and objectives

1.2.1 Aims of the study

Lilith is a complex figure that crosses a multitude of boundaries and comfort zones. This is, in part, due to the fact that Lilith, as a figure, has multiple representations and manifestations that exist within history, mythology and popular culture (Patai 1964; Smith 2008; Martínez-Oña & Muñoz-Muñoz 2015; Dennis & Dennis 2014; Fernandes 2015). The central focus of this dissertation is to explore the contemporary representations of the mythological figure Lilith in visual culture. Therefore, the main aim is to both analyse and contextualise the meanings that arise from the representation of Lilith in *Shadowhunters* and *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina (TCAOS)*. In examining these representations, I aim to understand why Lilith is resurfacing in recent popular culture and what the relevance of this might be particularly in relation to contemporary feminist discourse in mainstream media culture.

1.2.2 Objectives of the study

The first objective of this study is to explore Lilith's varied origin stories and understand how they might relate to her contemporary manifestations. This will allow me to better understand what Lilith signifies today. The analysis of the two contemporary television series under discussion requires one to conduct an in-depth exploration into the earlier representations of Lilith in earlier contexts. In addition, due to the fact that this study is predominantly focusing on American television shows, this objective will allow the reader to understand how Lilith is present in a diverse selection of different cultural contexts.

The second objective of this study is to further investigate these origin stories in order to explore the multiple meanings that have come to surround Lilith. It is important to note here that while Lilith has emerged within an array of different historical contexts, myths and legends that span over a multitude of diverse ethnicities, religions and geographical locations, this study predominantly delves into her representation in Anglo-Christian and Jewish traditions as these are more relevant to the two series under investigation.[1]

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[1] It is important to note that I do not expansively explore the representation of Lilith in certain mythologies and folklores, specifically African folklore. See Patai (1964) for a discussion.

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The third objective is to understand how Lilith has come to be associated with feminist discourse. I investigate whether or not she can be considered a postfeminist icon, as has been suggested in the literature. This study therefore investigates Lilith's relationship to postfeminism. The objective is to explore what role this contemporary feminist movement has played in Lilith's most recent refiguration(s) and how the two (postfeminism and Lilith) might relate to one another. To do this, this study briefly unpacks the previous waves of feminism and then further investigates postfeminism and its relevance with regard to the contemporary manifestation of Lilith. Following this, the representations of Lilith in *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) and *TCAOS* (2018–) are analysed more closely. The analysis focuses on the three tropes or concepts that I have identified following a semiotic and iconographical analysis of the series. This semiotic and iconographical analysis "will consist of the study of pictorial conventions used by a particular culture in the process of encoding the values that structure its reality" (Moxey 1986:992).

Lilith has been, and still is, depicted as a sexual, powerful woman with a vendetta against mankind as a whole, and at times specific male targets. Therefore, the fourth objective is to explore the ways in which she is depicted as the *femme fatale,* both historically and in the series mentioned above. Furthermore, because Lilith simultaneously embodies two contrasting binaries in the television series, the abject, as argued by Julia Kristeva, is investigated here. For example, in both series she is portrayed as being both a maternal mother and a sexualised vixen.

The fifth objective I examine is how the figure Lilith embodies the female grotesque. Lilith has the potential to portray qualities that are imbued in the female grotesque trope. For example, Lilith is an ambiguous character that shows signs of both excess and the abject. This analysis of the female grotesque will assist me in examining how Lilith as the female grotesque is evident in the representation of Lilith found in the selected series: *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) and *TCAOS* (2018–).

1.3. Need for the study

This study is important because the current increasing popularity of Lilith is taking place during a tumultuous period in feminist history. Within the current feminist movements, women have difficulty carving out a specific overarching cause that drives the current wave. According to Rosalind Gill (2016:625), this is due to the fact that contemporary society is currently influenced by different feminist movements that are being circulated. While previous feminist waves have always had a pivotal plight that drove each movement or wave

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(Gill 2007:147), this multitude of feminist media, positions and influences causes some confusion surrounding the possibility of a singular plight or cause of the contemporary feminist woman. For the purpose of this study, I specifically focus on the postfeminist media economy and its turbulent nature. The result of this turbulent movement, or "sensibility" as defined by Gill (2007:163), has seen a rise in the popularity of the sexualised female character in contemporary popular culture in the guise of feminism (Gill 2008:37). The current situation may indeed provide the ideal platform for Lilith to position herself as a potential icon for postfeminist women to admire. This positioning is evident from the recent influx of Lilith-like characters in contemporary film and literature as I have discussed above. With the popularity of such a chaotic character on the rise within popular visual culture, it is undeniably important to explore the meanings generated by her various representations. In addition, this study aims to explore Lilith from an intellectual history perspective. As mentioned above, Lilith as a mythological or historical figure is depicted in a collection of different manifestations, that can each be interpreted differently. Thus, viewing Lilith with an academic and a historical lens provides a very interesting and detailed account of the different historic periods, art movements and mythological interpretations that Lilith is represented in. Hence, this study aims to provide an extensive understanding of Lilith as a representation or figure, which could be achieved by exploring both the past and contemporary manifestations of Lilith.

While Lilith's popularity in contemporary popular culture is evidently increasingly expanding, academic analyses of her various reincarnations remain scarce. Interestingly, I have found more significance in the topic in undergraduate and graduate essays, dissertations, theses and blogs than in peer-reviewed journals. It is mainly young female students who have chosen to write about Lilith. This suggests that Lilith is indeed a character that is of interest to young women; specifically, young women who have argued that she represents a new "strong female role model" (Kinrich 2011; Berkowitz 2020; Mercure 2010). For this reason, I argue that Lilith ought to be analysed more closely in order to understand what meanings have been (and are being) assigned to her in a postfeminist media economy in the making.

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1.4. Theoretical framework and literature review

1.4.1 Representations of Lilith

This section analyses the relevant theoretical texts surrounding Lilith's origin, and also refers to the various concepts and visual representations of Lilith that are seen within the series under discussion here. *Lilith: From Powerful Goddess to Evil Queen* by Maria Fernandes (2015) gives a brief account of the history of Lilith. However, what makes this analysis unique is that Fernandes argues that Lilith was initially created to exist as a "pure spirit" (Fernandes 2015:740). However, as a result of her expulsion from Eden, Lilith became a "symbol of sexual perversion and a fearsome power of darkness" (Fernandes 2015:740). Interestingly, Fernandes (2015:738) argues that regardless of how Lilith is interpreted, she maintains an Otherness that challenges boundaries. Fernandes even goes as far as to say that from the time of creation itself, Lilith was intended as a supernatural being. This can be said because when Lilith was banished from Eden, she flew away (Fernandes 2015:738). As discussed in the introduction of this study, Lilith embodies a multitude of ideas and concepts that are featured in her character and mythology. One such idea is that God intended Lilith to be a supernatural entity. This is discussed in depth in Fernandes's chapter, where the argument put forth is that Lilith had supernatural tendencies from the time of creation, such as a vast intelligence and the gift of flight. What perpetuates the idea of these supernatural tendencies is how easily Lilith assimilated into a demonised state once expelled from Eden (Fernandes 2015:739), suggesting that she was already an abject creature. This concept is further developed and explored in Chapter 2 and is again discussed in Chapter 3, where the abject supernatural trope is thoroughly examined.

Lilith by Raphael Patai (1964) also assists in providing an in-depth account of Lilith's origin and briefly discusses where she appears as a representation or refigured manifestation throughout history. This article was published in 1964, making it relatively older than the other articles explored in this study. However, it still holds great value when examining the foundation of Lilith and her historical representations. Pritha Kundu (2013) offers insight into a classical pre-Raphaelite manifestation of Lilith in a painting entitled *Lady Lilith* (1866–1868) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. This article serves as an introduction to Lilith and her representation within different art movements and specifically within the pre-Raphaelite era. In addition, this article assists in analysing the Victorian *femme fatale* and in providing a different representation of Lilith. Kundu's (2013) article therefore assists in aligning Lilith with the *femme fatale* trope.

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The article *Vampires, Witches and Commandos, Oy Vey: Comic Book Appropriations of Lilith* by Geoffrey Dennis and Avi S. Dennis (2014) provides a detailed account of Lilith's relevance in popular culture and more specifically the comic book world from 1971 onward. This article assists in both contextualising and historically accounting for Lilith with regards to her more contemporary manifestations. While the focus of this dissertation is on two television series, this text assists in outlining contemporary accounts of a (re)figured Lilith throughout an assortment of popular culture mediums such as art, comic books, literature, music and film as previously noted. In addition, this article provides an account of the evolution of Lilith's character and her significance within the comic book world.

An examination of the *Iconographic analysis of the Myth of Lilith in advertising* by Maria Marona Martínez-Oña and Ana Maria Muñoz-Muñoz (2015) gives insight into the contemporary relevance of Lilith and proves that she is still an affective and provocative character. Lilith's physical representation is explored within this text. Martínez-Oña and Muñoz-Muñoz (2015) discuss how visual representations of Lilith always shock the viewer in a tantalising and hypersexual manner. This article serves as a link between the contemporary Lilith and the sexualised *femme fatale* of the nineteenth century.

In *Lilith: Seductress, Heroine or Murderer* by Janet Howe Gaines (2001) and *Lilith: The Personification of Humanities Fears* by Rosa Marie Lewis (2011), Lilith is positioned as a threat to masculinity. In light of the patriarchal stance of the Western world, she thus becomes a threat to mankind as a whole. Lewis's article further proposes that Lilith has survived all these years only because she is feared. She is an Otherness that cannot be pinned down. This Otherness is examined in *Witches, Bitches and Femme Fatales* by Kerry Mallan (2000), where the concept of the abject female is further investigated and studied.

The article *The Dawn of a New Lilith: Revolutionary Mythmaking in Women's Science Fiction* by Michele Osherow (2000) looks at the old, the new and the fictional Lilith and compares and contrasts all three. Osherow offers some useful insights into the refiguring of contemporary Lilith. The article maintains that Lilith effectively still sits on the outside of societal norms and will always do so regardless of whether she is a heroine or villainess (Osherow 2000). *Lilith* by Tracey Louise Smith (2008) contains information around the multiple representations of Lilith, namely Lilith as a feminist, Lilith as a supernatural creature and Lilith as a myth. All three of these ideas collectively contribute to a large part of this study. Therefore, Smith's reading is of immense use when exploring the meanings ascribed to Lilith's various refigurations. Moreover, it assists with studying the evolution of Lilith as a contemporary myth.

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1.4.2 The three waves of feminism

This section discusses the relationship between feminist discourse and contemporary representations of Lilith. Before one can continue with further investigation into the representation of Lilith, a basic understanding of the different waves of feminism is necessary in order to contextualise her. Initially, Cathryn Bailey's (1997) article *Making Waves and Drawing Lines: The Politics of Defining the Vicissitudes of Feminism* is explored when examining the concept of a wave as seen in the three waves of feminism. Bailey (1997) assists in defining what comprises a wave and the criteria that needs to be met in order for a movement to be considered a wave.

Marcia Rampton's (2015) *Four Waves of Feminism* is used here as it provides a detailed overview of the three waves of feminism. Rampton's analysis offers the cause, limitations and results from all three waves, which assists this study when analysing Lilith's role in postfeminism. In addition, Charlotte Krolokke and Anne Scott Sorensen's (2006) *Three Waves of Feminism* assists in historically contextualising the waves. Stephanie Genz (2009) offers insight into the mentality and underlying plights that brought about the second wave of feminism as explored in her book titled *Fighting It: The Supergirl, Postfeminism in Popular Culture*. Genz (2009) provides an examination of the different plights that were prominent within the second wave of feminism, such as radical feminism for example (Genz 2009:38). Mel Gray and Jennifer Boddy (2010) also assist in exploring and understanding these different causes or plights that fell under the second wave of feminism. In their article *Making Sense of the Waves: Wipeout or Still Riding High?*, Gray and Boddy (2010:374–375) examine liberal feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism and how they all contributed to the second wave of feminism. This is helpful when investigating the three waves of feminism and how the figure Lilith fits into these waves. Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young's (2006) *Chicks, Girls and Choice: Redefining Feminism* and Kate Grover's (2016) *Lilith Fair: Feminist Practice or Feminism Commodified?* offer historical insight when exploring the third wave of feminism. Ferriss and Young (2006:88) suggest that the third wave arose after a rejection of certain qualities or macro political matters that were more prominent in the second wave of feminism. Grover (2016:42) further suggests that one of the main reasons for this shift was due to the fact that the third wave of feminism aimed to be more inclusive of women from different classes, lifestyles, and races.

After a general analysis of the three waves, special attention must be paid to postfeminism, as it is a current feminist movement and, in my opinion, has had a considerable impact on the contemporary refiguration of Lilith. *Empowerment, Sexism: Figuring Female Sexual Agency in Contemporary Advertising* by Gill (2008) looks at the role of the *femme fatale* in a

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postfeminist world. It examines women who use their sexuality as a power to enact revenge. This woman is represented as the vengeful woman (Gill 2008).

Post feminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility (2007) by Gill is a valuable text when exploring the role of the postfeminist and the postfeminism movement. Within this reading, Gill examines the term "postfeminism", stating that it is a feminist movement that has a large number of interrelated notions, concepts and arguments, while simultaneously lacking direction and cause. Interestingly, this chaotic description can be compared to the complex and at times chaotic nature of Lilith. *Sex and the City: A Post-feminist Point of View? Or How Popular Culture Functions as a Channel for Feminist Discourse* by Fien Adriaens and Sofie Bauwel (2011) provides an in-depth exploration of the term postfeminism. Adriaens and Bauwel (2011:2) argue that even the word itself "postfeminism" offers an array of different meanings and interpretations, which only contributes to the ambiguous understanding of the phrase. The role of postfeminism is investigated further in the article *Post-postfeminism?: New Feminist Visibilities in Postfeminist Times* by Gill (2016). In Gill's (2016) article, she argues that postfeminism is not necessarily the only feminist media or movement taking place within contemporary culture. Instead, Gill (2016) suggests that contemporary society is currently influenced by a multitude of different feminist sensibilities or movements that affect different aspects of contemporary culture. Contrastingly, Linda Mizejewski's (2005) article *Dressed to Kill: Post-feminist Noir* argues that postfeminism is not necessarily a desire for a shift in how feminism is interpreted but rather a desire to reap the benefits of feminism without identifying as a feminist. Mizejewski (2005:122) examines how the postfeminist woman would rather focus on consumerism than politics. This tumultuous and ambiguous contemporary timeframe offers insight into why Lilith has resurfaced within contemporary popular culture. The concept of Lilith resurfacing within this multifaceted feminist economy will be further examined in Chapter 2.

The discourses of sexual empowerment and self-entitlement[2] are explored in the following two readings respectively: *Empowerment, Sexism: Figuring Female Sexual Agency in Contemporary Advertising* by Gill (2008) and *Entitled to Consume: Postfeminist Femininity and a Culture of Post-critique* by Michelle Lazar (2009a). Lazar's article (2009a) features in multiple chapters in this dissertation as it investigates postfeminism, sexuality and femininity. Here Lazar explores the concept of entitled femininity. Lazar defines this concept as female power that reclaims previously patriarchal concepts or stereotypes that affect women (Lazar

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[2] Here self-entitlement does not refer to vanity or a large ego; rather it refers to a woman being entitled to her own body and sexuality. The theory is that a woman should be able to do, wear and act as she pleases without the male gaze as a limitation (Lazar 2009b).

2009a). An example of this reclaiming is seen in the refigured definitions of the *femme fatale* or the word 'slut'. This reading is of great use, as Lilith can be seen as a potential reclaimed myth. She was initially created to instil fear in humanity and, more specifically, men. Lilith now possibly stands as a powerful female figure and a force to be reckoned with.

1.4.3 Lilith: The *femme fatale,* the abject and the female grotesque

This section investigates the tropes surrounding Lilith, namely the *femme fatale,* the abject and the female grotesque. The *femme fatale* is directly translated as the fatal woman. In *Femme Fatale: Negotiations of Tragic Desire* by Elizabeth Bronfen (2004), the concept of the *femme fatale* is explored. Bronfen investigates the two opposing sides of the *femme fatale,* namely the demonised, chaotic vixen created by the patriarchy and the feminist icon refigured in third wave and postfeminist media culture. The concept Bronfen examines produces a refigured view of the *femme fatale*; she concludes that regardless of what argument is more persuasive and relevant, the *femme fatale* still remains a sexualised figure with a multitude of ideologies and expectations that her character embodies.

The f*emme fatale* in film noir is discussed in *Vicious Womanhood: Genre, The Femme Fatale* by Mark Jancovich (2011) and *Beyond Backlash: The Femme Fatale in Contemporary American Cinema* by Katherine Farrimond (2018). Both texts examine the different *femme fatale* stereotypes and specifically those found in film and visual culture. Moreover, these texts are useful when analysing the contemporary character Lilith and are used in connection with the reading *Lilith: Seductress, Heroine or Murderer* by Janet Howe Gaines (2001) so that Lilith's type of *femme fatale* can be determined. Furthermore, these authors offer insight into the role of being a *femme fatale;* this provides value when examining how the *femme fatale* affects Lilith's position and influence within the series outlined above.

In *Personality Disorder and the Film Noir Femme Fatale,* Scott Snyder (2001) discusses the *femme fatale* and her downfall. Snyder suggests that while the *femme fatale* may always reach some version of a downfall, the factors that make the *femme fatale* memorable do not lie within her failure or ruin, but rather in the way her chaos, sexuality and power are depicted. I apply this analysis of the *femme fatale* in my exploration of Lilith. She is a deadly figure that uses her sexuality and power to gain vengeance over men that have wronged her or mankind as a whole (Jancovich 2011). This text explores how a villainess has a very complicated relationship with sexuality and qualities a *femme fatale* may embody. Such qualities include the female figure as a temptress who only desires to see the downfall of man. However, contrastingly, Jancovich (2011) suggests that the role of the *femme fatale* was often seen as one of the few active female roles in film. Jancovich (2011) also argues

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that the audience and protagonist find it difficult to determine that the *femme fatale* embodies only evil or goodness; this causes an ambiguous reaction. This mixture of good, bad and everything in-between causes confusion in a similar manner to the ways in which a beautiful supernatural creature causes an abject reaction in a viewer. This text is helpful in developing an understanding of how Lilith uses this mixture of good and bad as well as confusion to break with societal expectations.

The study then looks at the ways in which Lilith could potentially embody certain abject qualities or traits. In Julia Kristeva's book *Powers of Horror* (1982), she defines the abject as an unconscious focus on societal desire and loss. That which does not comply to societal norms automatically, unconsciously gains an abject edge to it (Kristeva 1982). Kristeva's (1982) text is of great value because it defines and discusses women and the maternal figure as abject. In the selected series, Lilith is represented as both abject and maternal, thus Kristeva's (1982) text assists in examining the role of Lilith as a character in these two series and how this character exhibits abject qualities. Barbara Creed's (1993) *Monstrous Feminine* provides great value when analysing the abject. Creed assists in providing the characteristics and criteria that make up the abject figure, specifically the female abject in horror. This is helpful when analysing Lilith as a supernatural creature. Moreover, Creed (1993) provides insightful commentary regarding motherhood as abject and castration anxiety as a contribution to patriarchal systems. These are important for my investigation of the contemporary manifestations of Lilith because throughout Lilith's mythological origin and her contemporary popular culture representations (specifically the *Shadowhunters* and *TCAOS* series) she is connected to maternity and children. However, the children of Lilith are often depicted as demonic. Thus, they embody the supernatural abject and, as a result, Lilith has the potential to embody both the supernatural abject and the maternal abject. Both of these concepts will be explored further in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

When exploring the female grotesque, *Witches, Bitches and Femme Fatales* by Kerry Mallan (2000) offers a valuable examination of the female grotesque. Mallan (2000) provides a useful analysis on the traits, characteristics, concepts and circumstances that comprise the female grotesque. Mallan (2000) achieves this by selecting children's films, such as *The Little Mermaid* (Ron Clements & Jon Musker 1989), *The Witches* (Nicolas Roeg 1989) and *101 Dalmatians* (Stephen Herek 1996), and deconstructing their meaning. Similarly, Chloé Germaine Buckley's (2019) *A Tale of Two Women: The Female Grotesque in Showtime's Penny Dreadful* provides an in-depth analysis of the female grotesque that can also be applied to the two series I discuss here. Not only does this assist me in understanding how to apply an analysis of the female grotesque in my own critical examination of my texts, but it

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also provides a topical exploration of the female grotesque evident in contemporary popular culture. Buckley's article assists in examining how the female grotesque relates to patriarchal structures.

All of these sources assist me in my arguments and exploration around the myth of Lilith. In addition, these sources aid me in examining how Lilith is represented in *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019*)* and *TCAOS* (2018–).

1.5. Methodology

This study predominantly relies on the application of gender theory and more specifically feminist theory. The study consists of a robust literature review, which is then applied to *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) and *TCAOS* (2018–). Moreover, a historical study is completed in order to provide a contextualised account of Lilith's contemporary refiguration. Finally, this study makes use of an iconographical analysis. To complete an iconographical investigation, this study employs an "analysis of systematic associations of motif and literary content" (Hasenmueller 1978:291). Due to the fact that this study engages with a multitude of different film/series/art and literature examples, a semiotic and iconographical analysis will assist in interpreting the images presented in the different mediums and texts. While there are certain limitations associated with an iconographical analysis such as the fact that this study does make use of academic literature from different time periods in which Lilith is relevant, special attention must be paid when deciphering the images and symbols associated with the ancient depictions of Lilith in order to avoid any interpretive misunderstandings. In addition, it is important to mention here that the study is exploratory and speculative and does not aim to reach definitive answers on the meanings Lilith produces through her contemporary appearances.

In *The Female Nude: Art, Obscenity and Sexuality,* Lynda Nead (1988:33) maintains that "the female body is in a continual process of definition and change". Therefore, when we ask what the female body means in particular contexts, we should also ask "who draws the lines, where they are drawn, and for whom" (Nead 1988:33). This study aims to analyse the ways in which contemporary representations of Lilith renegotiate her past incarnations, what these recent versions of Lilith mean and for whom they come to operate as images of female empowerment, if at all.

This dissertation focuses on three specific sections in order to provide a detailed exploration of Lilith. The first section focuses on the origin of Lilith and her contemporary refiguration(s). This provides a contextualisation of the figure Lilith and, in addition, provides historical and

contemporary examples of the different manifestations or representations of Lilith. These examples assist in providing evidence for how Lilith's lore or representation is expansive and multifaceted. The second section investigates the three waves of feminism and the postfeminist movement with specific focus on the end of the third wave and contemporary feminist concepts and ideas. In addition, the second section examines the *femme fatale*, the abject and the female grotesque. These concepts are important as they are repeated throughout the texts discussed within the literature review. These concepts assist in developing the study of contemporary Lilith. The third section is a close analysis of *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019*)* and *TCAOS* (2018–*)*. Moreover, the concepts and tropes explored in the second section are applied to the series in this section.

It should be noted that the sampling process employed, when selecting the different examples or manifestations of Lilith, makes use of the available examples found in the literature review. Primarily the introduction of this study acknowledges certain films, series, videogames and other sources as a means of initially contextualising Lilith. These sources were taken from personal prior knowledge. However, as discussed, thereafter the sources are taken from the literature review. Due to the immense frequency of manifestations and representations of Lilith throughout folklore, mythology, history, art, music, advertising, literature, and popular culture, it would be difficult to list each manifestation or representation as it would take away from the overarching purpose of this study. Thus, this study has selected certain manifestations of Lilith that prominently feature within the literature review.

I have selected two specific series to focus on when examining the contemporary refiguration and representation of Lilith. Both of these series are contemporary and feature a character named Lilith. The first series selected for this study is *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019), which was directed by various people. The genre of this series is a mixture of romance, action, drama, fantasy, the supernatural, horror fiction and teen drama. This study focuses on the end of Season 2 and the whole of Season 3 as Lilith is a key antagonist in the third season. Of the eleven episodes that feature Lilith in this series, it is interesting to note that two episodes were directed by women and four episodes were written by women. All of the eleven episodes that feature Lilith in them will be analysed in this study.

The second series focused on in this study is *TCAOS* (2018–). The genre of this series is a mixture of drama, mystery, horror, romance and the supernatural. Here the character Lilith reveals her name only at the end of the Season 1, but throughout the season, her persona, style and personality embody the concepts and aesthetics associated with Lilith as they emerged from the literature review. The focus is, therefore, on seasons 1, 2 and 3 in which

the character Lilith takes on what appears to be the role of both the antagonist and the antihero. Of the eleven episodes that feature Lilith, five episodes were directed by women and three were written by women, which means that this series has the most female influence between the two that are selected. I mention this for interest sake, and not because I believe that men cannot be feminists or that all women express the same feminist politics. All of the eleven episodes that feature Lilith in them will be analysed in this study. These two series were selected due to their overall popularity and due to the fact that they both feature an interesting manifestation of Lilith as a character.

This study hopes to understand why Lilith has resurfaced as such a popular figure in contemporary popular culture. This is done by closely examining gender discourse, as well as tropes of femininity often employed in media culture – specifically, the *femme fatale*, and the abject and female grotesque– in relation to the selected TV series.

1.6. Outline of chapters

Chapter 1: Introduction
The scope, aims and objectives, need for the study and rationale are outlined here.

Chapter 2: Contextualising Lilith
This chapter investigates the origin of Lilith and how her representation has evolved within contemporary popular culture. This chapter starts out by exploring the historical, cultural and mythological origin of Lilith. Thereafter, this chapter investigates contemporary popular culture manifestations or representations of the figure Lilith. This chapter serves to contextualise the mythological figure Lilith. In addition, the chapter assists in outlining certain qualities and representations that have become synonymous with the mythological and contemporary representations of Lilith.

Chapter 3: An exploration of concepts
This chapter looks at the various concepts that repeatedly resurface when studying contemporary versions of the figure Lilith, and particularly in *Shadowhunters* (2016–2018) and *TCAOS* (2018–). Specifically, this chapter examines the three waves of feminism and the postfeminist movement. This examination assists in determining what feminist qualities Lilith, as a figure, embodies. In addition, this chapter explores the *femme fatale*, the abject and the female grotesque. The chapter serves to examine these concepts and tropes, and to explore how they relate to the representation of Lilith. The chapter investigates whether Lilith is imbued with the qualities of the *femme fatale*, the abject and the female grotesque.

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Chapter 4: Contextualising Lilith in *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) and *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–)

In this chapter a brief synopsis of the two series is given. Thereafter, the concepts and tropes examined in Chapter 3 are further explored. In addition, these tropes and concepts are applied to the character Lilith found within the selected series, specifically *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) and *TCAOS* (2018–).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The final chapter of this study reflects on the previous discussion and summarises my conclusions on the refiguration of Lilith.

CHAPTER 2: CONTEXTUALISING LILITH

2.1 Introduction

As a mythological character who has appeared in a wide variety of cultural contexts, Lilith is a highly complex figure to analyse. This is due to her fragmented origin according to which Lilith has featured as a witch, a greater demon, a sub-demon, a prostitute, a succubus and other powerful, supernatural manifestations (Smith 2008:11,14). This chapter explores some of these manifestations, beginning with a particular focus on the Jewish and the Christian mythological representations of Lilith. According to Smith (2008:28), while Lilith's origin may be fractured and without a definite linear plot, there are dominant traits and aspects that emerge in most of these representations of her. These traits include assertiveness, power (both in terms of her gender and otherwise) and rebelliousness. As Patai (1964:312) points out, "[with] all these advances in her career, the basic qualities of [Lilith's] personality never changed: she remained the beautiful seductress."

Beauty, it would appear, is one of the qualities continuously associated with Lilith (Patai 1964; Gaines 2001; Lewis 2011; Smith 2008). According to Gaines (2001:6), while Lilith takes on many different forms and manifestations, she "nevertheless has the form of a beautiful woman". Depicted as a beautiful woman in literature, art and film, Lilith's beauty is a prominent characteristic that will be explored further in this chapter. Rosa Lewis (2011:7) argues that "Lilith's physical forms throughout the ages are just as diversified as her crimes against society, yet with a single consistency – rare beauty". Patai (1964:295) therefore confirms that Lilith is best known for her beauty and seductive nature; these are two qualities often synonymous with the *femme fatale,* which will be investigated further in Chapter 3. Smith (2008:47), on the other hand, argues that Lilith embodies an "unearthly beauty". Lilith's 'unearthly' or supernatural beauty and its implications will be explored further in this chapter.

Closely connected with her beauty is Lilith's frequent depiction with long, flowing hair. As Fernandes (2015:739) states, "[Lilith] is beautiful beyond measure, her long hair being one of her most sexy attributes." Lilith's long hair is depicted as either black or red throughout her various manifestations (Martínez-Oña & Muñoz-Muñoz 2015:620). These characteristics and iconographical details contribute to constructing a stereotypical 'portrait' of Lilith that has been more or less maintained throughout the gamut of her depictions. This chapter serves to examine a sample of the multiple representations of Lilith as she manifests throughout

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history and mythology.[3] It also explores how these prominent earlier representations of Lilith relate to how she is imagined and refigured within contemporary popular culture.

2.2. The origin of Lilith

The first manifestation of Lilith is in Mesopotamian culture around the middle of the third millennium B.C.E. (Patai 1964:295). Here Lilith appeared in folklore, alongside a collection of evil wind spirits or djinns called the Lilitu.[4] According to Patai (1964:295), at this stage Lilith did not have an individual story. In Mesopotamian folklore, her mythology was in its earliest stages of development and, as a result, she formed part of a lesser known group of demons/spirits as opposed to the greater demon she would later become known as (Patai 1964:295). However, it is important to identify, through this manifestation, that Lilith's origins begin to take shape at a very early stage in folklore and history.

While Lilith was recognised in Mesopotamian folklore only as part of a group of spirits, the first individual account of Lilith was in the ancient Sumerian text *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (2000 B.C.E.), specifically in the tale of the *Huluppa Tree.*[5] This story discusses a demon by the name of Ki-Sikil-lil-lake which, roughly translated, means maiden Lilith (Lewis 2011:11).[6] The tale was about the goddess Inanna who found a beautiful tree resting on the banks of the Euphrates. She intended for the tree to become her throne. For ten long years, she tended and cared for the tree. When the tree had matured and it came time to cut it down, Inanna was dismayed to find that a dragon had set up its home at the foot of the tree. The Zu-bird was raising its young in the crown of the tree, and a demon by the name of Lilith had built her home in the middle of the tree. Gilgamesh, upon hearing of Inanna's dismay, came to rescue her. He slayed the dragon, which caused the Zu-bird to fly away with its young. Fearing for her own safety, Lilith tore down her home and fled for the desert (Smith 2008:11). This fable, while focused on Gilgamesh, offers insight into the first recorded tale about a character that is now widely assumed to be Lilith.

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[3] As discussed in Chapter 1, the sampling process or examples used in this chapter were selected from the examples in the literature review. After extensively studying the origin of Lilith and her many manifestations as a figure, it became apparent that there were too many to condense and explore in this chapter. Thus, this study's sampling is directly selected from prominent examples examined in the academic literature review.

[4] These spirits were known to cause havoc and scare children. Their purpose was to ensure that humans stayed within their dwellings at night and did not venture too far during tumultuous weather (Smith 2008:10).

[5] The *Epic of Gilgamesh* is a poem from ancient Mesopotamia, and it revolves around a great hero called Gilgamesh and his adventures. The text is regarded as possibly the earliest surviving great work of literature. It was found on the table at Ur and is dated at around 2000 B.C.E. (Gaines 2001:1).

[6] Lilith has had many different names throughout history. The Hebrew Bible gave her the infamous name "Lilith", which has become the default name by which she is known.

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While *The Epic of Gilgamesh* may be the first time that Lilith is featured in an ancient text, the *Babylonian Terracotta Reliefs* (1800–1750 B.C.E.) are believed to portray the first image of Lilith (Patai 1964:295).[7] In the *Babylonian Terracotta Relief* depicting Lilith (Figure 1), she is portrayed as slender and beautiful, with wings and owl feet. She is nude and standing tall on two reclining lions, which are turned away from her. She is surrounded by owls and on her head, she wears a cap adorned with many horns. In her hands she holds a combination of a ring and a rod (Patai 1964:295). In *The Epic of Gilgamesh* Lilith is described only as a demon – without any other mention of physical characteristics or distinguishing traits – thus the *Babylonian Terracotta Relief* offers a detailed depiction of a very particular manifestation of Lilith. Not only are her physical features shown, but she is also adorned with and surrounded by various symbolic images. This representation of Lilith therefore shows her as elevated from a lowly sub-demon to a goddess-like creature. Like her description in *The Epic of Gilgamesh,* there is still a defining supernatural otherness to Lilith; the presence of wings and owl feet alludes to an innate animalistic nature or dualism. Furthermore, being associated with the owl implies undertones of the night and darkness, which reinforces the earlier depictions of Lilith as an evil demon, djinn and succubus.[8] It is important to note that even in this early depiction, Lilith is host to a complex binary. In the *Babylonian Terracotta Relief,* Lilith is depicted with wings, which, according to Lewis (2011:8), represents the qualities of God and being God's messenger. The clawed feet, however, denote a threat, pain and predatorial behaviour. Lewis (2011:8) further suggests that this depiction could also show a shift from good to evil, which poses an interesting parallel to the biblical depiction of Lilith that will be explained later in this chapter.

During the Babylonian Talmudic period[9] Lilith thus rose from being a minimal, subordinate demon or prostitute to a "fully-fledged she-demon" (Patai 1964:295). According to Dennis and Dennis (2014:75), it is during this Talmudic period that Lilith was elevated to one of the four greater demon queens who ruled the underworld at the time. According to Fernandes (2015:733), at this stage in the cultural imagination, Lilith became so powerful that a special class of priests called the Ashipu were sent to defeat her. The Babylonian mythology surrounding Lilith created the foundation for her Judeo-Christian biblical representation and depiction. This highlights the fact that Lilith features in a great number of mythologies and

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[7] *The Babylonian Terracotta Relief* of Lilith is also known as the Burney Relief or the Queen of Night Relief (Smith 2008:10).

[8] A succubus is a female demon that sexually preys on weak men or sleeping men. An incubus is the male version of a succubus (Gaines 2001:3).

[9] It is important to note that *the Babylonian Terracotta Relief* is not connected to the Babylonian Talmud. The Babylonian Talmud is a collection of documents that was written during the second and fifth century B.C.E. It is a book on Jewish code and law. It includes the Mishnah (oral law) and the Gemara (rabbinic commentary of the Mishnah) (Gaines 2001:2–3).

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folklores across diverse cultures and religious contexts. Having said that, one must note that this study takes an Anglophonic approach to the representation of Lilith since the primary data used comes from the Hebrew and the Christian Bibles. As a result, certain cultures and religions will not receive as much attention in this study. However, it is important to acknowledge the presence of Lilith in other cultures and religions regardless of whether or not they feature within the discussion as they contribute not only to the origin of Lilith but also to how she is represented in contemporary popular culture.
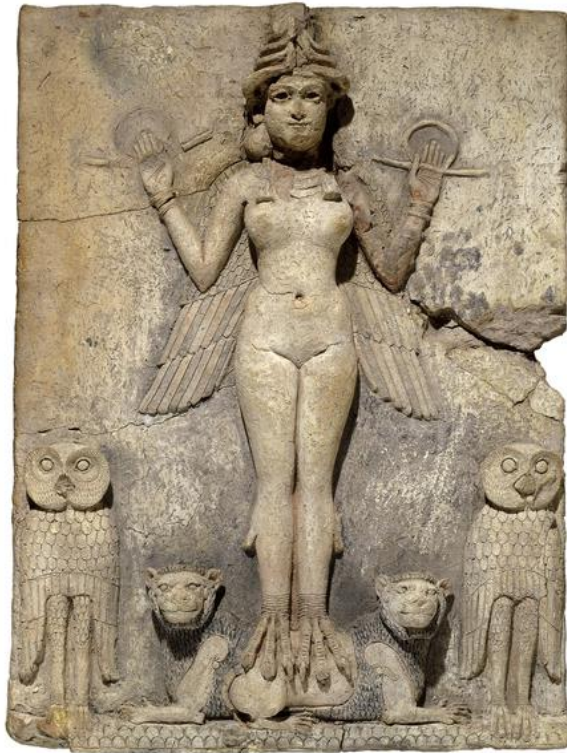
Figure 1: *Burney Relief*, 18ᵗʰ–19ᵗʰ century B.C.E.
Clay, 49,5 x 37, 4,8 cm.
The British Museum, London.
(Patai 1964:295)

For the sake of economy, only a few of these can be mentioned here. For instance, in Bulgarian folklore, Lilith is called Lamia, a cave-dwelling succubus that causes destruction (Smith 2008:13). In ancient Greek mythology, Lilith was also called Lamia; her children were killed by Hera (wife of the god Zeus) after Hera found out that Zeus had taken Lamia as a lover. As revenge, Lamia seduced married men, killed children and caused sleeplessness, until Zeus appeased her with the gift of prophecy and the ability to remove the eyes of her victims (Smith 2008:11). In pre-Islamic Arabian mythology, Lilith is thought to have been

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called Ghul, an evil spirit or demon (Fernandes 2015:734).[10] In Jewish lore, she is thought to have featured as a night demon called Laila (Lewis 2011:11). In Turkish folklore, she was supposedly a female night demon called Al Basti/Al Kardai (Smith 2008:14). It is important to briefly highlight these varying representations of Lilith. They not only show how much Lilith features in mythology and folklore, but also emphasise the fact that, despite this eclectic historical reach, she is not widely known in contemporary Western culture.

Before this study examines how Lilith features within a Judeo-Christian context, it is important to discuss a text called *The Alphabet of Ben Sira.* This text plays a role in understanding a more well-recognised origin of Lilith and acts as a turning point in the identity of Lilith. *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* was found during the Middle Ages and is thought to have dated back to sometime between the seventh and eleventh centuries B.C.E. (Smith 208:18). *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* consists of two sets of proverbs (44 proverbs altogether). The first set contains 22 Hebrew proverbs and the second set contains 22 Aramaic proverbs. Lilith's tale is found in the fifth proverb of the Hebrew set (Smith 2008:18), which discusses the creation of man. According to this proverb, as explained by Smith (2008:18), when God created man from the earth, he created both man and woman at the exact same time. He named man Adam, and woman Lilith. Adam and Lilith did not get along; they constantly fought about their roles. "[Lilith] said, 'I will not lie below', and [Adam] said 'I will not lie beneath you, but only on top. For you are fit only to be in the bottom position, while I am to be the superior one'" (Smith 2008:18). Smith (2008:18) explains that Lilith eventually grew tired and annoyed with Adam's arrogance. She pronounced God's ineffable name – the Tetragrammaton – and flew from Eden.[11] Adam called out to God, distraught that his companion had abandoned him. As a result, God sent three angels by the names of Senoy, Sansenay and Semangelof to retrieve Lilith and return her to Eden. The angels caught up with Lilith as she flew over the Red Sea.[12] They demanded that she return with them or they would drown her in the sea, but still she refused to return. She declared that her purpose in life was to bring pain and suffering to infants and that she no longer had a place in Eden. The angels told her that her punishment for not returning (as dealt by God) would be the death of a hundred of her demonic children every day. She accepted these terms, explains Smith (2008:18). In reaction to this, Lilith declared that she had the power to harm children within the first eight days of a male infant's life and the first twenty days of a female infant's

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[10] Ghul is a term that later became known as a Ghoul, which is an undead creature that feasts on flesh (Fernandes 2015:734).
[11] The Tetragrammaton is the ineffable name of God (Gaines 2001:4).
[12] The Red Sea is very significant in the Jewish religion as it is the sea that Moses parted in order to give safe passage to the fleeing Israelites [Exodus 14:21-31].

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life. However, if the child bore an amulet that had the three angels' names on it, she would not harm them (Smith 2008:18).

This proverb leaves a lot to be unpacked as it is one of the first comprehensive accounts of Lilith in known existence (Gaines 2001:20). This text establishes the foundation of Lilith as an assertive or independent woman who has the potential to be considered disobedient by patriarchal systems in place at that time, but it also produces the image of Lilith as an otherworldly creature. The fact that Lilith could fly away from Eden and that Adam could therefore not follow her suggests that she is a supernatural and/or an abject creature. The abject exists in a liminal state, between two binaries, for example natural and supernatural (Creed 1993:11). Lilith becomes the supernatural abject because she is supposedly created to be Adam's equal, which is man and natural. Thus, when Lilith flies, she exhibits both supernatural and abject qualities as one does not know whether she is natural or supernatural and, alternatively, whether or not she is a mixture of both. One potential reason for this is outlined by Fernandes (2015:738), who suggests that Lilith gained supernatural otherness and the ability to fly when she spoke the Tetragrammaton. One of the commandments bestowed upon Moses is that "you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain" [Exodus 25:21, Deuteronomy 10:2,5]. The fact that Lilith grows wings and is then depicted as an anthropomorphic demon could, according to Fernandes (2015:738), be her punishment for using the Tetragrammaton. This is further cemented by the fact that Lilith's price to pay for not returning to Eden is for 100 of her children, which are supposedly demonic, to die every day. From uttering the ineffable name of God to flying over the Red Sea, a dramatic change evidently occurs in the way in which Lilith was imagined and depicted in *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* compared to the previous accounts I discussed earlier.

When analysing *The Alphabet of Ben Sira,* it is important to note that it does have certain limitations as a reliable text. David Stern and Mark Mirsky (1990:167) discuss how *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* can be interpreted in multiple ways. Firstly, it could be considered as a serious text that elaborates on and discusses the proverbs surrounding the Hebrew Bible, as examined above. Secondly, it could be used as a means of entertainment (Stern & Mirsky 1990:168). This idea suggests that the tablets were merely parodies of biblical tales; Stern and Mirsky (1990:168) comment that *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* may be one of the earliest literary satires in Hebrew literature, a kind of academic parody or farce that could even be seen as entertainment for rabbinic scholars. Gaines (2001:20) suggests that the tablets were used as a teaching aid for outspoken women. The potentially cynical genre of the tablets rejects the idea of female equality as ridiculous. Not only was the idea of female

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empowerment dismissed but it also received a warning. As Gaines (2001:20) explains, *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* connects women's sexual equality with the murder of children and being thwarted by men. The tablets could then have acted as a humorous way to intimidate women who strove for equality or empowerment during the seventh and eleventh centuries B.C.E. However, despite the unreliability of *The Alphabet of Ben Sira*, it is still a useful source when trying to understand and explore the different meanings assigned to Lilith.

A further concept to explore that is derived from *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* is Lilith's role in bringing suffering to children (Lewis 2011:24). This is interesting since, during the nineteenth century, Lilith was often used as a scapegoat to explain miscarriages and cradle deaths of infants. As Lewis (2011:24) explains, Lilith was used to express the societal fears of the time, "serv[ing] as the necessary evil to resolve the disparity between knowledge and medical practice." This is why Jewish mothers were told that their babies must keep an amulet (Figure 2) to ward off Lilith in order to avoid such tragedies (Gaines 2001:2). This proverb therefore created a persona of Lilith as a beautiful woman hell-bent on destroying marriages and killing infants.

Figure 2: *Amulet for a woman in childbirth and her infant with female demon Lilith bound in chains in the centre,* 19th century B.C.E.
Silver, 11,2 x 7,1 cm.
(The Israel Museum, Jerusalem)

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According to Smith (2008:17), "Judaism pre-dates Christianity by 1300 years." Within Judaism, Lilith features far more prominently than in any other culture or religion. She is seen within the Talmud, Kabballah, mythology and folklore. The Jewish exploration of Lilith features in multiple contexts. One of the first is in the Zohar. The Zohar is a Kabbalistic tome that first appeared in Spain during the thirteenth century and was compiled by Moses de Leon.[13] According to Smith (2008:17), in the Jewish Zohar, Lilith features as "one of the Four Angels of Prostitution". She is depicted as one of the four demons that give birth to demons and her supposed aim is to lead "good" God-fearing men astray (Patai 1964:308). In addition, the Zohar is where the tale of Lilith and Samael's (the greater demon) pairing originates (Gaines 2008:6). According to Kabbalistic mythology, Lilith and Samael's marriage was arranged by the blind dragon.[14] However, according to Patai (1964:308), the marriage between Samael and Lilith was not destined to succeed; "God was apprehensive lest they fill the world with their demon brood, and, to prevent this, he castrated Samael." While Lilith still loved Samael, she longed to fulfil her sexual desire to copulate, which she succeeded in doing by having sexual relations with human men whom she led astray and seduced (Patai 1964:308).[15] In the Kabballah, Lilith features as a demoness consort of the greater demon Samael; in the Talmud, Lilith is thought to be a demon who is active during the night or "Lailah" in Hebrew (Smith 2008:17).

In later depictions of the Midrashim,[16] Lilith's origin followed the tale found within *The Alphabet of Ben Sira,* but with an addition to the ending of the story. According to Smith (2008:17), the ending of the Midrashim Lilith origin story is extended to include the fact that once Lilith flees Eden, she finds a new mate in the greater demon Samael. This addition to Lilith's Jewish background and context, coupled with her former manifestations within the Talmud and Kabballah text, resulted in Lilith being elevated to the status of Queen of Darkness, which gives her a more evil and menacing status (Fernandes 2015:735). Within Judaism, Lilith's darkness takes on a more seductive manifestation. As Smith (2008:17) explains, in Jewish folklore Lilith is seen as a dark temptress. She is depicted as a supernatural, nude woman with long hair and the characteristics of a succubus, such as beauty. Lilith embodies the fears of the pre-modern Jew, both externally and intrinsically.

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[13] The Kabbalah is a method, discipline or school of thought in Jewish mysticism that, across its various formulations, focuses on an esoteric and spiritual outlook in life (Gaines 2001:5).

[14] The blind dragon was at the bottom of the dragon hierarchy (Patai 1964:308).

[15] A lot of mythology around Lilith as a succubus blames her for wet dreams and untamed desires that cannot be fulfilled. According to such tales, these frustrations were the work of Lilith attempting to steal the seed of man to make demon offspring (Martínez-Oña & Muñoz-Muñoz 2015:613).

[16] According to Rivkah Walton (2011:115), Midrash is both the "process and the product of interpreting biblical and occasionally other sacred-texts". It is the process of analysing and determining the literal meaning behind biblical references.

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Externally, this is because Lilith comes to cause havoc in the night, a time traditionally linked with fear and mystery. Intrinsically, this is because Lilith causes "psycho-sexual chaos" to burst from within (Dennis & Dennis 2014:75). Lilith embodies a fear that Barbara Creed (1993:2-3) explores as the castration theory. This is the concept that "woman primarily terrifies because of the fear that she might castrate" a man (Creed 1993:i). According to Creed (1993:7), another fear that woman represents is that of monstrous female owing to her connection with mothering and reproductive functions. The fact that Lilith is at times seen as the Mother of Demons, which is achieved by Lilith being represented as a seductive vixen who steals seed and virility from men in the night, is already an abject interpretation of motherhood.[17]

One important aspect that *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* assists in explaining is a discontinuity within the book of Genesis, found in the Old Testament Bible.[18] Genesis 1:27 describes how God created a man and a woman in the image of God: "so God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." However, in Genesis 2:18–24, Eve is created from the bone of man:

> "The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.' He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So, the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So, the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man the man said, this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman', for she was taken out of man."
>
> [Genesis 2:18–24].

As one can see, there is a discrepancy regarding whether or not God made man and woman together or on separate occasions. The argument, according to Maria Marona Martínez-Oña and Ana Maria Muñoz-Muñoz (2015:614) and Smith (2008:14), is that the woman made in God's image in Genesis 1 is Lilith and the woman made from man's flesh in Genesis 2 is Eve. If this is correct, it means that Adam and Lilith were made at the exact same time, in the exact same way and were therefore equals in every conceivable manner. This could also explain the supposed frustration experienced by Lilith as described in *The Alphabet of Ben*

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[17] The concept of motherhood as abject is explored in more detail in Chapter 3.
[18] It should be noted that Lilith is mentioned by name in the King James Bible version. However, for the purpose of this study, when I refer to the Bible, I am referring to the New Revised Standard Version, which refers to Lilith in its subtext rather than directly.

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Sira proverb, as she was not Adam's subordinate and there was no logical reason for her to have to "lie beneath" Adam (Smith 2008:18).

This is not the first time that Lilith has specifically been named within a religious text. The following extract from an older version of the Hebrew Bible discusses how Edom will become a chaotic, wasteland after God condemns the Edomites' territory:[19]

> "Wildcats shall meet hyenas,
> Goat-demons shall greet each other;
> There too Lilith shall repose
> And find herself a resting place"

[Isaiah 34:14 as cited in Gaines 2001:2].[20]

In modern versions of this ancient text, Lilith is replaced with the term "screech owl"[21] and "goat demon" has been replaced with "male goat" [Isaiah 34]. The Book of Isaiah is a collection of Hebrew prophecies that all take place over a multitude of years. According to Gaines (2001:2), a continuous thread throughout the Book of Isaiah is that the prophet encourages God's people to avoid interactions with foreigners who worship false idols. One such example is Edom; in Isaiah 34, the prophet discusses the fall of Edom. The excerpt looks at the judgement of God and how he punished the Edomites for their destruction and bloodshed. According to Gaines (2001:2), when God completed punishing Edom, only the scavengers and predators were left in the desert land. It is interesting to note that Lilith or the 'screech owl' finds her home in this chaotic desert, which directly connects to the Sumerian text, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. In this text, Lilith flees Inanna's tree after it is chopped down, and heads for the desert (Patai 1964:265). While Lilith features somewhat in the Hebrew Bible, Lilith's name features minimally in the Christian Bible, if at all (Smith 2008:16). The number of times Lilith appears in the Bible depends on the version and how old it is. For example, Lilith features once in the Hebrew Bible under the name Lilot (Dennis & Dennis 2014:77). However, in the King James Bible, Lilith's name has been replaced with the words great/screech owl (Smith 2008:16).

Owing to the many revisions that have been made to ancient biblical texts, and their inclusion or exclusion from various versions of both the Hebrew and Christian Bibles, it is

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[19] Edom was an ancient Kingdom that existed in between Jordan and Israel. According to Edward Bridge (2010:88), God or Yahweh condemned Edom for being an unreasonable neighbour to the supposedly polite Israelites. Concerned with only their wants and needs, God condemned them as punishment for their behaviour.

[20] Biblestudytools.com offers a comparison of this quotation and how it is reworded within different versions of the Bible.

[21] Screech owl has often been used as a pseudonym for Lilith (Smith 2008:16).

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impossible to accurately place the development of Lilith's character along a chronological timeline. Lilith's unclear status within the Bible, therefore, does not come as a surprise as this text has been criticised as a research tool lacking in consistency and accuracy (Smith 2008:16). Deborah Grenn (2007:45) contributes to this argument stating that one must be critical of religious texts and the implications of the social lens under which we view such texts. Grenn (2007:45) states that:

> In response to the clear dangers posed by attempts to limit our knowledge and to present only a male-dominant creation story, we must ask ourselves again and again: Whose worldviews shape our values and belief systems; what historical and social lens did the biblical writers and 'sages' see through, and whose voice is it that we really hear in the Bible and subsequent texts held as canon.

Similarly, Karen Edwards (2010:35) argues that "it is difficult, perhaps impossible, not to read the Bible through a veil of received interpretation, a proposition demonstrated with a particular forcefulness." Edwards (2010:35) is suggesting that the Bible has certain presumptions or pre-assertions that affect the objectivity of the text, thus one can only deduce that one must approach the Bible with certain acknowledged reservations before analysing it as a text.

This consideration of consistency and accuracy is best seen when examining the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Dead Sea Scrolls comprise over 800 documents found in eleven different locations in Wadi Qumran on the banks of the Dead Sea. Upon the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, it became apparent that the Bible comprised some of these ancient scrolls; however, other scrolls that filled gaps in information contained in the Bible had clearly been omitted (Smith 2008:16). This could be because these scrolls disrupted the flow of the Bible or it could be due to the fact that they contradict sections of the Bible deemed to be more suitable. According to Smith (2008:16), the latter is most likely. Within the Bible, Lilith features very seldom and only an in-depth knowledge of the theology and mythology behind the Bible unlocks one's knowledge of her presence within it. In contrast, the Dead Sea Scrolls feature Lilith more prominently and by name. For example, Lilith features very clearly in *a Song for a Sage,* a demonology scroll that was supposedly used for exorcisms (Gaines 2001:2). Such clear reference to Lilith is not found in the Hebrew Bible. As discussed above, while there are a multitude of different manifestations of Lilith that have the potential to be explored, for the sake of economy a limited selection of manifestations and representations are explored in this study. This subsection has examined the ancient manifestations of Lilith, with specific reference to the Judeo and Christian manifestations. In order to provide examples of the array of different mediums and time

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periods in which Lilith resurfaces, this subsection will see a shift from the ancient Lilith to Lilith in the sixteenth century. In addition, to display the range of Lilith as a representation, this subsection will see a shift from Lilith in mythology to Lilith in art. While the mythological tales of Lilith as a figure prove to be valuable inspiration for some artists, such as Michelangelo.

The sixteenth century saw a new and important depiction of Lilith. Although not well known, Michelangelo painted an image of Lilith in the Sistine Chapel (Figure 3). The image features Lilith as a "half-human, half-serpent coiled around the tree of knowledge" (Gaines 2001:1). The image suggests that Lilith was the serpent that led to the banishment of man from the Garden of Eden.[22] The painting was titled *The Fall and Expulsion from Garden of Eden* (1508–1512) and contributed to Lilith's reputation as a supernatural creature who leads men into temptation. If anything, it also added a new dimension to Lilith's representation as it insinuated that she was the serpent that led Adam and Eve astray. As discussed, this section portrays the Biblical and Jewish manifestations of Lilith as a demonic temptress, who uses her beauty to lure men astray or to their doom. One can observe that in these representations, Lilith could potentially be seen as a warning to women who seek empowerment or independence within an ancient Christian or Jewish patriarchal system.

Figure 3: Michelangelo, *The Fall and Expulsion from Garden of Eden,* 1512.
Fresco, 280 x 570 cm.
Sistine Chapel Ceiling, The Vatican.
(Gaines 2001:1).

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[22] According to Fernandes (2015:733), Lilith was often depicted or illustrated as the serpent that led Adam and Eve astray in the Garden of Eden.

According to Virginia Allen (1984:286), in the eighteenth century, Lilith emerged in popular culture. The play *Faust* by Johanne Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) succeeded in bringing Lilith to the forefront of the popular imagination. The play featured Lilith as a minor character in which she is two witches that make up one person:

> **Faust**
> Who is that, there?
> **Mephistopheles**
> Note *that* madam! That's Lilith.
> **Faust**
> Who?
> **Mephistopheles**
> First wife to Adam.
> Pay attention to her lovely hair,
> The only adornment she need wear.
> When she traps a young man in her snare,
> She won't soon let him from her care.
>
> (Goethe cited by Kline 2003:197).

This was one of the first introductions of Lilith into fiction (Allen 1984:286). Previously she had existed only in mythology, folklore and biblical texts. Some of Lilith's characteristics that Goethe points out – and that echo those already mentioned above – include the following. She is Adam's first wife, has beautiful hair, is nude, and she ensnares and imprisons young men. Evidently, a trait that Lilith maintains throughout her fragmented history appears to be her long hair (Fernandes 2015:793). Regardless of her various manifestations, she is always featured with long hair, which is either dark and mysterious or a fiery red (Martínez-Oña & Muñoz-Muñoz 2015:620). In addition to her resplendent hair, as discussed, Lilith is always depicted as exceedingly beautiful and equally powerful. As Oankali (cited in Osherow 2000:76) comments "[Lilith is] horror and beauty in a rare combination". She is often associated with temptation, lure, sin and a supernatural otherness. As seen in the above manifestations, Lilith has yet to appear human or at the very least mortal. While this section has contextualised the origin of Lilith historically and how she has manifested throughout mythology, folklore and religious texts, the next subsection will explore Lilith and her representation within popular culture.

2.3 Lilith in art and literature in the nineteenth century

This section examines Lilith in nineteenth century art and literature. As explored above, the purpose of Chapter 2 is to offer a contextualisation of the many manifestations of Lilith, thus a shift from the eighteenth century to the nineteenth century is necessary in order to provide

an overview of the different manifestations of Lilith.[23] While Lilith did resurface in sixteenth-eighteenth century art and poetry, the nineteenth century saw a shift in how Lilith was portrayed in art, literature and the popular imagination. In some representations, she still remains the dark entity. This is seen in the examples from Mesopotamian, Sumerian and Babylonian folklore, as well as the Hebrew Bible and *The Alphabet of Ben Sira,* as discussed in the previous subsection. In other representations such as art, poetry and literature, however, she embodies passion and love, rather than pure evil and destruction. After Goethe's play, Lilith began to feature in other media. For instance, within nineteenth century art, Lilith emerges as a temptress. In paintings, she would either make direct eye contact with the viewer in a way that is unsettling and challenging or, contrastingly, she would seem completely uninterested in the viewer.[24] Overall, one continuous factor of Lilith in the nineteenth century was that she was represented as beautiful beyond any comparison (Fernandes 2015:739)

The painting *Lady Lilith* by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1866–1868) is an iconic depiction of Lilith (Figure 4). According to Jennifer Lee (2006:26), the model for the woman in the painting was initially Rossetti's housekeeper and mistress, Fanny Cornforth. However, Rossetti chose to paint over Cornforth's softer features and blonde hair and instead chose Alexa Wilding as his model for the piece since she had more mysterious features than Cornforth (Allen 1984:290).[25] Essentially, Wilding took on the role of Lilith in more ways than one as she physically embodied the otherness of Lilith with her auburn hair and alluring beauty (Lee 2006:18). The second way in which Wilding embodied Lilith is the manner in which she replaced Cornforth. Rossetti had finished his painting of *Lady Lilith,* which at that time was based on Cornforth. However, upon meeting Wilding, he asked his patron, Fredrick R. Leyland, if he could have the painting back in order to improve it and return it to Leyland as a masterpiece (Lee 2006:27). Due to her striking beauty and mysterious nature, Wilding usurped Cornforth's place in the painting and henceforth became a regular feature in Rossetti's artworks (Lee 2006:27). The mysterious, beautiful woman who uses her looks to gain power or notoriety closely resembles the mythological seductress, as established

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[23] The different examples provided in Chapter 2 are selected directly from the academic literature used in this study. This study synthesises the different manifestations of Lilith that appear in different academic arguments.

[24] Making direct eye contact with the viewer is unsettling because it challenges the male gaze. When a nude or sexualised model is painted with a passive or uninterested look on her face, viewers are invited to look at her body without any ramifications or shame (Mulvey 1992:346).

[25] Alexa Wilding was Rosetti's favourite model to paint. She features in more of his art than any other model (Lee 2006:3). Not much is known about her and it is unknown whether or not they had an affair. However, it is known that she was fond of him and placed flowers on his grave until the day she died (Lee 2006:43).

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above, and also fits the definition of the *femme fatale*.[26] This act of using one's sexuality to gain power can be paralleled with the way in which Lilith is often compared to a *femme fatale* (Smith 2008:7).[27]

Figure 4: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Lady Lilith,*
1866–1868.
Oil on canvas, 134,6 x 121,9 cm.
Delaware Art Museum.
(Allen 1984:285).

According to Pritha Kundu (2013:772), the iconography of a female body represented in male art is "broadly of two kinds: it is either demonised or idealised, or in other words, 'muse' on the one hand, and '*femme fatale*' on the other". *Lady Lilith* depicts the second kind of female body represented in artworks by men, the *femme fatale. Lady Lilith* is an ambiguous and captivating artwork. The artwork itself features a beautiful woman "rapt in contemplation of her own beauty" (Kundu 2013:774). The figure in the painting depicts a young woman with "loose flowing hair and off-shoulder clothing [that] emphasis[es] her voluptuous, overtly sexual figure" (Kundu 2013:774). According to Elisabeth Gitter (1984:936), "in painting and literature, as well as in their popular culture, they have discovered in the image of women's hair, a variety of rich and complex meanings, ascribing to it powers of both magical and symbolic." Gitter (1984:936) argues that hair played a significant role in decoding female

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[26] Artworks associated with the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood often featured the *femme fatale* as a prominent subject matter and offered a stark contrast to the placid and conservative representations of women circulating in (visual) culture in Victorian England.
[27] The *femme fatale* will be explored in more depth in Chapter 3.

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characters during the Victorian era. Gitter (1984:936) continues to note that "when the powerful woman of the Victorian imagination was an angel, her shining hair was her aureole or bower; when she was demonic, it became a glittering snare, web or noose". One can assume that *Lady Lilith* adheres to Gitter's definition of hair as demonic. This assumption is derived from both the painting *Lady Lilith* and the poem Rossetti paired with it. In his poem, Rossetti refers to *Lady Lilith*'s hair as: "that, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue could deceive, and her enchanted hair was the first gold." Gitter (1984:950) states that this depiction of Lilith's hair brings together "the most sinister meaning of gold as a glittering deceptively radiant lust for power and the most nightmarish associations with women's hair as aggressively serpentine, strangling, and biting".

With regard to *Lady Lilith's* outfit in the painting, Kundu (2013:776) suggests that *Lady Lilith's* lack of corsetry is a symbol or gesture of "utter self-sufficiency of the body itself, its being there is no further need to decorate her presence by ornamentation". This idea parallels characteristics that are evident within the *femme fatale* trope; more specifically, the beautiful but deadly woman who uses her power to destroy mankind (Yarbrough 1999:57). Kundu (2013:774) argues that what makes *Lady Lilith* memorable is the fact that "although her physical posture seems to be inviting the attention of the male viewer, her facial expression is so self-absorbed in its own grace and dignity that it strikes an expression of cold indifference to the male gaze". As a result, this figure refuses to engage with what Laura Mulvey (1975:436) refers to as the feminine role of being-looked-at-ness or the male gaze. *Lady Lilith* does not engage with the viewer but instead she "toys with her hair and delights in her own reflection. Thus, she enjoys her sexuality for herself, not for a male viewer" (Kundu 2013:774). As Kundu (2013:774) continues, "*Lady Lilith's* self-absorbed gaze both parallels male voyeurism and reverses it." *Lady Lilith* rouses a conflicted response; this is due to the fact that "her passive self-absorption and simultaneous lack of submissive acceptance of a male voyeur results in a threat to masculinity" (Kundu 2013:774). By resisting the male gaze, Lilith therefore deconstructs the actions of the male voyeur. Interestingly, Kundu (2013:778) notes that this passive threat to masculinity differs from the actively aggressive threat posed by "Lilith the succubus or Lilith the child-slaying witch, marking a transformation from these earlier images of Lilith as actively aggressive and unjustifiably evil".

The background and environment of the painting contributes to its overall ambiguity. This is because one cannot determine whether the scene in the painting is indoors or outdoors as there are elements of both a boudoir and a forest of some sort (Kundu 2013:774). This ambiguity is furthered when the viewer notices the mirror in the top left corner of the

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painting. The mirror clearly reflects both candles (relating to an indoor space) as well as a mythic forest (relating to an outdoor environment). Kundu (2013:775) argues that the space is at once "realistic, illusory and mythic." Kundu (2013:776) continues that the purpose of Rossetti's portrayal of Lilith was to "bring her from the mythical past into what was, for Rossetti, a realistic present". A contributing factor to this liminal mythic-realistic environment are the flowers that reside in the top right corner of the painting. The flowers are white roses which, according to Kundu (2013:775), represent sterile passion. Poppies are also evident in the painting, symbolising "drugs, delirium and death" (Kundu 2013:775). Kundu (2013:781) notes that this combination of roses and poppies symbolically illustrates the visual image of *Lady Lilith* as being represented as "an attractive and desirable, yet deadly, woman".

As discussed above, to accompany his artwork, Rossetti inscribed a poem that he wrote into the frame of the painting. It reads as follows:

Body's Beauty:

Of Adam's first wife, Lilith, it is told
(The witch he loved before the gift of Eve.)
That, ere the snake's, her sweet tongue could deceive,
And her enchanted hair was the first gold.
And still she sits, young while the earth is old,
And subtly of herself contemplative,
Draws men to watch the bright web she can weave,

(Rossetti cited in Allen 1984:285).

This poem ascribes similar characteristics to Lilith as those found in Goethe's description, namely her lovely hair and her immense beauty. Another poem that offered an alternative portrayal of Lilith was *Adam, Lilith and Eve* by Robert Browning (1833):

One day, it thundered and lightened.
Two women, fairly frightened,
Sank to their knees, transformed, transfixed,
At the feet of the man who sat betwixt;
And "Mercy!" cried each—"if I tell the truth
Of a passage in my youth!"

Said This: "Do you mind the morning
I met your love with scorning?
As the worst of the venom left my lips,
I thought, 'If, despite this lie, he strips
The mask from my soul with a kiss–I crawl
His slave,–soul, body, and all!'"

Said That: "We stood to be married;
The priest, or someone, tarried;

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'If Paradise-door prove locked?' smiled you;
I thought, as I nodded, smiling too,
'Did one, that's away, arrive–nor late
Nor soon should unlock Hell's gate!' "

It ceased to lighten and thunder.
Up started both in wonder,
Looked round and saw that the sky was clear,
Then laughed "Confess you believed us, Dear!"
"I saw through the joke!" the man replied
They re-seated themselves beside.

(Browning 1902:637)

The poem is unique because it depicts Lilith more as a vain trickster than an evil entity. One could argue that Browning does not alienate Lilith in his poem, but instead creates a level of intrigue as he does not identify which woman is Eve and which is Lilith. One could suggest that the woman in the second paragraph is Lilith due to the potentially sarcastic tone evident in the words "the mask from my soul with a kiss – I crawl, his slave, -soul, body, and all" (Browning 1902:637). This has the potential to be sarcastic because it parallels the biblical origin of Lilith, in which she fled from Eden and from Adam because she refused to be submissive to him (Smith 2008:18). In addition, this poem positions Lilith as someone living in the Garden of Eden and as a contender for Adam's love. This saw Lilith as a witty, potential lover of Adam as opposed to a demoness as seen in Smith's (2008:18) account of the biblical Lilith. At this time in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries, a definite shift was taking place where Lilith began to embody the *femme fatal*e rather than the evil demon (Smith 2008:18).

Osherow (2000:71) argues that Lilith is the original *femme fatale*; she is the blueprint for the dangerous woman who owns her sexuality. Lilith is the first bad girl, the first insatiable seductress that pervades Western religious, mythological and literary texts. Artists and poets of the Victorian age returned to this subject almost obsessively. Besides Rosetti's *Lady Lilith* discussed above, this trope of femininity is also evident in John William Waterhouse's painting *Lamia* (1909) (Figure 5). It features a beautiful maiden vainly combing out her lustrous, long hair, uninterested in the viewer. She is highly sexualised with one breast fully exposed and the other breast tightly outlined. She is the embodiment of temptation. Here, Waterhouse uses Lilith's Greek manifestation, Lamia, as the title of his artwork (Smith 2008:13).

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Figure 5: John William Waterhouse,
Lamia, 1909.
Oil on canvas, 57,15 x 91,44 cm.
Private Collection.
(Smith 2008:13).

Waterhouse adopts certain symbols and characteristics synonymous with pre-Raphaelite artworks and specifically artworks that make use of the *femme fatale* as subject matter. During the Victorian era (1837–1901) women were not allowed to own property, they did not have the right to vote and essentially all wealth belonged to either their fathers or husbands (Nunnally 1968:4). As Joseph Nunnally (1968:4) notes, "it is not surprising that the two most cherished ideals of the Victorian era were the sanctity of the home and the purity of women." Women were not treated as individuals of society during this time. Instead, they were treated as "dear little creatures or wonderful little beings" (Nunnally 1968:10). In 1853, a group called the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood formed. Members of this Brotherhood included painters Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais (Nunnally 1968:16). At this time, Victorians essentially barred all topics that remotely hinted at sex and sexuality. Nunnally (1968:9) even comments that the word "leg" was too suggestive and thus table legs were renamed table limbs. This hyper-conservative environment acted as a direct contrast or binary opposite to the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, who chose to write literature and create artworks that:

> "… contained thematic treatments of an especial type of woman, one who was soon to be designed by a variety of titles: the carnivorous woman, the *femme fatale*, *la femme sterile*, our lady of pain, *la volupte*, the dark Venus and a host of similar appellations."

> (Nunnally 1968:18)

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This female character or trope arising from such literature introduced a dangerous but excessively beautiful woman, the *femme fatale*. Kundu (2013:783) best describes this beauty when analysing Rossetti's *Lady Lilith*. She explains that "any woman so beautiful as Lilith, so self-contented and powerful, possesses an uncanny power to cause a man's death" (Kundu 2013:783). An added effect to this specific trope of the *femme fatale* was the fact that she did not appear mortal or human for that matter. As Nunnally (1968:19) explains:

> "Finally, she has about her an aura of the supernatural. Her merciless nature and irresistible beauty transcend the mundane restrictions of birth and death. About her is a timelessness, which links her directly with her fatal sisters of antiquity (who themselves often become subjects for paintings and poetry): Helen of Troy, Salome, Lilith, Eve, Pandora, Iseult, and so on, ad infinitum."

This characterisation of the Victorian *femme fatale* positioned her as a threat to masculinity and its perfectly constructed domestic sphere. This *femme fatale* was not only stronger than any male counterpart, she was also "completely satisfied with herself," says Kundu (2013:774). She desired nothing from man except to see his downfall. This threatening power wielded by the *femme fatale* was evident in the artworks and literature that Lilith frequently featured in. While an extraordinarily beautiful woman on a canvas encouraged the male gaze in the past, the Victorian *femme fatale* rejected it entirely. As Margaret Goscilo (1993:75) explicates, "in these works the woman is no longer an object for viewing but is, unequivocally, a subject." To contribute to this dissolving of the female as an object of the male gaze was the fact that many artists during this time were not painting the *femme fatale* as nude. As Goscilo (1993:74) notes, while a few models were still painted nude from the torso up, "[the artists] less frequently unclothed their females in blatant sexual objectification." This turn of dynamic created an aura of fear and animosity. As Kundu (2013:779) justifies, these *femme fatale* mythic women serve to "problematise the nature of masculine desire by raising questions about the relationship between subject and object and threatening the identity of the male subject". These artworks were not only challenging the subject-object relationship of the canvas and the viewer, but the subject matter itself included an array of mythic women who contain immense power, beauty and an almost cold indifference. As Nunnally (1968:34) comments, "she is the symbol of carnality and sensuousness, which robs men of their reason, thus reducing them to the level of beasts." Contrastingly, while the Victorian *femme fatale* caused a societal disruption and a threat to masculinity, when examining the literature of the Victorian era, a great irony is exposed by "the plethora of bejewelled, vampiric temptresses, which the reader finds everywhere in it" (Nunnally 1968:77). The above discussion has offered an insight into the characterisation of

Lilith as a *femme fatale.* This trope and its multiple historical manifestations will be explored even further in Chapters 3 and 4.

2.4 Lilith in twentieth century popular culture

This subsection of Chapter 2 sees a shift from the manifestations of Lilith being represented predominantly in art and literature to the manifestations of Lilith being represented prominently in popular culture. This section offers an examination of how the more contemporary manifestations of Lilith resurface as well as the different mediums and medias in which Lilith resurfaces. Before this section is further explored, one must first define the term 'popular culture'.

Popular culture is a complex term to unpack as it encompasses an abundance of different ideas, mediums, time periods, media and influences. Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (1986:47) argue that "the resulting field of popular culture does not have distinct borders". Mukerji and Schudson (1986:47) continue by suggesting that "the study of popular culture also crosses disciplines, and it would be impossible to discuss a sociology of popular culture without attention to work in history, anthropology, and folklore". Similarly, Holt Parker (2011:147) argues that popular culture is very difficult to define and that this may be, in part, due to the fact that scholars do not wish to define it. Parker (2011:147) states that "scholars of popular culture and cultural studies have taken a certain perhaps perverse pride in not defining their subject". Parker (2011:147) even goes as far as to argue that "popular culture is like pornography-in, oh, so many ways: we may not be able to define it, but we know when we see it." One of the reasons that popular culture may be laborious to define could be due to the word 'popular'. What is defined as popular in the nineteenth century does not necessarily qualify as popular in the twentieth century (Parker 2011:147). Parker (2011:150-158) attempts to offer five different definitions of popular culture in hopes of attempting to define the ambiguous concept.[28] According to Parker (2011:150), the first definition is that popular culture is "simply culture which is widely favoured or well like by many people". However, a limitation found within this definition is the factors that go into defining what is well liked or favourable.

The second definition of popular culture, says Parker (2011:151) is the culture that remains after high-culture or elite culture is defined. The problem with this definition is that it is very isolating and non-inclusive. It also has the potential to attach a negative stigma to popular

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[28] His definitions are formed after synthesising the thoughts, the opinions and the ideas of different scholars. The two prominent scholars made use of here are Tony Bennett and Dominic Strinati.

culture, deeming it a 'leftover' culture rather than its own movement. According to Parker (2011:152), the third definition of popular culture is that popular culture is defined by mass commoditisation and production. The limitation of this definition, however, is that it does not historically account for popular culture that took place before mass production existed. The fourth definition is that popular culture is defined by the people themselves (Parker 2011:154). However, Parker (2011:154) argues that there are many limitations to this definition as it is both ambiguous and problematic as it makes one question who these people who determine what qualifies as popular culture are and which minority or majority they represent (Parker 2011:154). The fifth and final definition offered by Parker (2011:158) is that popular culture is a response to "informed thinking around the debate on postmodernism". While an interesting concept to consider, this definition is not inclusive of historical periods before postmodernism and after postmodernism. After examining these five definitions one must conclude that to simply choose one of these definitions as the finite or the final means to determine the definition of popular culture is not feasible. Thus, one can only suggest merging these definitions and using them "less as a functional definition than as a heuristic tool" (Parker 2011:158). With a better understanding of popular culture in place, one is now able to continue exploring the many manifestations of Lilith, specifically in the twentieth century.

In the beginning to mid-twentieth century, Lilith was mentioned in works such as Robert Graves's poem *The White Goddess* (1948) and *Narnia* by C.S. Lewis (1950). Although she did not feature prominently in these texts, she was still represented as an oversexualised, dangerous woman who seduced men and was driven purely by sexual desire (Martínez-Oña & Muñoz-Muñoz 2015:613). This *femme fatale* version of Lilith made a complete turnabout after Judith Plaskow's feminist novel *The Coming of Lilith* (1972) was published. Written against the backdrop of second-wave feminism (which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3), Plaskow's literary work refigured Lilith into an embodiment of "feminism, subversion and irony" (Dennis & Dennis 2014:77). Before this, Lilith's survival and evolution throughout mythological, religious and literary narratives relied on her fearmongering and sexuality, as Lewis (2011:3) argues. In Plaskow's publication, Lilith was celebrated for her bold confidence and refusal to submit to men. Lilith had been evading submission to men and religion for as long as she had been portrayed in various contexts. With the liberation of women, it could be suggested that Lilith was freed from certain qualities, which could be considered negative to women, that had previously surrounded her.

This liberation was seen in a number of different platforms. A Jewish feminist journal adopted the name *Lilith* in the 1970s. In addition, a female magazine entitled *Lilith* came into

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circulation in the 1980s (Dennis & Dennis 2014:78).[29] The influence of a strong and powerful Lilith was even seen in the comic book world, a male-dominated field at the time. The 1975 comic book titled *Lilith Daughter of Dracula* (Figure 6) created by Marv Wolfman and Gene Colan under Marvel, depicted a beautiful young Lilith who sought revenge for her mother, Zofia. In this text, Dracula was cast as Lilith's father, before he became a vampire, and through abuse and abandonment he drove Lilith's mother to suicide. Lilith's goal was therefore to seek out her father and kill him (Dennis & Dennis 2014:83). Throughout her journey, she found women who were abused or scared, and she protected them by either getting them to safety or killing their abusers. In the comic world, Lilith took on the role of a vigilante who seeks justice for womenkind. Her power was the ability to transport herself into the body of any woman who hated her father and had been abused by him (Dennis & Dennis 2014:83). This avenging Lilith is in stark contrast to the succubus who aimed to destroy marriages and kill children, as seen in accounts of Lilith in earlier Jewish folklore.
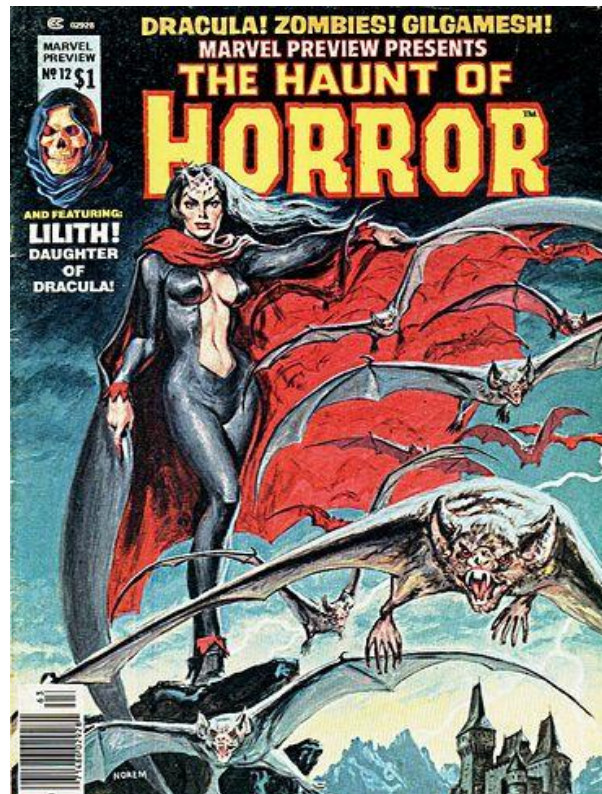
Figure 6: Earl Narem, *The Haunt of Horror: Lilith, Daughter of Dracula. Marvel Preview vol. 1, #12,* 1977.
Comic Book, 25,7 x 16,8 cm.
(Dennis & Dennis 2014:83).

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[29] The *Lilith Journal* and *Lilith* magazine are both Jewish-American feminist publications that featured feminist essays, poems, interviews, art and photography. Today, the *Lilith* magazine can be found online at www.lilith.org

Lilith is reimagined briefly within the comic book world as the Mother of Demons in the 1992 *Lilith* in *Ghost Rider* created by Howard Mackre and Andy Kubert. This comic book character saw a return to the Lilith of ancient mythology, in which she is the villain whose goal is to create chaos and despair. However, this version is replaced in 2007 by a return to her previous incarnation (specifically in *Lilith Daughter of Dracula*) who seeks justice for women and aims to kill her murdering father in the comic book titled *Nick Fury's Howling Commandos* (Figure 7). In this comic, the character Lilith is called Lilith Drake, who lives under the pseudonym Lily Drake.[30] Here she is recruited as a pivotal team-mate in an important commando in S.H.I.E.L.D. led by Nick Fury (Dennis & Dennis 2014:88).

Figure 7: Dan Norton, Nick Fury's Howling
Commandos, vol. 1, #3, 2006.
Comic Book, 25,7 x 16,8cm.
(Dennis & Dennis 2014:88).

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[30] Lilith's name is changed to Lily Drake in order for her to join the sci-fi community of the Paranormal Containment Unit of S.H.I.E.L.D (Dennis & Dennis 2014:88).

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As these examples demonstrate, Lilith has been called to serve many purposes. As a figure that embodies female empowerment, in the twentieth century Lilith has evolved on the pages of magazines and comic books and has even developed into an entire culture of her own. This influence and culture even made its way into the music industry. In 1997 to 1999, a music festival titled *Lilith Fair* took place. The festival was founded by Canadian musician Sarah McLachlan, Nettwerk Music Group Dan Fraser and Terry McBride and New York talent agent Marty Diamond. *Lilith Fair* was an annual festival that featured an all-female line-up (Grover 2016:38). Its purpose was to create a safe space for social engagement surrounding feminism and female empowerment (Grover 2016:38) and to raise money for women's charities.

In 1999, *Lilith Fair* went into an indefinite hiatus and was "resurrected" in 2011 (Grover 2016:38). The festival was revived in the summer of 2011 under the new name, *"Lilith".* It was, however, not received as warmly as it had been in the past. Grover (2016:39) explains that the reason for this could be due to the fact that *Lilith Fair* was criticised in the past for being non-inclusive regarding music genres. As a result, the 2011 *Lilith* [*Fair*] attempted to include musical acts from every genre imaginable, which effectively saturated the festival and prevented the revival from distinguishing itself from festivals at the time, explains Grover (2016:39). Another reason could have been that the festival was revived at a time when postfeminist ideas had crystallised into a "sensibility" (Gill 2007:163). This meant, as Grover (2016:44) explains, that "young women were less receptive to *Lilith* because they were not as connected to feminism as their predecessors". As a result, *Lilith Fair / Lilith* was permanently disbanded after 2011. Paradoxically, it was precisely the gains made by the neoliberal postfeminist agenda that may also have accounted for the demise of the "need" for Lilith as demonstrated by the waning popularity of the *Lilith Fair.* The complex feminist politics of postfeminism are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

Regardless of how *Lilith Fair* concluded, it is important for the purpose of this study to focus on the fact that this was a festival that revolved around Lilith as an icon. It featured feminist prose, all-female artists and was centred on promoting female empowerment and female positivity (Grover 2016:38). It was important because it represented Lilith as a powerful feminist. *Lilith Fair* effectively contributed to the association of Lilith with female empowerment. Despite the disinterest in *Lilith* in some quarters, Lilith is widely considered a contemporary feminist icon, and she still maintains her former seductive and alluring qualities. Thus, in many ways, Lilith has been appropriated as an ideal contemporary postfeminist icon.

While the previous subsection discussed Lilith and her influence as a figure in *Lilith Fair,* it is important to note that at this time Lilith was being featured in different medias. Thus, the potential of seeing a more contemporary postfeminist Lilith is best seen in advertising where there are certain tropes (steeped in patriarchal visions of ideal women) that commonly appear in tandem with Lilith or, as she is often mistakenly called, "New Eve".[31] In advertising, Lilith is often depicted in an overtly sexualised pose, as seen in the 2000 Yves Saint Laurent advertisement for its perfume *Opium* (Figure 8)*.* The image features a naked woman with wild red hair, closed eyes, spread legs and an open mouth, ecstatically arching her back while lying on a blue velvet cushion. In this advertisement, the sexualised, succubus version of Lilith from Jewish literature who aims to tempt men has clearly resurfaced. One also sees traces of Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* in this advertisement. The contemporary Lilith in Figure 8 reflects characteristics and nuances of the Rossetti artwork. One can apply Kundu's (2013:776) discussion of *Lady Lilith* (1866–1868) to the Lilith in Figure 8. According to Kundu (2013:776), *Lady Lilith*:

> [displays] her body, barely able to be contained by clothing, [which] invites the viewer to read Lilith as sensual and beautiful. Yet, at the same time, that body of Lilith is not to be enjoyed by the "Other" – the male desire; it is rather to be asserted for its own selfhood.

Figure 8: Yves Saint Laurent, *Opium perfume advertisement*, 2000.
(Martínez-Oña and Muñoz-Muñoz 2015:621).

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[31] Due to a general lack of awareness surrounding Lilith, at times an advertisement showing an exotic, free and empowered woman with a mythological or biblical undertone is labelled "New Eve" (Martínez-Oña and Muñoz-Muñoz, 2015:614). This label is of course inaccurate because all the qualities and characteristics associated with New Eve are directly associated with Lilith; thus, New Eve is actually Lilith with an incorrect title.

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Lilith pictured with snakes in advertisements is also very popular, as seen in the Christian Dior advertisement for its perfume *Hypnotic Poison* (Figure 9) and in the Roberto Cavalli advertisement for the perfume *Profumo* (Figure 10). In both advertisements Lilith is overtly sexualised and features snakes that are posed suggestively. These portrayals conjure up images of the Garden of Eden, temptation and the devil (Martínez-Oña & Muñoz-Muñoz 2015:618).[32] The Roberto Cavalli advertisement in Figure 10 also alludes to the serpent depicted in Michelangelo's *The Fall and Expulsion from Garden of Eden* (1512). The snake slithering up the model's torso is imbued with the images of temptation and sin. Another biblical interpretation could be that this model has already been expelled from the Garden of Eden as she appears to be in the desert. As already discussed, when God punished Edom, he destroyed their kingdom and banished the Edomites to the desert (Patai 1964:265). Similarly, in the Sumerian text *The Epic of Gilgamesh,* Lilith fled to the desert when her home was threatened (Smith 2008:11). It is interesting to see how both the figure Lilith and the history and characteristics surrounding her have managed to re-emerge within contemporary popular culture.
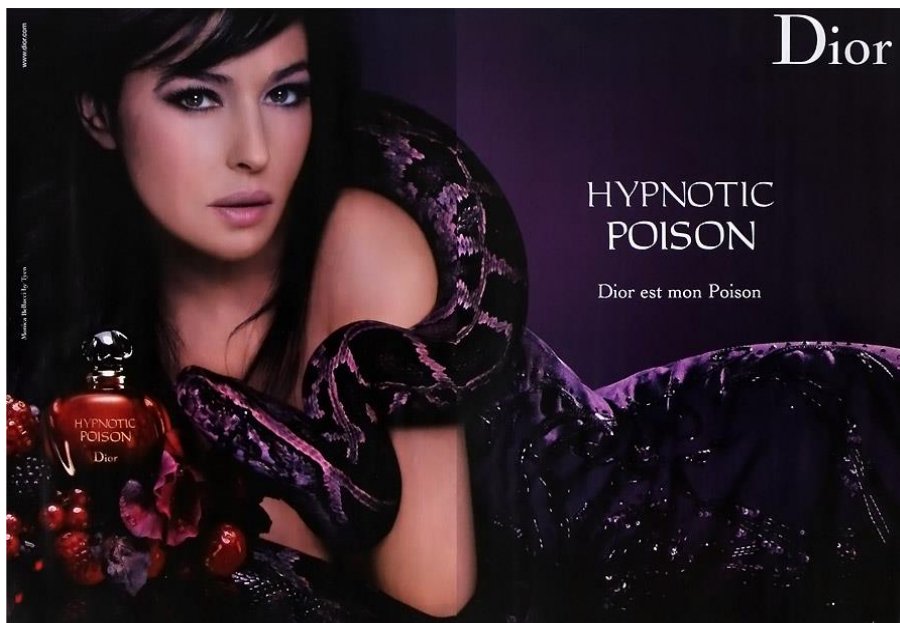
Figure 9: Christian Dior, *Hypnotic Poison perfume advertisement,*
2008.
(Martínez-Oña and Muñoz-Muñoz 2015:618)

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[32] In the Judeo-Christian Bible, the Devil is associated with snakes and appears as the serpent in the Garden of Eden (Martínez-Oña and Muñoz-Muñoz 2015:616).
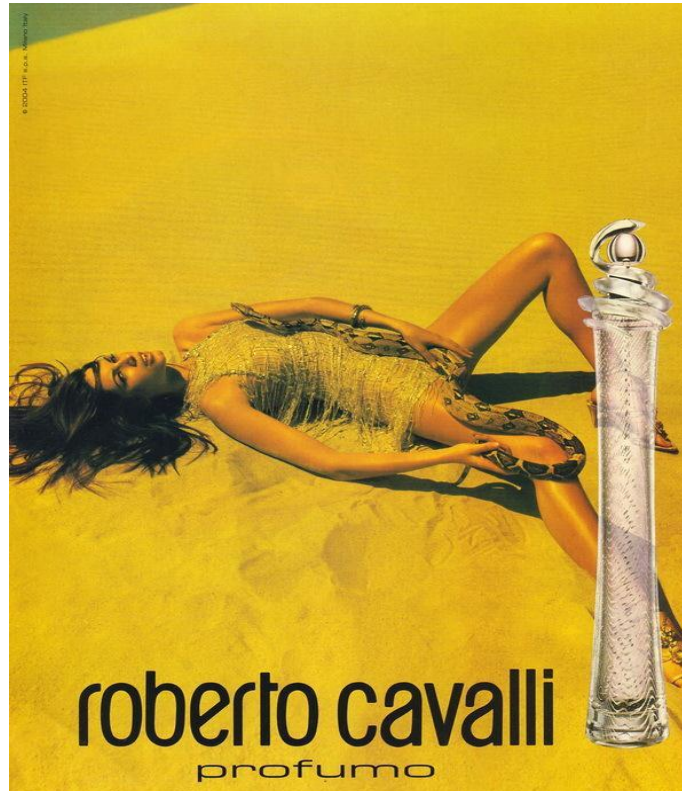
Figure 10: Roberto Cavalli, *Profumo perfume advertisement,* 2002–2004.
(Martínez-Oña and Muñoz-Muñoz 2015:620).

According to Martínez-Oña and Muñoz-Muñoz (2015:616), Lilith is a character or figure that surfaces not only in advertisements but also within the film and television series world. This resurgence of Lilith is often a direct manifestation, where the character is named Lilith, as seen in films and series. Some examples are *Serpent's Lair* (Jeffrey Reiner 1995),[33] *Darklight* (Padraig Reynolds 2004),[34] *True Blood* (2008–2014),[35] *Scooby Doo! Mystery Incorporated: Night on Haunted Mountain* (Doug Murphy 2012)[36] and *Lilith* (Alexander T. Hwang 2018).[37] A more recent example is that the actress Cate Blanchett has been cast as

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[33] In *Serpent's Lair* (Jeffrey Reiner 1995), Lilith is manifested as a succubus who aims to seduce men and destroy marriages.

[34] In *Darklight* (Padraig Reynolds 2004), Lilith is represented as the first woman created by God. After being rejected by Adam, God turns Lilith into a demoness. Lilith is captured and has her memories erased, leaving her as a young girl named Elle in the foster-care system. When a threat approaches, Lilith is the only character that can save the world.

[35] In *True Blood* (2008–2014), Lilith resurfaces as the apparent first vampire in history. According to the lore of the series, Lilith was created first and Adam and Eve were created to sustain her bloodlust. This manifestation of Lilith is the antagonist of Season 5 and part of Season 6.

[36] The Lilith featured in *Scooby Doo! Mystery Incorporated: Night on Haunted Mountain* (Doug Murphy 2012) sees Lilith depicted as the antagonist. She is represented as a flying phantom named Dark Lilith who protects the Mount Diabla mountain.

[37] In *Lilith* (2018), Lilith is depicted as a demon who punishes men for their indiscretions.

Lilith in the new *Borderlands* film, which is based on a video game.[38] According to Matthew Byrd (2020), the character Lilith in the video game *Borderlands* is described as being a siren and legendary thief equipped with magical skills.

According to Martínez-Oña and Muñoz-Muñoz (2015:616), if Lilith does not feature as a character within film or series, then certain iconographical elements that allude to Lilith emerge at times. These iconographical allusions to Lilith are evident in films and series such as *Maleficent* (Robert Stromberg 2014) and *American Horror Story* (2011–). In the film *Maleficent* (Robert Stromberg 2014), Maleficent is depicted as a winged creature with horns and anthropomorphic features (Figure 11) which alludes to the figure Lilith (Figure 11). According to Martínez-Oña and Muñoz-Muñoz (2015:616), this image can be compared to the ancient Assyrian-Babylonian representation of Lilith (Figure 1). Martínez-Oña and Muñoz-Muñoz (2015:616) continue that Lilith is also associated with the mother of devils or serpents. Thus, one could argue that, if analysed via an iconographic lens, the three women sharing one snake in their mouths in *American Horror Story* (2011–) and specifically Season 3 *American Horror Story: Coven* (Figure 12) could relate to Lilith.

Figure 11: *Maleficent,* 2014.
(IMDB [sa])

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[38] Blanchett played the antagonist, Norse goddess of death, Hela, in the 2017 film: *Thor: Ragnarök* directed by Taika Waititi.
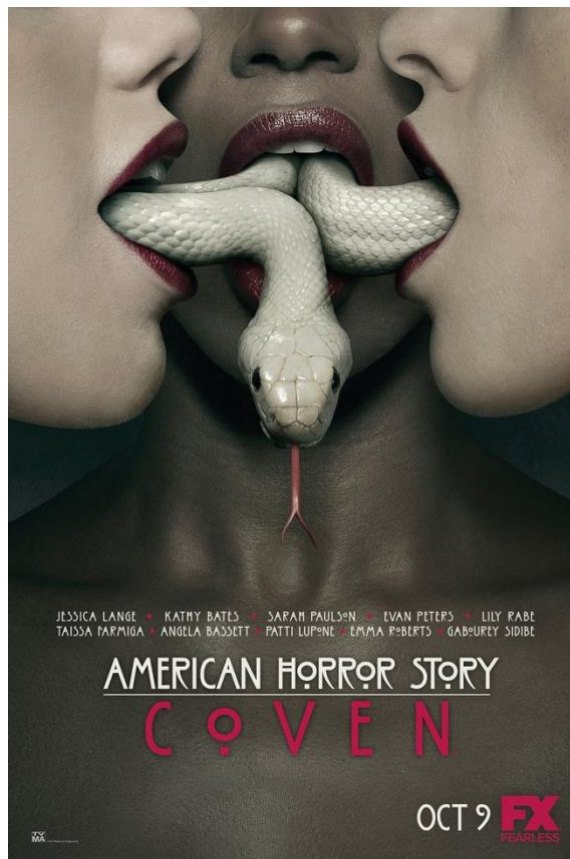
Figure 12: *American Horror Story: Coven,* (2011–).
(Hollywood Reporter 2013*)*

For the purpose of this study, I focus on two TV series that feature Lilith as a prominent character. The first series, *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019), is a teen fantasy/science fiction show that featured on Netflix (Figure 13). The series ran for three seasons, with Lilith featuring in one. Lilith was the prime antagonist in two-thirds of Season 3 of *Shadowhunters.* The second series that is examined is *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–) *(TCAOS).* This series also fits in the teen fantasy / science fiction genre and, similarly to *Shadowhunters*, the show is also featured on Netflix (Figure 14). The series is still running and has three seasons to date. Lilith is a leading character of the series and has featured in every single one of the 36 episodes to date. This manifestation of Lilith began as an antagonist in Season 1; however, her character has undergone considerable development and she has begun to emerge as an anti-heroine.

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Figure 13: *Shadowhunters, 2016–2019.*
(Fandom 2020).

Both of these series are critically analysed and investigated in Chapter 4 through the lenses of the theoretical frameworks and the concepts that arise in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. This analysis serves as a means to contextualise and better understand the meanings that can be ascribed to Lilith in two very recent manifestations in contemporary popular culture. Both series are based on popular contemporary forms of literature. *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) is based on the novel series, *The Mortal Instruments* by Cassandra Clare. *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–) is based on a comic book series by the same name that was created by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa and illustrated by Robert Hack. That these series are based on a novel on the one hand and a comic book series on the other will contribute to understanding the different layers of representation that Lilith embodies.
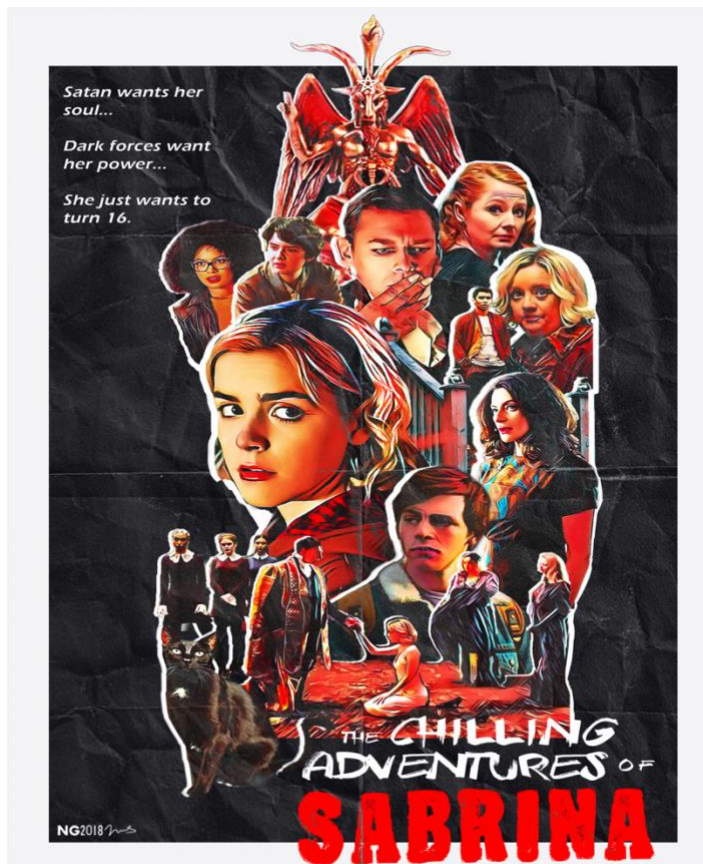
Figure 14: *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, 2018–.
(Reddit 2019).

Eetessam (cited in Martínez-Oña & Muñoz-Muñoz 2015:613) discusses how Lilith has become "the icon of the woman located outside the circle of correctness, the *femme fatale*, the prostitute, the perverse perverter". These women are seen as powerful and sexualised. These qualities are associated with postfeminist female empowerment. Contrastingly, these same qualities (sexuality, lust, eroticism and sin) were considered Lilith's downfall in ancient mythologies. This shift marks how contemporary societies interpret and reinterpret certain attributes and concepts, as Lilith represented these qualities in earlier manifestations as seen in *the Babylonian Terracotta Relief* (Patai 1964:295) or as seen in *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* (Smith 2008:18).

Fernandes (2015:735) argues that the version of Lilith as fundamentally evil emerged only because her story was being written by men that lived within a biblical legal system, which did not condone any notion of female empowerment. All of Lilith's "crimes" embody and reflect male fears such as the fear of "impotence, loss of a female companion or loss of the patriarchal line [through miscarriages]" (Cantor cited in Osherow 2000:70). Lilith's gradual evolution into a feminist icon suggests that, while she was created to be controlled by men in

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order to convey certain socio-political ideologies (Lewis 2011:2), the contemporary versions of Lilith have evolved past her prior (evil) purpose of killing babies, breaking up marriages, and seducing men. This redefinition or adaption is due to the way Lilith is represented by particular authors, texts and by the audiences that view her. In contemporary popular culture, specifically in the West, Lilith has "turned the tables on male patriarchy" after it has dominated the way she has been represented in previous centuries (Dennis & Dennis 2014:84). It is important to identify that contemporary appearances of Lilith are manifested in two different ways; however, both ways seek to feature Lilith as an anti-patriarchal empowered woman.[39] The first manifestation sees Lilith as a sexualised *femme fatale* as seen in the advertisements examined by Martínez-Oña and Muñoz-Muñoz (2015:613). This manifestation shows Lilith as a dangerous woman who, at times, still embodies villainous behaviour as seen in Dennis and Dennis's (2014:83) depiction of Lilith as an avenging vampire that kills to protect abused women. A second manifestation of Lilith is influenced by *Lilith Fair* and sees her reimagined as a softer figure that supports female empowerment (Grover 2016:38). This difference in manifestations surrounding feminism and female empowerment is examined further in Chapter 4, where I conduct a critical analysis of the manifestation of Lilith in light of postfeminism.

As I have argued in this chapter, Lilith is a unique mythological figure. This is due to the fact that, while she remains both present within history, fiction, folktales and contemporary media, her mythological roots are still not commonly recognised or acknowledged outside of Judaism (Lewis 2011; Dennis & Dennis 2014:77). She is refigured and re-represented constantly but, in all of the contexts discussed above, she always remains a powerful woman (Fernandes 2015:740), regardless of how she is depicted. The way in which Lilith is represented and precisely what her power means is influenced by the specific time and place in which she (re)surfaces. That is why I suggest that Lilith is a liminal figure: she is portrayed as both the goddess and the demon, the nurturer and the baby killer, the liberator and the oppressor (Lewis 2011:3). She is a prism of change and her multiple, both unsettling and unsettled manifestations are the reason that she has remained visible throughout history. Owing to her character as both liminal and ambiguous, Lilith, I argue, has become the archetype for the changing role of women. This is seen in the manner in which she changes as the representation of female empowerment develops in mainstream media culture. Ultimately, she reflects "the evolving attitudes towards a woman's place" in the particular culture in which she circulates (Osherow 2000:69).

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[39] As Gill (2016:610) notes, these alleged images of female empowerment too easily slip into eye candy for the heteronormative, misogynistic male gaze.

While Chapter 2 has provided a contextual analysis of the different manifestations regarding the figure Lilith, Chapter 3 provides an exploration of the concepts and tropes surrounding the figure Lilith. Specifically, Chapter 3 examines the three waves of feminism and postfeminism, and investigates which, if any, representations of Lilith manifest within these waves. In addition, Chapter 3 examines Lilith's role as a *femme fatale* further and explores how this role is exhibited in different representations of Lilith. I pay special attention in this chapter to the contemporary refiguration of Lilith as *femme fatale*. Thereafter, the chapter explores the abject and the female grotesque and investigates whether Lilith embodies characteristics evident within these tropes. Chapter 3, therefore, builds on the contextualisation of Chapter 2 in order to fully investigate the tropes and concepts associated with the figure Lilith and her different manifestations.

CHAPTER 3: AN EXPLORATION OF CONCEPTS

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter offered insight into the mythological, historical and contemporary analysis of the figure Lilith. I showed that Lilith is a figure that has her roots in a multitude of cultures, religions, folklore and mainstream popular culture. Lilith, while shrouded in ambiguity, maintains certain qualities and characteristics that have become synonymous with her various representations and manifestations. As I argued in Chapter 2, while Lilith may be portrayed differently throughout history, one constant factor is her immense beauty (Lewis 2011:7). In addition to this unwavering beauty, Lilith is recognised for her long hair, which is either depicted as fiery red or pitch black (Martínez-Oña & Muñoz-Muñoz 2015:620).

Coupled with this beauty are strength and power. Lilith's power comes in many different forms. Firstly, as seen in Chapter 2, her power comes in the form of her Otherness. This Otherness is seen in the fact that Lilith is always represented as supernatural. She has been a witch, a demon, a succubus, a vampire and even a Queen of the Underworld (Smith 2008:11,14). Nunnally (1968:19) argues that Lilith's beauty itself is supernatural. Lilith as a supernatural entity creates a boundary between her and mortal women. This boundary serves to position Lilith as abject, a concept that will be explored further in this chapter. The second manner in which Lilith draws power is from her sexuality – a popular concept among postfeminist theorists. According to Kundu (2013:783), Lilith makes use of her beauty and sexuality to lure men to their death. She therefore embodies what Creed (1993:2-3) refers to as castration anxiety. It is the idea that she induces male anxiety due to the fact that she may castrate them, either physically or emotionally. Likewise, Lilith embodies characteristics synonymous with the *femme fatale*, another equally beautiful and dangerous woman. The *femme fatale* will be explored further in the chapter.

Overall, Chapter 2 expressed how multifaceted and intriguing Lilith is. She has featured in countless mediums such as art, music festivals, literature, film, television series, and mythological and religious narratives. Lilith's ability to remain enduring makes her a fascinating topic of study. Lewis (2011:9) explains in her various incarnations throughout history:

> Lilith appears differently to each person because she is the visual
> projection of individual fears. She's a mixture of humanity's personal

interpretation influenced by the historical representation presented to the ancient world through man's vision.

Furthermore, Lewis (2011:10) adds that "to proclaim there is a well-defined chronological timeline of Lilith's existence would be a false-hood; her origin is as elusively diversified as her notoriety". These definitions are important because they highlight not only how Lilith is seen as an enduring figure, but also how Lilith represents certain qualities of the society in which she manifests. This ability to maintain a beautiful, strong and powerful aura regardless of which manifestation one is examining makes Lilith an important figure to explore when looking at concepts such as the *femme fatale*, the abject, the female grotesque and, most importantly, the role of Lilith in relation to feminism.

This chapter serves as an exploration of the different concepts and tropes that surround the mythological figure Lilith in relation to various positions in feminist discourse. Initially this chapter explores the three waves of feminism and the postfeminist movement. This is necessary since Lilith has the potential to be represented as a feminist icon. Osherow (2000:71) even deems her to be one of the first feminists. One can only assume that this opinion is based on the Jewish and the biblical representations of Lilith. In the Jewish and the biblical representations, Lilith is the supposed first female to demand equality from her partner, Adam. As Fernandes (2015:734) notes:

> They [Adam and Lilith] came to fight about the manner of their intercourse, because Adam refused to lie beneath her, saying that she was only fit to be in the bottom position, for he was to be the superior one. Lilith did not accept such statement and reminded him that they both had been created at the same time, from the same material, and none was to be superior over the other.

This defiance of patriarchal control could potentially be seen as the act of a feminist. According to Patai (1964:296), this repudiation resulted in Lilith rejecting and challenging patriarchal systems with her refusal. Moreover, according to Jewish and Christian lore, Lilith was the first woman in existence, says Osherow (2008:70). Thus, one could argue that in being the first woman in history (Osherow 2008:70) and simultaneously embodying the notions and acts of a feminist (Fernandes 2015:734), one can only conclude that Lilith is the apparent first feminist in history.

In order to explore the notion that Lilith is the first feminist and more prominently a feminist icon, the beginning of this chapter briefly explores the various so-called 'waves' of feminism, with a specific focus on the postfeminist movement. In contemporary society, postfeminism

is the current movement or "sensibility", as Gill (2007:148) refers to it. As a result, a great deal of contemporary (popular) cultural texts will be influenced by the characteristics and tropes evident within the postfeminist media economy.

As seen in Chapter 2, Lilith features within a large body of texts and mythologies; as a result, it is necessary to analyse whether or not Lilith has embodied characteristics of different feminisms and how this has affected her representation. Since Lilith is becoming a popular and prominent character in contemporary mainstream popular culture, one needs to examine why this occurrence is taking place. Furthermore, the first section of the chapter examines how Lilith is represented within the postfeminist media economy and how this affects her overall interpretation.

The second section of this chapter explores three tropes of femininity that are evident in the representation of Lilith as a mythological figure. Each of the three tropes will later assist in exploring how Lilith is established as a figure within contemporary culture. The first trope or archetype that is explored in this chapter is the *femme fatale*. In addition, this section explores Lilith as a potential *femme fatale*. As Jennifer Lee (2006:24) states, "there was also Lilith – the first, and perhaps, ultimate *femme fatale*, beautiful and yet damned for all eternity." In order to successfully explore this archetype, the *femme fatale* is briefly contextualised with specific reference to the first *femme fatale* as Allen (1983:6) labels her. Furthermore, attention is given to the film noir *femme fatale* that arose at the end of World War II (WWII) in America (Yarbrough 1999:51). Finally, the contemporary *femme fatale* is examined.

The second trope examined in this section of this chapter focuses on the abject woman in order to explore how Lilith potentially embodies characteristics of the abject or "Other". Abjection exists in-between binaries and, as Creed (1993:9) explains, the abject "signifies a border between two distinct entities or territories" The abject is caused/lives between binaries: good and evil; natural and supernatural. This discussion therefore assists in critically examining the liminal position that Lilith has occupied, as shown in the previous chapter. Lastly, the third subsection examines the female grotesque. This subsection explores how the *femme fatale*, abject and grotesque female share common characteristics.

This section of the chapter assists in deconstructing certain characteristics and tropes associated with the figure Lilith. All three of these concepts contain a certain degree of ambiguity. The *femme fatale* is known for her mysterious nature. As Helen Hanson and Catherine O'Rawe (2010:1) explain: "While the *femme fatale* figure is a recurrent presence

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in both popular culture and high culture, the figure is a perennial site of uncertainty, raising challenging questions and inviting further investigation." In a similar manner, the abject is also considered uncertain, as seen in Creed's (1993:14) definition: "abjection by its very nature is ambiguous; it both repels and attracts horror." In addition, the female grotesque embodies liminal and ambiguous qualities. For instance, Chloe Germain Buckley (2019:1) argues that "the female grotesque creates a risky opportunity for women to break out of patriarchal control, but it can also confirm the association of 'woman' with monstrosity". This liminal uncertainty could assist in exploring the ambiguous meanings that emerge from Lilith's multiple manifestations in contemporary popular culture. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to both unpack and contextualise these tropes and concepts in order to situate various representations of Lilith alongside the three waves of feminism and postfeminism, and the selected tropes as outlined above.

3.2. The three waves of feminism

Before one can begin to investigate and contextualise the different waves of feminism, one must first examine what qualifies as a wave. Bailey (1997:18) defines a wave as follows: "waves that arise in social and political milieus, like waves that arise in water, become defined only in context, relative to the waves that have come and gone before." Bailey (1997:18) explains that in calling a movement a wave, one suggests that it is "one among others in some sort of succession, both similar to and different from the other occurrences". According to Prudence Chamberlain (2016:459), the term "wave" is at times problematic: "feminist scholarship and activism, while dependent on it, are in a continual process of problemising it." In using the term "wave", certain plights, intersectional issues and overarching concerns are potentially minimised as "the wave, as such, could be considered to lack complexity, erasing the multiplicity of feminist activism, as well as those who sit on its margins," says Chamberlain (2016:459). Chamberlain (2016:459) notes that it has also been suggested that "using the wave to divide generations implies that, historically, activism happens in small and forceful bursts, effacing longer term projects". However, this critique aside, Chamberlain (2016:460) acknowledges that the term *wave narrative* "has created a complex relationship between feminism and time". Thus, Chamberlain (2016:460) suggests that feminist waves instead adopt the term "affective temporality". "If wave definitions become untethered from feminist identity and associated with the socio-political and technological contexts in which they arise, then each one can be positioned as an affective temporality" (Chamberlain 2016:460).

Stacy Gillis, Gillian Howie and Rebecca Munford (2007:xxii) suggest that to speak about a certain wave of feminists is to "name a specific moment in feminist theory and practice. To

incite others to speak about this wave is, in effect, to proliferate discourse in such a way as to define 'the wave' as an object, which can be considered and interrogated." Gillis et al. (2007:xxix–xxx) continue that while the wave paradigm is successful in creating a generational timeline, the metaphorical wave can also transcend these limits causing what they refer to as "mythic time". This "mythic time" is the supposed key "with which to unlock pathways through feminism and between feminists and to help us to negotiate the drive for knowledge of the past, with the constraints imposed by the past and with the knowledge of the present that is yielded by the past," argue Gillis et al. (2007:xxx).

Taking into account the concepts put forth by both Gillis et al. (2007) and Bailey (1997), one has to consider the implications of the term "wave". This suggests that, despite the criticisms that have been lodged against the wave metaphor, it not only acts as a chronological indicator of the generations, the ambitions and the aims of the different feminisms but it also positions itself as an important tool for dissecting and continuing discourses evident within the different waves.

As Amber Kinser (2004:127) argues, the ideas of feminism were "alive and well long before the first wave but had not been organised into an identifiable movement until the mid-nineteenth century." One could argue that, mythologically, Lilith is a successful example of this statement as she defied both Adam and God when she refused to submit sexually to Adam nor remain in the Garden of Eden (Smith 2008:18). In this defiance, one could suggest that by rejecting the male-dominated systems of the time, Lilith enacted feminist theory and thought in her actions. Therefore, that is why Fernandes (2015:734) considers Lilith as the first feminist in history.

According to Bailey (1997:18), the first wave of feminism in the United States is marked as having begun with the Seneca Falls Conference of 1848. Bailey (1997:18) suggests that while the start of the wave took place in 1848, the passage of women's suffrage in 1920 saw the end of the first wave. Krolokke and Sorensen (2006:3) explain that the Seneca Falls convention of 1848 saw over "300 men and women assemble for the nation's first women's rights convention". It was at this convention that Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott outlined the Seneca Falls Declaration (Krolokke & Sorensen 2006:3). According to Krolokke and Sorensen (2006:3), this declaration outlined a political strategy of equal access and equal opportunity. Supposedly, it was this declaration that gave rise to the suffrage movement (Krolokke & Sorensen 2006:3).

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Krolokke and Sorensen (2006:1) argue that the first wave of feminism arose in the context of "industrial society and liberal politics". According to Rampton (2015:1), the first wave's primary aim was to obtain the right to vote. Women wanted the right to own land and dictate the rights of their own body. Krolokke and Sorensen (2006:5) explain that "suffrages confronted stereotypes of women and, in particular, claims of proper female behaviour". While Lilith does not necessarily directly adhere to the characteristics of the first wave of feminism, there are some similarities in their plights. What I am referring to here is the fact that while the suffragettes fought for bodily autonomy and equal rights, the Jewish and Christian manifestations of Lilith similarly fought for equal rights and bodily autonomy. Lilith was considered Adam's subordinate, even though they were supposedly created at the exact same time by God (Smith 2008:18). According to Smith (2008:18), Lilith did not demand superiority, but rather asked for equality (Smith 2008:18), a plight that bears its roots in similar first wave causes. By World War I in 1914, in the United States half of its citizens remained disenfranchised (Krolokke & Sorensen 2006:2). On 18 August 1920, 72 years since the initial Seneca Falls Conference, the Nineteenth Amendment was passed. This amendment gave women the legal right to vote (Anderson 1995:54).

An important result of the first wave of feminism was the emergence of birth control in America. According to Christian Johnson (1977:63), Margaret Sanger is responsible for the conceptualisation of the birth control pill. Sanger was a self-proclaimed feminist who, according to Johnson (1977:63), argued that "the most important threat to a woman's independence came from unwanted and unanticipated pregnancy". Johnson (1977:63) continues that Sanger saw birth control as an opportunity to redistribute female autonomy and that "even the term 'birth control' itself possessed a high-content of feminist ideology. Control implied self-determination." In 1920, Sanger opened up the American Birth Control League, which was a clinic that would eventually come to be known as Planned Parenthood (Johnson 1977:64). In the early 1950s there was a breakthrough with regard to the development of birth control. According to Lindsay Edouard (2015:158), a chemist by the name of Carl Djerassi created a progesterone pill, made from wild yams, which stopped female ovulation. These beginnings of birth control provided women with sexual freedom and individual control over their own bodies. This meant that women now had the potential to separate reproduction from sex. All of these contributing factors such as the vote, equal rights and sexual autonomy created the bedrock upon which the second and third waves of feminism could be built.

According to Gillis et al. (2009:xxi), the second wave of feminism began in the 1960s and ended in the 1970s. Kinser (2004:129) notes that "the labels 'first wave' and 'second wave'

were created at the same time [during the second wave of feminism] as a way of negotiating feminist space". This consideration reiterates Bailey's (1997:18) argument that a wave can be distinguished in only a particular context and is "relative to the waves that have come and gone before". During WWII, the majority of men in the United Stated had been conscripted to fight in the war. This absence of men resulted in women having to join the workforce (Nicholson 2010:4). As Linda Nicholson (2010:4) states:

> Women had been entering the workforce in increasing numbers since the early twentieth century. But prior to WWII, a lot of this labour had been associated with women who were poor, black, single or childless. After WWII, more married women, more white women, more middle-class women, more women with children at home, became part of the paid labour force.

WWII officially ended in 1945. When men returned home from war, there was an expectation that women would forfeit their careers and return to the private sphere. Jancovich (2011:100) argues that there was a post-war period that made a "concerted effort to persuade women to surrender the jobs that they had taken on during the war and to return to their roles as wives and mothers within the domestic sphere".

In 1963, a seminal text was written by Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* ([1963] 2001). This important text examined the unfulfilled feelings that housewives of the 1950s were experiencing. Friedan ([1963] 2001:97) argues that this feeling of dissatisfaction is the "problem with no name"; it was a result of experiencing a lack of identity. Friedan ([1963] 2001:97) continues that these housewives had no independent self because their identity relied so heavily on the identity of someone else, such as their husbands or children. As Kinser (2004:129) comments:

> *The Feminine Mystique* spoke volumes about the lives that middle- and upper-middle-class women were leading. Her arguments affirmed their malaise and motivated them to cure it by moving out of private and into public space, where no such malaise plagued men.

In 1966, as a result of *The Feminine Mystique*, a women's group called the National Organisation for Women (NOW) was formed, with Friedan as its first president (Genz 2009:47). According to Stephanie Genz (2009:47–48), this group furthered the plights evident within the second wave of feminism. However, the group and specifically Friedan as its leader received criticism at the time. Many of the underlying ideologies and concepts in the group embodied more of a liberal optimism than the harsher radical feminism that was most prominent during the second wave. Genz (2009:48) explains that Friedan wanted

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"heterosexual women to be able to identify as feminists, without having to question their intimate connections with men – seemingly heralding later postfeminist and popular feminist engagements with heterosexual mainstream femininity". This notion of encouraging heterosexual femininity stood in contrast to other prominent ideals that had arisen within the second wave of feminism. The second wave of feminism rejected stereotypical signifiers of femininity. Thus, "typical" women's objects such as bras, girdles, high-heels, makeup, long hair, false eyelashes and pantyhose were deemed oppressive feminine artefacts and women were encouraged to discard them entirely (Rampton 2015:2).[40] Suzanne Ferriss and Mallory Young (2006:89) explain that the second wave of feminists criticised the usage of feminine sexuality as it served only as a means of "objectifying women and perpetuating women's sexual subordination to men". Gillis et al. (2009:xxi) observe that the second wave of feminism focused on issues "which specifically impacted on women's lives: reproduction, mothering, sexual violence, expressions of sexuality and domestic labour". As Krolokke and Sorensen (2006:15) argue, and as is clear from the above accounts, second-wave feminism is "not one, but many". This wave saw the rise of a multitude of different trajectories within feminism. Three prominent trajectories are as follows: liberal feminism, radical feminism and socialist feminism. I discuss them in more detail below because they offer insight when examining the connection between the second wave of feminism and the different Liliths represented in *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) and *TCAOS* (2018–).[41]

Mel Gray and Jennifer Boddy (2010:374) define liberal feminism as a group of feminists who "continued the work of their predecessors by fighting for women's liberation through rights and recognition in freedom of expression and choice and equal rights, treatment and opportunities for women". The liberal feminists sought to dismantle any barriers that prevented women from acquiring high positions in government, business and in industry (Gray & Boddy 2010:374). Gray and Boddy (2010:374) argue that:

> Liberal feminists sought to promote women's interests and protect them from exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment. They believed in women's autonomy and right to self-determination and assumed that women had the right to participate in the economy even though many were not in a position to do so.

According to Genz (2009:38), radical feminism, on the other hand, includes viewpoints that draw attention to the sexual politics of the institutionalised oppression of women. Genz (2009:38) continues that the radical feminist viewpoint determines that equality is constituted

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[40] This act of throwing these so-called oppressive feminine artefacts away was where the myth of burning one's bra, in female solidarity, came about (Rampton 2015:2).
[41] This examination takes place in Chapter 4.

"within a set of terms that disparage things female or feminine in favour of masculinity". Gray and Boddy (2010:375) explain that radical feminism placed its focus on women's health and, moreover, it "favoured a cultural focus on women's personal lives, personal stories and personal narratives". Gray and Boddy (2010:375) continue that radical feminists regarded most men with suspicion and sought to "develop their own totalizing discourse as a way of supplanting the dominant male discourse".

There are second-wave characteristics that Lilith as a figure potentially embodies or displays at times. Certain manifestations of Lilith denounce any mutual connection with men. This is seen in earlier representations of Lilith, for example the Bulgarian manifestation of Lilith known as Lamia (Smith 2008:13). Lamia was a cave-dwelling succubus whose only purpose was to seduce men and enact destruction on civilisation as a whole (Smith 2008:13). This could potentially be interpreted as Lilith or Lamia being a radical feminist who would like to dismantle the patriarchal system in place.

When considering different manifestations of Lilith and their collective desire to see the downfall and destruction of society, one must remember that it was a male discourse that ruled indisputably during the 1960s and 1970s. Thus, when Lilith desires to deconstruct the power or prominent discourse of the time period, she is essentially deconstructing patriarchal systems. It is important to note, however, that there is a difference between the ways in which the ancient, religious, mythological and historical Liliths functioned within their particular socio-cultural contexts versus how they functioned within the context of second-wave feminist politics of the 1960s and 1970s. Instead, one could argue that the reason why Lilith has the potential to be considered a feminist icon in the 1970s is because the ancient Liliths were characterised in a particular way that fits the radical or liberal agenda (Walton 2011:121). Ellen Willis (1984:93) argues that:

> Male supremacy was in itself a systematic form of domination-a set of material, institutionalised relations, not just bad attitudes. Men had power and privilege and like any other ruling class would defend their interests; challenging that power required a revolutionary movement of women.

Based on this quote, one could potentially argue that Lilith was created under a system of male supremacy. Her creator, God, was male and her counterpart, Adam, was also male-making Lilith the only female at the time (Smith 2008:18). Thus, by removing herself from this male environment and rejecting the power and privilege associated with male supremacy as discussed above, Lilith performed a radical act of feminism. According to the Ben Sira tablets (Smith 2008:18), once Lilith flew from the garden of Eden, three male angels were sent to retrieve her. According to Willis's (1984:93) definition of radical

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feminism, one could interpret this retrieval as an attempt to return Lilith to an environment ruled by male supremacy. Thus, one could interpret Lilith's unwavering decision to not return to Eden, regardless of the punishment , as the final rejection of a male dominated system (Smith 2008:18).[42] This potential interpretation assists in decoding the ancient figure Lilith as a possible radical feminist.

In contemporary society, radical feminism has been met with heavy criticism due to its inability to recognise men as feminists and its unwillingness to partner with men in order to find solutions to issues such as gender-based male violence (Gray & Boddy 2010:375). According to Gray and Boddy (2010:375), while radical feminists focused on patriarchal structures, Marx-oriented socialist feminists placed their focus on "the political economy, particularly social inequalities resulting from capitalism", as capitalism is an ideology associated with patriarchy. Gray and Boddy (2010:376) continue that with their focus on the political economy, socialist feminists sought to "highlight how reproduction and unpaid work within the family was a key factor in the exploitation of women, benefitting both men and capitalism. They sought to expose domestic women's work as work". This paragraph serves as a contextualisation of the different feminist agendas since the ancient or mythological versions of Lilith fit best with the radical feminist agenda more so than the liberal and the socialist agenda.

The 1980s saw the emergence of the third wave of feminism (Gillis et al. 2007:xxi). The third wave moved from large-scale politics and plights to more micro-political matters. According to Bailey (1997:17), the third wave identified itself as a means to distance itself from the earlier waves of feminism. Ferriss and Young (2006:88) suggest that "third-wave feminism took shape by rejecting what it perceived as the hectoring, critical tone of second-wave feminism". Ferriss and Young (2006:88) suggest that this rejection arose as a result of third wavers resenting "being depicted as powerless victims of patriarchy". Krolokke and Sorensen (2006:10) argue that the feminist agenda "attempted to combine social, sexual and personal struggles and to see them as inextricably linked". The positions outlined above only serve to confirm how complex and interlinked the third wave of feminism is with the previous waves. The third wave appealed to the younger generation of women during the nineties. It placed importance on the concepts of "sisterhood" and women standing up for women. Third-wave women were celebrated regardless of what particular role they fulfilled in both the work and the domestic spheres. This movement saw a deconstruction of

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[42] As discussed in Chapter 2, according to the Ben Sira tablets, when Lilith refused to return to Eden with the three angels, she was issued a punishment by God that one hundred of Lilith's demonic children would perish daily (Smith 2008:18).

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universal womanhood, a concept that had held an essential position during the second wave of feminism. As Gillis et al. (2007:18) state: "in the 1980s and 1990s, however, numerous feminist thinkers showed repeatedly that such universal claims about women are invariably false," or, at least deeply suspect.

Grover (2016:42) argues that the third wave grew out of the "critiques of the goals and methods of earlier feminist movements and reinforced the idea that issues faced by women living in the 90s were different than those faced by women in the previous generation". Grover (2016:42) observes how the third wave demonstrated a new brand of feminism that "spoke to the ways intersectionality affected females, while validating the experiences of young womanhood".[43] In order to actualise this new brand of feminism, Grover (2016:42) suggests that popular culture became the new chosen medium through which a third-wave feminist could promote social change. Like Grover (2016:42), Ferriss and Young (2006:89) argue that "rather than direct political action, the strategies of third-wave feminism are diffused, spread primarily through popular culture". This emphasis placed on popular culture also saw Lilith resurface within mainstream media. According to Gaines (2001:6):

> Today the tradition of Lilith has enjoyed a resurgence, due mainly to the feminist movement of the late 20th century. Renewed interest in Lilith has led modern writers to invent ever more stories. Ignoring or explaining away Lilith's unsavoury traits, feminists have focused instead upon Lilith's independence and desire for autonomy.

One could argue that certain traits imbued in Lilith had become desirable within the agenda of third wave of feminism. These traits included a re-adoption of female sexuality and autonomy. As Smith (2008:2) argues, "Lilith has become an icon for modern feminist movements."

The purpose or aim of the third wave is best described by Ferriss and Young (2006:88). They argue that "in contrast to viewing sex as a site of oppression and domination, as many second wave feminists did, third-wave feminists argued in favour of women's sexual freedom and pleasure as signs of independence and power". Gillis et al. (2007:xxi) contribute to this argument in saying that the third wave of feminism was eager to define their feminism as something different from the previous feminisms. Third-wave feminists

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[43] According to Colleen Mack-Canty (2004:160), it is the expansion of the notion of intersectionality of "sexism with race, class, and heterosexuality to include a wider, potentially unending assortment of embodied positions, attitudes, and locations, as they articulate their theoretical and experiential commonalities and differences. Intersectionality acknowledges that different classes, genders and races will experience their own unique plights that require the same amount of attention as any other larger or more universal struggle (Mack-Canty 2004:160).

wanted to "reclaim and refashion their sexuality, to unsettle traditional images of feminine virtue by substituting an image of themselves as 'lusty feminists of the third wave'" (Ferriss & Young 2006:89). Power and sexuality played an important role within the third wave of feminism. While power and sexuality were important concepts within the third wave, theorists such as Jenny Coleman (2009:4) suggest that there were additional issues that were explored and critically examined within the third wave. Coleman (2009:4) states that the third wave addressed four major perspectives that:

> Contribute to the new discourse of third-wave feminism: intersectionality theory as developed by women of colour; postmodernist and poststructuralist feminist approaches; feminist post-colonial theory (often referred to as global feminism); and the agenda of the new generation of younger feminists.

The reason that these issues were still at the forefront of this movement, says Ferriss and Young (2006:95), was due to the fact that "in spite of their obvious differences and agreements, second-wave and third-wave feminism share a significant number of issues and concerns. The word that most clearly links them might, in fact, be choice." This choice outlined by Ferriss and Young (2006:95) refers to the ability to choose from various opportunities that are now available to women, a concept that is also prominent within the second wave of feminism. The second type of choice outlined by Ferriss and Young (2006:95) is the ability to not only have these choices, as outline above, available to them, but to also have the ability to expand on these choices and redefine them. This was a concept prominent within the third wave and postfeminism.

Rampton (2015:3) poignantly explains that third-wave feminism meant that "you could wear a push-up bra and still have a brain" at the same time. One of the aims of the third wave was to achieve equality in areas such as sex and desire, while still maintaining the appearance of femininity that can be considered girlie and diverse (Snyder 2008:179). Krolokke and Sorensen (2006:16) contribute to the argument in suggesting that the third wave of feminism was a movement that "simultaneously criticised sexist language, appropriated derogatory terms for girls and women, and invented new self-celebrating words and terms of communication". In addition, the movement allowed for a paradoxical or unintended result in which women would dress themselves in an outfit that could be considered sexualised in public (Rampton 2015:3). This only contributed to positioning women as passive sexual objects for the misogynistic male gaze. While the idea was that women had the right to wear what they wanted, it did not stop men from objectifying them. This was something that would have been highly criticised by the second wave of feminism as it essentially stood in direct opposition of their objectives. As Ferriss and Young (2006:89) explain: "part of the

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negotiation with popular culture has been the deliberate appropriation of terms that would have made second-wave feminists cringe."

The third wave of feminism paved the way for the postfeminist movement. Postfeminist ideals and concepts overlap with the third wave of feminism and, as a result, many theorists find it difficult to separate the two (Adriaens & Bauwel 2011:5). In the context of the discussion on the Lilith character, an early example of this overlapping of ideals can be seen in different medias such as in the comic book world. Specifically, *The Haunt of Horror: Lilith, Daughter of Dracula* Marvel Preview volume 1, #12, which portrays Lilith as Dracula's daughter who seeks to destroy Dracula after he drives Lilith's mother to her death (Figure 6). In this comic book edition, Lilith is depicted as a vengeful woman wearing a skin-tight catsuit who seeks to protect abused women from men (Dennis & Dennis 2014:83). She displays physical postfeminist characteristics in her oversexualised outfit; however, she also exhibits traits synonymous with the third wave of feminism in which she wants to protect women and create a safer space for women to interact in. This manifestation only wants to punish the guilty and avenge her mother's death. The next subsection will explore postfeminism in more depth.

3.3. Postfeminism

Postfeminism is a widely – and perhaps also wildly – disputed movement. This is largely due to the ambiguities on which it seems to be founded. Disagreements about the timeline of the movement add to this ambiguity. One could argue that the reason for Lilith's resurfacing during contemporary postfeminist popular culture is due to the fact that, much like the postfeminist movement itself, Lilith is also considered an ambiguous, liminal figure that is shrouded in mystery (Patai 1964:301). Michelle Lazar (2009b:372) argues that postfeminism began in the 1980s and overlaps with the third wave of feminism. Gill (2016:613) defines postfeminism as "a critical analytical term that refers to empirical regularities or patterns of contemporary cultural life, which include emphasis on individualism, choice and agency as dominant modes of accounting". In addition, Lazar (2009a:339) adds to this definition when she states that postfeminism is "a heightened female visibility in conjunction with notions of assumed freedom, agency, choice, pleasure, personal empowerment and autonomy". An additional definition by Jane Gerhard (2005:39) sees postfeminism as "circulat[ing] widely in popular, academic and political discourses, [and] accruing contradictory meanings from all". These three definitions serve to highlight how intricate and complex postfeminism is as a movement. One could even go as far as to argue that postfeminism is less an intellectual or even activist movement with specific theorists than the second wave of feminism was.

Rather, it can be seen as a way of life, or a lifestyle choice, as in Gill's (2007:161) designation of postfeminism as more of a sensibility than anything else.

To further try to explain the definition of postfeminism, Gill (2016:612) discusses some of the prominent concepts found in the movement. The first is that postfeminism has the potential to be considered as an anti-feminist movement due to the prefix "post" potentially meaning beyond feminism or after feminism. The sense that postfeminism is an anti-feminist concept is furthered by the fact that specific second wavers renounce postfeminism and all associations with it due to the fact that it stands in direct opposition of the objectives within the second wave (Rampton 2015:2). On the other hand, Fien Adriaens and Sofie Bauwel (2011:2) argue that postfeminism makes use of the prefix "post" in a similar way that post-modernism makes use of the same prefix. It has the potential to mean "in relation with" or "related to", thereby starting a new discussion around postfeminism instead of ending the discussion altogether. Thus, in a similar way that postfeminism remains ambiguous and multifaceted, the qualities or arguments surrounding postfeminism remain equally conflicting and, at times, vague.

The second concept discussed by Gill (2016:612) refers to postfeminism's connection with the third wave of feminism, and as a historical shift after the second wave of feminism. Adriaens and Bauwel (2011:2) explain that Anne Brooks holds the view that "postfeminism is a political shift in feminism's conceptual and theoretical agenda". Whereas the third wave of feminism still fought against patriarchal systems, Lazar (2009a:340) argues that postfeminists are often criticised as not wanting to make use of the word "feminism" or "patriarchy" altogether. Similarly, Elizabeth Kissling (2013:491) argues that postfeminist texts "repudiate feminism, and propose women's achievements as well as their failures are products of individual effort rather than collective action or structural impediments". According to Adriaens and Bauwel (2011:4), the movement appears to reject the second wave of feminism, choosing to favour the third wave and even directly adopting some of its methods and agendas. Such methods and agendas can be seen as "individualism, choice and empowerment, consistent with neoliberal economic powers" (Kissling 2013:492). From this account, postfeminism appears to deem the second wave of feminism as outdated and in the historical past. While Adriaens and Bauwel (2011:2) see postfeminism as a political shift in feminism's conceptual and theoretical agenda, Rebecca Munford (2007:267) argues that postfeminism instead looks to a shift within the feminist academy. It chooses aspects of the third wave of feminism that comply with a depoliticised postfeminist ethos. Similar to the third wave of feminism then, postfeminism sees the personal individual at the centre of its ethos. Gill (2007:162) suggests the notion of liberty and gratifying one's own desires through

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the freedom of choice as playing a large role in presenting postfeminist women as autonomous agents who are not constricted in any way.

This notion of individual liberty, as outlined by Gill (2007:162), is a key site of critique and a contentious issue for many (post)feminists. Lazar (2009a:340) explains this critique as the fact that postfeminism has gained the reputation of wanting to reap the rewards of the previous waves of feminism without actually having to invest in feminism, activism, collectivism, social injustice or transformation of the prevailing gender orders. Instead, arguably, the postfeminist woman is represented as what Linda Mizejewski (2005:122) refers to as "the savvy woman who no longer needs political commitment, who enjoys consumerist choices, and whose preoccupations are likely to involve romance, career choices, and hair gel". The hesitancy to make use of the word "feminism" is due to the fact that it has become a construct demonised by the media.[44] Associating with a feminist agenda causes one to be labelled a radical feminist, in line with the second wave of feminism (Gill 2008). Shauna Pomerantz, Rebecca Raby and Andrea Stefanik (2013:204) suggest that women "may have used postfeminism to strategically distance themselves from feminism. Feminist researchers have noted girls detach themselves from, feminism because it is perceived to be 'man-hating', 'butch' and 'ugly'". Gorton (2007:214) astutely comments that postfeminism wants the benefits of feminism, without having to be associated with the criticisms against feminism. Similarly, while commenting on postfeminism, Patricia Lewis, Yvonne Benschop and Ruth Simpson (2017:5) argue that the "contemporary 'ordinariness' of feminist principles is accompanied by a repudiation of feminist action alongside a process of retraditionalisation." Gorton (2007:214) examines that "instead of wanting to move beyond representations of woman, postfeminism wants to move beyond representations of feminism that 'outdate' its own image".

The third concept that Gill (2011:64) explores is the relation between sexualisation and postfeminism. The second wave of feminism placed a lot of energy on deconstructing and destroying archetypal feminine roles and artefacts. However, within the third wave of feminism and more predominantly in postfeminism, women have reembraced these previously deconstructed ideas. Such deconstructed ideas can be seen by Patricia Lewis (2014:1851), which she identifies as:

> a collection of stable features of a postfeminist gender regime including femininity as a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; the emphasis upon self-surveillance; the

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[44] Gill (2007:147) refers to this as "sexism reloaded", where sexism is absorbed into the media and popular culture and is resignified to represent a radical feminism.

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> prominence given to individualism, choice and empowerment; the ascendancy of a make-over paradigm; the revival and reappearance of "natural" sexual difference; the resexualisation of women's bodies and finally the retreat to home as a matter of choice not obligation.

According to Gill (2007:147), in the past, women were considered passive sex objects. However, postfeminism places women within the position to present themselves in a relatively sexualised and objectified manner because it suits the postfeminist's liberated interests to do so. The sexy female body becomes a woman's key source of identity. Gill (2007:153–154) examines that this produces two different strains of postfeminist women. These are the sexualised woman who uses her femininity to gain power and the sexualised woman who uses her femininity because it simply "feels good".

Adriaens and Bauwel (2011:5) confirm Gill's description by arguing that postfeminism saw characteristics of third-wave ideas in which a woman could be "traditional, radical and pretty all at the same time". This notion of presenting women as autonomous agents can be paralleled with Lilith's own independence and autonomy. She retains her seductive and alluring qualities, thereby not sacrificing her sexuality for freedom, as second wavers would have it.

As Patai (1964:312) notes, while Lilith has been reinvented throughout time, the basic qualities of her personality have never changed – she remains a beautiful temptress. Her ability to retain both power and sexuality, for her own benefit and on her own terms, is a characteristic that suits the postfeminist agenda. Sex appeal and independence play a large role in the construction of identity of the ideal postfeminist woman (Gill 2007:147). Therefore, Lilith undoubtedly has the potential to be considered a contemporary postfeminist icon.

The postfeminist argument that "we deserve lipstick if we want it, and free speech; we deserve to be sexual and serious" emerged from what Lazar (2009b:372) refers to as "entitled femininity". Entitled femininity refers to women taking back certain stereotypes, phrases or words previously borne under patriarchal conditions. It is the act of readopting and refiguring these words/phrases or stereotypes so that they now embody positive connotations. It is the idea of proudly reclaiming conventional codes and rewriting the indexical meaning behind them, for example the colour pink (Lazar 2009b:381). Pink has traditionally been gendered and associated with women and specifically femininity. The second wave of feminism rejected this construct and the idea that certain colours correlated with specific genders. However, under entitled femininity, pink undergoes a process of resignification; enjoying it as a colour supposedly strengthens a woman's role in the postfeminist movement rather than hampering it (Lazar 2009b:382).

Postfeminism therefore merges, or at least attempts to merge, the dualistic split between feminism and femininity. According to Lazar (2009b:397), a limitation within the merging of celebrating femininity and feminism is that it is only inclusive of heteronormative behaviour. While the movement often commends itself on being the most inclusive and least marginalising wave, certain qualities within the movement are problematic and non-inclusive (Lazar 2009b:397). According to Lazar (2009b:397), the movement is seen as homophobic, ageist and classist because it is heavily influenced by consumer culture.

The notion that women are entitled to consume as they please has brought about a large consumer culture synonymous with postfeminism (Lazar 2009b:372).[45] This implies that feminism has shifted from grand objectives and concerns to a movement that is more concerned with style than substance. Contrary to the second-wave dictum that the personal is political (which was also the title of Carol Hanisch's 1970 essay, *Personal is Political*),[46] postfeminism ushered in an era where the personal had triumphed over the political (Gorton 2007:213). Women's liberty became a marketable commodity. Instead of women being sexualised in advertisements for men, advertisements now offered female brands imbued with sexual agency that they could consume themselves (Lazar 2009b:379). The emphasis placed on consumption and entitled femininity has received the largest wave of criticism of any of the other factors and concepts that constitute the postfeminist movement.

The fourth concept that Gill (2011:63) examines is that postfeminism adopts or embodies the ability to capture the epistemological break within feminism as a discourse. Here postfeminism is seen as a re-evaluation of the way feminism interacts with other discourses such as femininity (Adriaens & Bauwel 2011:4). Thus, one could argue that postfeminism is not compliant with patriarchy but rather engages in a discussion with it. Here the validity of postfeminism as a movement is debated. Gorton (2007:222) explains that saying that a certain kind of feminism is not needed does not show a lack of feminism. Instead, it shows the need for a new kind of feminism that addresses and redresses certain issues within feminist discourse. Gorton (2007:214) argues that the postfeminist movement wants to move past or beyond representations of feminism that it deems outdated when examining its own image. This positions postfeminism as a direct response to feminism itself. Gill (2007:147)

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[45] This so-called "entitled" behaviour has often been associated with being self-absorbed, hedonistic and narcissistic with its roots in consumerist values (Lazar 2009b:375).

[46] Hanisch's (1970) essay commented on how the various domestic plights aired by women, of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) at the time, were belittled and side-lined. Hanisch's (1970) essay was initially written as a response to fellow WLM staff member Dottie Zellner, who had noted that consciousness-raising was just therapy and questioned whether the new independent WLM was really "political". The *Personal is Political* essay (1970) observed that all feminist plights and streams of consciousness – whether individual or collective, large or miniscule – deserved the same amount of attention.

suggests that arguments around postfeminism thus become debates that offer the platform to analyse transformations in feminism, as well as their relationship and how this affects their presence in media culture.

This fragmented cluster of definitions and concepts contributes to the ambiguity of postfeminism as a whole. Gill (2007:147) outlines a negative result of this ambiguity in that it becomes difficult to specify the criteria and features of postfeminism. The result of this is that it becomes difficult when one attempts to apply current postfeminist notions to any particular culture, media analysis or text (Gill 2007:147). To remedy this, Gill (2007:148) presents the idea that postfeminism is not a movement but rather a sensibility, which accounts for its fluid nature and ever-changing definitions. Gill (2007:163) explains that postfeminism, as a sensibility, does not require a single static definition of any single authentic form as a point of comparison. Instead, this sensibility is influenced by different perspectives such as post-modernism or constructivism. Postfeminism, as a sensibility, seeks to examine "what is distinctive about contemporary articulations of gender in the media" (Gill 2007:161). Postfeminist culture produces new femininities that are neither feminist nor are they traditional forms of femininity, which goes towards breaking down the dichotomy between feminist and feminine identities (Gorton 2007:213). In this sense, postfeminism acts as an ongoing debate and discussion, in which feminism, femininity and gender representations can be addressed and (re)negotiated. While postfeminism is an influential feminist movement in contemporary popular culture, it has been suggested that postfeminism is beginning to shift into a post-postfeminist state (Gill 2016:611). Whichever term is more appropriate, it is important to understand that the postfeminist media economy created over the duration of the movement has embodied and has been characterised by postfeminism. This is an important factor to keep note of when decoding such contemporary postfeminist media.

This section has examined the three waves of feminism and postfeminism, with specific reference to postfeminism and what it entails. In addition, this section has examined if and how Lilith can be identified and examined under the three waves of feminism and, more particularly, how she might be positioned in relation to postfeminism. These explorations assisted in negotiating the ways in which Lilith is a feminist and, more specifically, a postfeminist icon. Although I have not yet discussed how she fits the postfeminist agenda of "entitled" consumption, this will become clearer in the next chapter.

The next section considers the trope of the *femme fatale*. In Chapter 2, I showed how Lilith is portrayed as a *femme fatale* in nineteenth century art and literature. In an extension of

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these arguments, this section explores the definition and history of the *femme fatale* more closely. This exploration is necessary as it shows the ways in which Lilith displays traits synonymous with the *femme fatale.* In addition, this section examines the abject and shows how Lilith embodies abject characteristics. Similarly, this section explores the ways in which Lilith depicts qualities of the female grotesque.

3.4 The *femme fatale*

According to Osherow (2000:71), the *femme fatale* can be considered as one of the oldest archetypes. While the term itself came into common usage only in the twentieth century (Anderson 1995:1), the characteristics and concepts behind the *femme fatale* have existed for much longer. Walker (2006:7) argues that there have been multiple representations of *femme fatales* throughout different cultures and historical periods. In the Judeo-Christian cultures alone "the fatale's origins can be traced back, through numerous cultural manifestations to Jezebel,[47] Salome,[48] Delilah,[49] Eve[50] and finally to Lilith, the original unruly female". As one of the oldest enduring figures (Farrimond 2018:1), the *femme fatale* is difficult to define. This is because the *femme fatale* is both "entrenched in cultural stereotypes and yet [she is] never quite fully known, she is always beyond definition" (Hanson & O'Rawe 2010:1). According to Carl Jung (28) the archetype of the *femme fatale* is referred to as the anima. The anima is a feminine archetype that, when fully embraced, offers characteristics that parallel those of the *femme fatale.* Jung (1959:199) defines the anima as "bipolar and can therefore appear positive one moment and negative the next; now young, now old; now mother, now maiden; now a good fairy, now a witch; now a saint, now a whore". This quote offers insight into how the archetype of the *femme fatale* or anima crosses binaries and remains liminal in her definition. Taking a slightly different approach, Gillis (2005:84) suggests that the *femme fatale* is not meant to be understood as an archetype. Rather, she is a "constellation of tropes and characteristics emerging from

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[47] Jezebel was a biblical, Phoenician princess married to King Ahab. As an attempt to undermine God, Jezebel causes her husband to sin against God through the worship of the Phoenician god Baal. As punishment for disobeying Israelite custom, she is pushed from a window and killed by the crowds outside (Anderson 1995:33).

[48] Salome was the biblical daughter of Herodias. With a seductive dance, Salome is able to convince her stepfather/uncle, Herod Antipas, to bring her the head of the imprisoned John the Baptist. Salome is prompted by her mother, Herodias, to make this request after the Baptist condemned Herodias's marriage to Herod (Anderson 1995:330).

[49] Delilah is a deemed a treacherous biblical woman. This is due to the fact that, after discovering the secret to Samson's great strength, Delilah cuts off seven locks of his hair in order to betray him to the Philistines, who then gouge out Samson's eyes (Anderson 1995:33).

[50] John Milton (2005:791–1186) considers Eve a *femme fatale* because of how she convinced Adam to eat the apple from the tree of knowledge. After Adam and Eve had been condemned and banished from Eden, Eve blamed Adam because he had left her by herself and she had needed his guidance. Eve thereby strategically places the blame on Adam.

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concerns about women and power". When looking at the *femme fatale* through this lens, it becomes easier to identify certain characteristics evident within the different tropes as opposed to characteristics that a single archetype embodies. Thus, it becomes easier to contemplate why the *femme fatale* remains as mysterious and ambiguous as she is.

These common characteristics that appear evident within each manifestation of the *femme fatale* seem to position her as a dangerous, seductive woman with a desire to see the downfall of man and thus patriarchy. This is best explained by Scott Yarbrough (1999:52):

> [The *femme fatale*] is beautiful, intelligent and corrupt. She uses her sexuality as a weapon, and she is ultimately self-serving and ambitious. She is an ambiguous character: powerful and strong while evil.

While this definition assists in creating a mental image of the *femme fatale*, it is useful to add that this definition was given during the late noir era (from the 1940s to early 1950s). Since then, the contemporary refiguration of this definition has changed.[51] Such changes, of course, only add to the liminality that characterises the *femme fatale*. Mary Ann Doane (1991:1) suggests that the only constant characteristic surrounding the *femme fatale* is her unknowability. "The *femme fatale* is the figure of a certain discursive unease, a potential epistemological trauma. For her most striking characteristic, perhaps, is the fact that she never really is what she seems to be." While this unknowability is helpful in explaining the liminality of the *femme fatale*, Yarbrough's definition assists in at least defining a *femme fatale* even if this definition must be appropriately altered and refigured as more contemporary manifestations arise.

During WWII, one of the most prominent versions, or manifestations, of the *femme fatale* was created, specifically the noir *femme fatale*. During the war, men were conscripted to fight, which left a gap in the workforce. As a result, women filled that gap, while successfully also managing the domestic sphere (Jancovich 2011:100). An arising fear, drenched in misogyny, was that once men returned from war, women (rightly) would not want to return solely to domesticity (Snyder 2001:163). In an attempt to regain patriarchal control, popular culture, specifically film, began to feature a new character known as the dangerous woman, hell-bent on destroying marriages and essentially patriarchy. In all these representations the *femme fatale* was ultimately punished or killed. As Snyder (2001:164) puts it: "a duplicitous *femme fatale* attempts to seduce and control [the hero]. But in the end, through his own

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[51] This concept of the contemporary *femme fatale* is discussed in more detail further on in this chapter.

ingenuity, sometimes with the assistance of a more pliable, dependable woman, he is able to attain male ascendancy and the [*femme fatale* is] vanquished." This dangerous woman became infamously known as the *femme fatale*. Jack Boozer (1999:20) comments that the *femme fatale* in the 1940s onward acted as a representation of a woman scheming and seducing to earn the same power as a man. This image of the *femme fatale* assisted in actively discouraging ambitious women from wanting to remain in the workforce. The death of the *femme fatale* in films such as *Dead Reckoning* (John Cromwell 1947) and *Scarlet Street* (Jean Renoir 1945) alluded to the thinly veiled threat that any women who wished to have more power in patriarchal systems would be ultimately punished in some form or another. Thus, the *femme fatale* seen as a thinly veiled threat can be paralleled to how Lilith became a public warning to women who sought empowerment during ancient Jewish and Christian society (Bernstein 1993:462).

While the *femme fatale* remained a villainous antagonist in film, she was still a desirable role to portray. This, ironically, was because the *femme fatale* was one of the few female roles in film that involved an active character that was powerful and dangerous. The *femme fatale* is a character that derives power from her gender without sacrificing her beauty or femininity (Yarbrough 1999:57). According to Adriaens and Bauwel (2011:15), the *femme fatale* maintains ultra-femininity while also demonstrating traits associated with heteronormative masculinity: power and strength. Previously, in film, there had been mainly two contrasting female roles: one woman was good, almost naïvely so, and the other was evil and ill-intentioned (Jancovich 2011:104). These separate roles guaranteed that the female character remained passive. However, this changed with the film *Gilda* (Charles Vidor 1946). With Rita Hayworth as the female lead, Gilda (Figure 15) was a character that embodied both good and evil qualities, which left her elusive and enigmatic.[52] The character Gilda, therefore, caused ambiguity and confusion because she embodied binary characteristics (Jancovich 2011:104).

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[52] Gilda is a film about a woman who is the wife of the dour proprietor, Ballian Mudson (Jancovich 2011:105). The entire situation becomes complicated when Mudson learns that his new wife, Gilda, shares a romantic past with his most trusted employee. The complications ensue when Mudson mysteriously disappears and is considered to be dead. Jancovich (2011:106) argues that the reason that Gilda was so enigmatic is twofold. Firstly, she was one of the first characters in film to embody the theme of vicious womanhood in which a female character embodies both good and bad characteristics. Secondly, Jancovich (2011:106) argues that Gilda is not a male fantasy; she does not conform to male expectations. Instead, she is "oppressed by the leading male character's fantasies about her and 'taunts and torments' the men by playing to these desires and fears".

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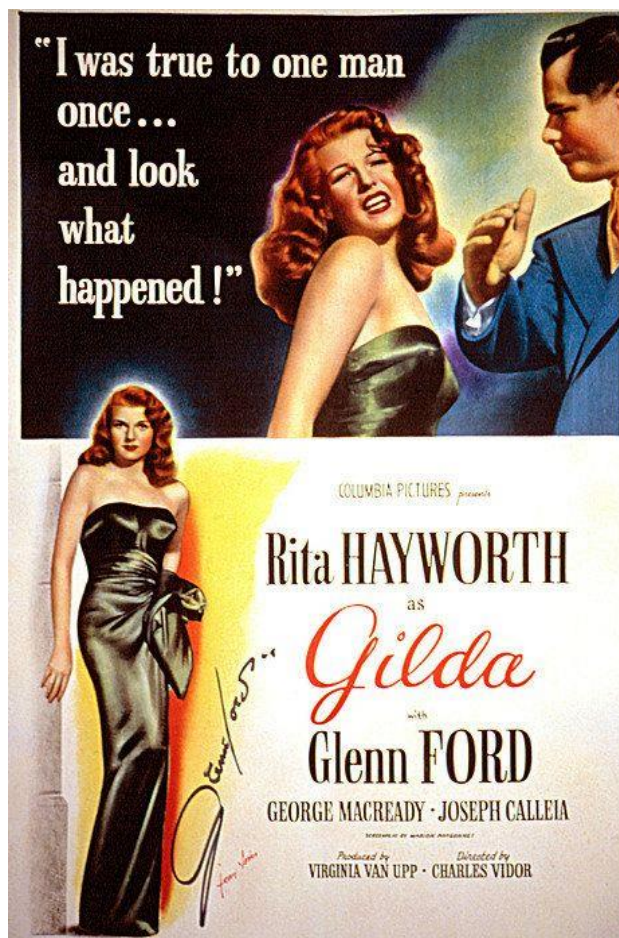
Figure 15: *Gilda*, 1946.
(WebUrbanist [sa])

This mysteriousness saw the formation of a specific trope within the *femme fatale* construct, namely the "siren of no mean proportions who completely befouls the hero's career" (Jancovich 2011:102). This specific trope saw the *femme fatale* use her wily nature and seductive behaviour to get whatever she wanted, which was usually materialistic. This version of the *femme fatale* was not necessarily a departure from the noir *femme fatale* but rather a new imagining or interpretation of the *femme fatale* within noir films; this version of the *femme fatale* is the character seen in films such as *James Bond* (Jancovich 2011:107). Specifically, she was a diabolically beautiful woman whose beauty was outmatched only by her cruelty and penchant for revenge. (Braun 1982:140) According to Amanda Du Preez (2012:23), the *femme fatale* "assigns women the power to control men, even to destroy them by using their beauty and ability to compel men's attractions". However, as Du Preez (2012:23) notes, this power always remains firmly under the control of patriarchy. Jung

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(1985:199) explains that "as long as a woman is content to be a *femme a homme*, she has no feminine individuality. She is empty and merely glitters — a welcome vessel for masculine projections".

By the late 1940s, the *femme fatale* as a film character was so popular and well-received that she was becoming a "pastiche of a figure" (Jancovich 2011:106). She was exciting to both women and men as she embodied a beauty that adhered to patriarchal standards, while also being an empowering figure for women. As Farrimond (2018:10) explains: "[the] *femme fatale* is usually under forty and conforms to normative body standards of beauty and body type. This power derives from her ability to meet patriarchal standards, which the majority of women are unable to meet themselves." Essentially, men want her, and women want to be her. According to Allen (1983:191), the *femme fatale* was so popular among women in the 1940s because it offered them a figure to emulate. The *femme fatale* offered an opportunity not only to enact her seductive beauty, but also to indulge in the fantasy of "freedom, sexual independence and considerable enjoyment" (Allen 1983:191). This need for freedom mirrors the growing need for feminist change during the 1940s–1950s. What is interesting is that a film featuring the *femme fatale* usually includes a morally 'purer' or good female character. However, the virginal 'good girl' is the character who usually seems out of place in the narrative, whereas, one could argue that the *femme fatale* seems utterly comfortable within her filmic world (Hales 2007:231).

Although the *femme fatale* remained a prominent trope in film, one could identify that, as a character, she began to shift. In the late 1940s to 1950s a different manifestation of the *femme fatale* was beginning to take form. She no longer embodied a devious vixen who uses her body as a weapon. Instead, she began to manipulate men by masquerading as innocent, naïve and as a victim (Jancovich 2011:107). Jancovich (2011:108) describes this new *femme fatale* trope or character as follows: "[she is] not an independent woman, nor even a sultry siren, but rather she proves to be a snare and delusion due to her ability to conform to male fantasies of female passivity and innocence." These types of character that emerged in the late 1940s to 1950s have continued to surface in contemporary film, says Jancovich (2011:108). For instance, in *Gone Girl* (David Fincher 2014), the main character Amy stages her own kidnapping and manages to place the blame of her disappearance on her husband as punishment for his infidelity. At the end of the film, Amy returns to her husband (Figure 16), Nick, as a victim of kidnapping. She has murdered her ex-boyfriend while having sexual intercourse with him and falsely blames him for the kidnapping. When Amy returns, she maintains an innocent façade and is not publicly revealed as a *femme fatale* in the film. Only the viewer knows the full truth (Vahlne 2017:12). Thus, this newer

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trope challenges the viewer who anticipates that the *femme fatale* will be "purely evil, by seeming simultaneously good and bad". Instead, the viewer receives a character who is difficult to place. She exhibits good and evil qualities, thus making her difficult to both anticipate and form an opinion of her.

Figure 16: Amy and Nick descend the staircase as a reunited couple, *Gone Girl*, 2014.
(Hooked on Houses 2015).

This refigured *femme fatale* trope that appeared in the late 1940s to 1950s was a prelude to a more contemporary *femme fatale* that became popular in the 1990s (as demonstrated in my discussion of *Gone Girl*). This *femme fatale* was not bound to a specific genre as the noir *femme fatales* had been. While her foundation is cemented in noir, as a result of detective, action, romantic and dramatic genres merging, the *femme fatale* has begun to move in-between them. As Farrimond (2018:8) explains, this shift in genres has led to the need for an evolved *femme fatale*. Farrimond (2018:8) explains that this evolution is not indicative of a universal *femme fatale* but rather that the *femme fatale* will feature in different genres in different ways and for very specific reasons. More specifically, she argues that this re-evaluation of the *femme fatale's* role in classical noir has "implications for Hollywood's relationship to its own gendered history". Thus, the contemporary, more pastiche, *femme fatale*, epitomised by 1990s films, is more of a sensibility than an archetype. An example of this 1990s *femme fatale* is Bridget Gregory in the film *The Last Seduction* (John Dahl 1994).

Bridget is a woman in an abusive relationship who steals her husband's loan shark money and escapes to Boston. In Boston she manages to find and manipulate a divorcee, Mike, to bend to her will and assist her in outing men who cheat on their wives by examining their credit bills. Bridget manipulates Mike into killing her abusive husband Clay. The film ends with Clay dead and Mike in prison, while Bridget walks free with all of her husband's money. This film genre is a mixture of horror and noir.

Farrimond (2018:3) defines the newer *femme fatale* as follows: "the *femme fatale* of contemporary cinema must be read as a postmodern accumulation of iconography and performances of key words, textures and images." Farrimond is thus suggesting that the appearance of contemporary *femme fatales* demonstrate an amalgamation of intertextual characteristics which function differently to their (specifically noir) predecessors. Farrimond (2018:30) argues that "the *femme fatale*, particularly in the more recent incarnations in which she gets away with her crimes, would seem to provide the ideal figurehead for feminist and postfeminist cultures since the early 1990s". This inter-textuality can be paralleled to the legacy and journey of Lilith who, as a figure, has blended and merged in-between different texts – cultural and religious – throughout history.

In addition, Farrimond (2018:8) examines how critics suggest that the *femme fatale* does not apply to every single female role that included a subversive character. By this, Farrimond (2018:8) is referring to the fact that any female character who portrayed a sexualised or incredibly intelligent woman was instantly labelled a *femme fatale.* Thus, Farrimond (2018:8) points out how film noir has the potential to represent real women and, as a result, "film noir is actively feminist in presenting the difficulties of women's attempts to thrive in patriarchy."

When exploring the *femme fatale* and her evolution as a contemporary figure, it is important to look at patriarchal influences surrounding the way in which this trope is depicted. According to Farrimond (2018:1), the *femme fatale* within contemporary society represents a socio-cultural duality that is at stake between the conservative anxieties of patriarchal ideologies and feminist empowerment. It is important, therefore, to highlight the split in the *femme fatale's* identity. One side of this split positions the *femme fatale* at the centre of patriarchy. As Snyder (2001:158) argues, the *femme fatale* is "the ultimate misogynistic fantasy". This is because she is ultimately feared, but at the same time she is a "scapegoated for society's problems" (Snyder 2001:158), since she was, after all, created by men who felt threatened by the escape of independent and powerful women from male dominance. Du Preez (2012:18) argues that the *femme fatale* has more to do with "men and their reactions to women and nature in general than actual women of the period". This

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meaning is furthered by the fact that each resurfacing of the *femme fatale* is marked by corresponding changes in feminist politics and men's reactions to feminist activism of the time.

Another characteristic embedded in the *femme fatale* trope that aligns itself with patriarchal dominance is her death or fall. Doane (1991:2–3) argues that under patriarchal rule, the *femme fatale* is situated as evil and is habitually killed off or punished, which is not an element of feminism but is rather a symptom of the anxieties of men. One such anxiety is discussed by Miranda Sherwin (2008:182):

> Sexual plurality, like polysexuality depicted in the *femme fatale* suggests that men and heterosexual intercourse are not necessary to fulfil female desire … man is dependent on another for sexual satisfaction, while woman is autoerotic and therefore needs no-one. This, in addition to castration anxiety, is what woman represents for man: autoeroticism, sexual independence.[53]

For this reason, the *femme fatale* must be annihilated.

While Sherwin (2008:182) regards the *femme fatale* as a condition of male anxieties, Farrimond (2011:20) argues that "the fact that women's agency might be perceived as threatening suggests that these images of dangerous women might be reclaimed as positive feminist representations". This idea is furthered by the fact that when a *femme fatale* is destroyed, she remains memorable, perhaps especially so for women. Snyder (2001:9) argues that the death of the *femme fatale* is not her downfall. Instead, it is a mark of her strength because "[the *femme fatale*] remains true to her destructive nature and refuses to be converted or captured even if it means she must die". According to Farrimond (2011:20), the *femme fatale* therefore dismantles patriarchy from within. Doane (1991:2–3) acknowledges that the *femme fatale* is a construction of misogyny; however, she also notes that the *femme fatale* is valuable in that she reveals patriarchal structures that are in place. Thus, one could argue that it is this acknowledgement of patriarchal systems that has the potential to redirect the male gaze that objectifies her by directly confronting it. Thus, the *femme fatale* has the potential to redirect the energy or standing of the patriarchal subject to herself, the object.

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[53] Castration anxiety comes from the philosophies of Sigmund Freud, who believed that women are terrifying because there is always a fear that she might castrate man, as she is already castrated, lacking, and therefore does not have to implicate herself in the fear (Creed 1993:7). Freud was a psychologist, psychoanalyst and neurologist based in Austria in the 1920s and 1930s. He is best known for his seminal texts such as: *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905)*, Studies on Hysteria* (1895) and *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899)*.

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The version or manifestation of the *femme fatale* described in the above argument clearly embodies similar attributes to that of the postfeminist as discussed above. *Femme fatale* actively engages with the male gaze. This is seen in the *femme fatale,* Catherine Tramell, in *Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven & Michael Caton-Jones 1992). Tramell, played by Sharon Stone, is a crime writer who is suspected of a string of violent murders. However, even though all evidence points to Tramell, she is able to evade arrest and even begins a torrid sexual affair with the investigating detective in the film. What makes Catherine Tramell different from the *femme fatales* in the films of the 1940s is that she is a beautiful and deadly woman who does not experience a downfall at the end of the film. Thus, she is a dangerous woman who defies authority and manipulates individuals as well as patriarchal structures, without receiving any punishment.

This manifestation of the *femme fatale* encourages "to-be-looked-at-ness" as Mulvey refers to it (Snyder 2001:162). In the same way, postfeminism values aesthetic beauty and sexuality (Gill 2007:147). This sexiness parallels characteristics of the *femme fatale*, namely her irresistible beauty, which is a characteristic that has remained with the *femme fatale* regardless of which manifestation she embodies. One could potentially argue that the reason the *femme fatale* has resurfaced during the third wave of feminism is potentially due to the fact that she has been refigured and can be tentatively made into an icon for a new generation of feminists (Farrimond 2018:8). Examples of films during third-wave feminism are *Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven & Michael Caton-Jones 1992)*,* and *To Die For* (Gus Van Sant 1995)*.* Postfeminism examples include the films *Kill Bill: Volume 1* (Quentin Tarantino 2003), *Kill Bill: Volume 2* (Quentin Tarantino 2004), *Jennifer's Body* (Karyn Kusama 2009), *Ex Machina* (Alex Garland 2014)*, A Simple Favor* (Paul Feig 2018) and *Hustlers* (Lorene Scafaria 2019).

As discussed above, it is difficult at times to separate the third-wave *femme fatale* and the postfeminist *femme fatale*. This is due to the fact that the postfeminist movement is not considered a wave by theorists, but rather as a sensibility that came about as a result of the third wave of feminism (Gill 2007:163). Consequently, one could argue that there is not necessarily a clear distinction between the third wave of feminism and postfeminism as postfeminism came about only as a movement derived from third wave thinking and theorists.

As already mentioned in this chapter, Lazar (2009b:381) discusses a concept called "entitled femininity". Entitled femininity involves postfeminist women adopting terms and stereotypes that exist prominently under patriarchal structures and rewriting their indexical meaning so

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that they now read as symbols of strength and not oppression. One could hypothetically consider that entitled femininity could extend beyond phrases and stereotypes, eventually going so far as to refigure an archetype, so that it now reads as a positive postfeminist icon. This is what I suggest has, at least partially, happened to the *femme fatale* and, in particular, in her appearance as Lilith.

In her current manifestations, the *femme fatale* doubtlessly still represents a complex figure. According to Farrimond (2018:1), the contemporary *femme fatale* can be "read both in terms of conservative anxiety and feminist empowerment [that] speaks directly to the inherent contradictions in the limited range of representations of female power available in contemporary American cinema". Farrimond (2018:1) continues that the *femme fatale* exists within contemporary cinema under "a number of distinct guises, each undoing the idea of the beautiful, evil and mysterious woman that has emerged from accounts of classical Hollywood noir".

The final concept to be discussed alongside the *femme fatale* archetype or trope is the idea of marriage and reproduction. According to Bronfen (2004:106), marriage for the *femme fatale* is not usually associated with abundance and happiness but, instead, it is often associated with unfulfillment, imprisonment and the absence of sexual inhibitions and independence. This state of affairs can be compared to Lilith and the biblical interpretation of her relationship with Adam (Smith 2008:18). Lilith fled Eden due to an unhappy marriage or partnership with Adam, thus embodying yet another characteristic of the *femme fatale*. As for reproduction, the *femme fatale* has no desire to reproduce, which positions her as 'Other' to socially acceptable heteronormative femininity. As Du Preez (2012:22) explains, the *femme fatale* does not conceive because her sterility is another means to control men. In addition, her rejection of maternity only cements her role as an Other or a marginal entity. In a similar manner, Lilith cannot have human children. However, she is not depicted as barren; rather, she embodies an abject response to pregnancy in the fact that she is the Mother of Demons who regularly gives birth to demonic children (Patai 1964:308).[54]

To conclude, much like Lilith, the *femme fatale* is a complicated figure whose meanings are difficult to pin down. The *femme fatale* has multiple manifestations and acts as a product of patriarchal fears as a means to control independent women (Farrimond 2011:106). She

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[54] It should be noted that not every manifestation of Lilith gives birth to demons. However, in *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) and *TCAOS* (2019–), both manifestations of Lilith have ties to a demonic child of their own. The *Shadowhunters* Lilith comes to earth to resurrect her dead son in a demonic ritual and *TCAOS* Lilith is pregnant with the devil's baby at the end of Season 3, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

simultaneously embodies the role of the vengeful woman who, according to Yarbrough (1999:62), "will enact revenge against that which has harmed her – the systemized patriarchy [which has] proven itself a weak and feeble protector." The *femme fatale*'s journey is a transformation from victim to villain. Yarbrough (1999:53) argues that the *femme fatale* is forced to become a villain because such transformations and reconstructions "of self are, to [the *femme fatale*], the only ways to salvage her life and soul". This suggests that the *femme fatale* is a symptom of the patriarchal fears that have remained active within contemporary society. As a result, the *femme fatale,* as an archetype throughout history, has enjoyed the space to be refigured and re-represented by artists, writers and producers of popular culture which has, in turn, created a space for the *femme fatale* to return and enact punishment due to patriarchal inadequacy.[55]

Below is a table that illustrates the different *femme fatale* tropes that are featured in this study:

Femme fatale trope:	Time period in which this trope was most evident:	Characteristics of this trope:	Literary examples of this trope:	Supporting academic evidence:
Ancient *femme fatale*	2000 B.C.E. onwards.	Dangerous temptress; very beautiful; tries to tear men from their wives by seducing them; autonomous sexuality.	The tales of Jezebel, Salome, Delilah, Eve and Lilith found in the Bible. The goddess Inanna from *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (2000 B.C.E.)	(Osherow 2000; Walker 2006; Lee 2006; Anderson 1995)
Victorian *femme fatale*	1800s–early 1900s	Mythic; voluptuous; challenges the male gaze; assertive; beautiful; deadly; almost animalistic; appears supernatural and immortal at times; dark Venus.	*Lady Lilith* (1866-1868); *Lamia* (1909).	(Goscilo 1999; Nunnaly 1968; Kundu 2013; Gitter 1984; Yarbrough 1999)
Noir *femme fatale:* Dangerous woman	1940s–1950s	Powerful; evil; mysterious; beautiful; seductive; ultra-feminine; villainous behaviour; wants to see the destruction of the hero; is usually destroyed at the end of the text of film.	*Dead Reckoning* (John Cromwell 1947); *Scarlet Street* (Jean Renoir 1945)	(Yarbrough 1999; Jancovich 2011; Doane 1991; Snyder 2001; Boozer 1999; Adriaens and Bauwel 2011)
Noir *femme fatale:* Seductive Siren	1940s–1950s	Seductive; manipulative; materialistic; vengeful; beautiful; independent; is usually destroyed at the end of	*Gilda* (Charles Vidor 1946)	(Yarbrough 1999; Jancovich 2011; Doane 1991; Snyder 2001; Boozer 1999;

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[55] This refiguration of the *femme fatale* throughout a multitude of different media and mediums is discussed in both Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

		the text of film; does not marry willingly.		Adriaens and Bauwel 2011; Du Preez 2012)
Innocent *femme fatale*	early 1950s onward	Appears innocent and naïve; plays the victim; manipulative; does not receive any punishment or destruction at the end of the text or film; does not marry willingly.	*Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven & Michael Caton-Jones 1992)	(Doane 1991; Farrimond 2011; Snyder 2001; Sherwin 200)
Contemporary *femme fatale*	1990s onward	Pastiche of the different *femme fatale* tropes; both at the centre of patriarchal systems and a symbol of female empowerment; influenced heavily by third wave feminism and postfeminism; has the potential to willingly get married and has children; engages with the male gaze.	*Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven & Michael Caton-Jones 1992); *To Die For* (Gus Van Sant 1995); *Jennifer's Body* (Karyn Kusama 2009); *A Simple Favor* (Paul Feig 2018); *Kill Bill: Volume 1* (Quentin Tarantino 2003), *Kill Bill: Volume 2* (Quentin Tarantino 2004)	(Snyder 2001; Farrimond 2018; Gill 2007; Yarbrough 1999)

Table 1: A table depicting the different *femme fatale* tropes evident in this study.

3.5 The abject woman and the female grotesque

This section explores the abject and the female grotesque. In order to offer a comprehensive understanding of both of these concepts, one must first explore liminality, the Other and how the two assist in examining the abject. Liminality is a difficult concept to define. However, according to Victor Turner (1969:359) the inability to define liminality serves a specific purpose. A liminal entity, transition or figure exists in between different binaries. It needs to continue as ambiguous so that it can remain fluid while it traverses different boundaries. As Turner (1969:359) concisely points out:

> The attributes of liminality or of liminal *personae* are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial.

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Michael Saward (2018:2) suggests that one "may understand a liminal time, phase or space as one which (variously) features uncertain or indeterminate identities and outcomes; a moment where the normal undergoes a degree of suspension". Hence liminality is a term given to something or someone that exists beyond what is expected or classified as normal. Connected to liminality is the Other or Otherness. The Other is the concept, entity or convention that exists in this suspended normativity (Saward 2018:2). The Other is the antithesis of the normal. Thus once something becomes the Other or abject it is possible to consider that a liminal shift has taken place. This liminal transition or shift from normal to the Other is "triggered by a rupture of a social role/activity played in a certain more or less broad context of life" (Salvatore & Venuleo 2019:219). Sergio Salvatore and Claudia Venuleo (2019:222) suggest that "liminal transitions are characterized by the following semiotic dynamics: the rupture of *what- has-been-so-far*—a certain state of affairs, a role, a social position, a form of activity— leads to the emergence of a new pattern of experience (*what-is-from-now-on*)." Thus the Other exists in this new pattern of existence or the 'what-is-from-now-on.' The Other is the opposite binary of what-has-been-so-far, or more specifically what is expected or considered normal.

Otherness or the Other, much like liminality, is difficult to outline. A reason for this is due to the fact that the Other is thought to exist outside of normative boundaries. As Frantz Fanon (1967:xxix) suggests: "the demand of identification—that is, to be *for* an Other—entails the representation of the subject in the differentiating order of Otherness." Thus, certain representations of the Other are not necessarily defined or represented by the Other but rather by another who is simply a witness to the Other (Said 1978:29). Edward Said (1978:29) makes an argument regarding how the Orient is represented by the West; he argues that "the exteriorly of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Orient could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the West, and faute de mieux, for the poor Orient." Using this example to analyse the Other, one can concede that any interpretation of a concept or entity such as the Other does hold value, however, one must also consider the limitations of the Other being represented by something outside of the Other, namely something or someone that exists in more traditionally normative boundaries.

According to Mathias Clasen (2010:20) regardless of how the Other is defined, it is always received with tension. Clasen (2010:20) argues that "it might have been 'us' at some point, but certainly is no more". This inability to define the Other causes an abject reaction, which in turn causes "a tension between increased moral complexity in the postmodern world on the one hand and on the other a dark, primeval urge to destroy the Other." This argument by

Clasen (2010:20) may explain why the Other is usually depicted as a gendered or racial minority, or even as a monster worth destroying; if the Other does not comply with the colonial norm then it does not necessarily have a specific place in colonial society (Piatti-Farnell 2010:11). However, the Other does exist in society among the "normal" entities. It can appear civil and educated, however, at the same time it can appear horrific and insidious. Lorna Piatti-Farnell (2010:12) makes use of the example of Hannibal Lecter to explain this civil-horror concept; Hannibal is a hyper-civilised, domesticated man, who also happens to murder humans and eat their flesh. With parallels like these it becomes understandable why the Other is met with suspicion and fear. In addition, the Other exists in tandem with liminality, thus adding another layer of ambiguity to the Other. The Other is important when studying the abject and liminality because Otherness offers a subject that has the potential to portray abject qualities. Once a supposedly normal character shows abject qualities, they become the Other as seen with Hannibal (Piatti-Farnell 2010:12). Hence the Other, abject and liminal are often valuable when analysed in tandem.

Like liminality, the abject is a site that exists between binaries; it is neither subject nor object. It is an Otherness that causes discomfort due to its ambiguity. In *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection,* Julia Kristeva (1982:4) argues that "abjection does not respect borders, positions, rules, that which disturbs identity, system [and] order". The abject is a result of a something being on the cusp of Otherness; but it still possesses identifiable qualities that are mixed with the unknown or uncomfortable. The abject is considered, by Kristeva (1982:407), as a "liminal condition where both meaning and the subject collapse". Kristeva's model of abjection is thus a useful lens through which to more closely examine the way in which Lilith has been represented in the past, as well as in her more current incarnations. This applies to both the texts analysed here, namely *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) and *TCAOS* (2018–), as well as other recent manifestations of Lilith in the examples I mentioned at the beginning of this study. An understanding of the meanings generated by the abject (as well as the grotesque discussed later) will assist in establishing whether representations of Lilith in mainstream media culture are potentially liberating and progressive for women.

Before examining the finer details of the abject, one must consider its implications. According to Imogen Tyler (2009:78), current critical feminist writings on abjection focus on "how the abject has been taken up and developed as a way of addressing the disparagement of the maternal within particular theoretical traditions". In other words, their emphasis is on maternal bodies as abject. However, Tyler (2009:82) argues that one should consider employing Kristeva's definition of abjection into feminist theories with caution. Firstly, Tyler (2009:82) notes that Kristeva does not align herself with feminist theories; thus,

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abjection is not necessarily something that has an origin in feminism. It is therefore a concern for Tyler that texts "theorizing and identifying the maternal (and feminine) body as primary site/sight of cultural disgust" are being highlighted so predominantly within feminist theory (Tyler 2009:82). On the other hand, one must consider the value that abjection contributes when critically analysing a text. It has been argued that, at its roots, abjection may not emerge from feminist discourse. However, it could be argued that the concept nevertheless provides valuable insights when examining a text and specially the female body as a text.

According to Tyler (2009:82), "what makes the 'abject' paradigm particularly compelling for feminist theorists is the promise that 'reading the abject' within specific cultural domains can challenge and/or displace the disciplinary norms that frame dominant representation of gender." Tyler (2008:83) argues that in addition to offering an abject lens to view these domains, "mapping the pejorative associations between the maternal and the abject can offer feminism resources with which to challenge the misogyny which underlies these cultural inscriptions." Essentially, Tyler (2008:90) suggests that, while investigating and interrogating the abject in various socio-cultural domains, one must tread with trepidation when employing abject theories to feminist discourses. While abjection has the potential to unpack the liminal nature of what it means to analyse the female body, it also has the potential to normalise this rejection and exile of figures that fall into the definition of abject (Tyler 2008:90).

When discussing the abject as a concept, one must note that the abject encompasses a large variety of categories. These categories range from food loathing to motherhood. Food loathing takes place when food sits between two distinct binaries or territories, thus causing it to become abject. Kristeva (1982:3) argues that "food loathing is perhaps the most archaic form of abjection". For Kristeva (1982:3), an example of this abjection is seen in the layer or "skin" that sits on top of milk. The milk is still perfectly fine and drinkable, but the skin on top of it causes an abject reaction and makes one feel uncomfortable to look at it (Kristeva 1982:3). An aspect of food loathing lies in the horror genre, namely cannibalism. According to Adele Nel (2012:556), cannibalism crosses multiple boundaries, as it connects with the corpse and bodily waste as a construct, and it connects with taboo subjects such as incest. Nel (2012:556) argues that "one way in which the abject can be controlled is through exclusion or taboo". This abject concept of cannibalism is usefully highlighted in the film *District 9* (Neil Blomkamp 2009). In the film, the character Wikus Van der Merwe is contaminated and begins turning into an alien species. Part of this contamination sees Van der Merwe growing an alien claw in place of his arm (Figure 17). This claw-like arm

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becomes a commodity. A Nigerian gang lord, Obesandjo, wants to cut Van der Merwe's claw-arm off and eat it in hopes of imbuing himself with the mystic powers of the aliens.[56]

This abject idea of one human being eating another human being's arm is connected with different abject concepts. Firstly, it is the horror of both bodily waste and food loathing. However, the fact that Obesandjo aims to remove Van der Merwe's arm while he is both alive and awake evokes in the viewer a fear of death and of the corpse. According to Nel (2012:557), "the threat imposed by the abject is seated most deeply in the threat of death, the abject is always associated with some or other form of what is represented by death." Nel (2012:557) observes that the fear of death consequently provokes a primal response within the subject, "the fear of the final boundary crossing of which the grave is an enduring sign for the subject."

Secondly, *District 9* (Neil Blomkamp 2009) explores what Nel (2012:561) refers to as "the actualisation of the self's fear of contamination from the Other/non-human". By this I mean that Van der Merwe's non-human transformation leaves him in a liminal or abject state whereby he is not the self any longer, nor is he entirely the Other. What is also interesting to note here is that the abject response, by the viewer, is rather repugnant in this film. Nel (2012:562) attributes this to the fact that it is a male figure or body collapsing in on itself.

It is more expected of the female figure to exhibit abject signs due to her constant liminality. However, the male body is more often seen as "stable and autonomous, from a socio and cultural point of view", thus giving Van der Merwe's contamination a horror response or ultimate abject response (Nel 2012:562). This connection of the abject and horror is explained by Creed (1993:10) as follows:

> Viewing the horror film signifies a desire not only for perverse pleasure (confronting sickening, horrific images, being filled with terror/desire for the undifferentiated) but also a desire, having taken pleasure in perversity, to throw up, throw out, eject the abject (from the safety of the spectator's seat). The horror genre offers a cleansing or purification of the abject through catharsis (Nel 2012:564). Thus, horror enables the viewer or spectator to engage with the text and fulfil any taboo desires before having them cleansed and purified (Tyler 2009:84).

Another abject concept often seen in horror is the figure of a woman. According to Creed (1993:11), the woman as a figure can be seen as abject. For the purposes of this study, this female as abject will be explored through three specific associations or categorisations.

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[56] The *District 9* aliens have access to advanced weaponry that responds only to their biological makeup. Obesandjo hopes to have access to this weaponry after he eats Van der Merwe's arm.

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The first example of why women are at times seen as abject is due to the fact that abjection is often associated with biological bodily functions such as blood, excrement, vomit and semen (Creed 1993:10). Women already have an expectation to maintain aesthetic patriarchal structures and bodily waste acts as an antithesis to what is regarded as acceptable expectations of femininity (Franco 2019:8). The height of bodily waste and specifically blood is best seen in the film *Carrie* (Kimberly Peirce 2013).

Figure 17: Van der Merwe's infected arm begins to change form*, District 9* 2009.
Screen shot by author.

Carrie is a young girl who comes from a very religious background. One could argue that, at times, religion is often contrasted with the abject because it supposedly represents the clean whereas the abject represents filth (Creed 1993: 9-10). In high school, Carrie begins menstruating for the first time thereby embodying bodily waste and specifically blood. Due to her lack of knowledge regarding her menstruation, Carrie is bullied and belittled. This culminates in Carrie being drenched in pigs' blood at the prom (Figure 18). An added level of abjection to the character Carrie is that she has telekinetic powers; when she is humiliated at the prom, she uses her powers to kill her bullies. This sees Carrie presented as the supernatural abject, the horror abject and as the self as bodily waste. Blood in particular is highlighted in the bodily waste abjection as it insinuates undertones of death and the corpse (Creed 1993:11).[57] Creed (1993:10) describes the corpse as the ultimate source of abjection, specifically within a religious setting as the corpse is not only a symbol of bodily waste but,

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[57] In addition, blood also refers to another female bodily function, specifically menstruation.

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moreover, it is also a body without a soul – an empty vessel. It, therefore, traumatically reminds us of our own materiality.

Figure 18: Carrie kills her bullies after they pour pig blood on her, *Carrie* (2013). (SSP Thinks film).

A second example of women as abject is seen in the maternal figure as a source of abjection. Not only does a pregnant woman allude to bodily waste in the act of giving birth but she is able to create life itself, which is abject in that it addresses the anxieties of patriarchal structures (Creed 1993:57). Owing to this ability, women were associated with witches long before men were, as Joseph Campbell (1972) argues. A pregnant woman was thus thought to possess a powerful form of magic (Creed 1993:74). Man's inability to produce life has the adverse effect of alienating woman and labelling her as "Other" because she is able to do what man cannot. As Creed (1993:11) explains: the "image of a woman's body, because of its maternal functions, acknowledges its 'debt to nature' and consequently is more likely to signify the abject". In addition, this maternal abjection extends beyond man and woman and addresses the archaic mother. According to Creed (1993:17), the archaic mother is responsible for the origin of life; she exists within the "primordial abyss as the point of origin and of end". This ambiguity of creation itself transfers onto women and their ability to create life. While the archaic mother is the creator of all, the maternal mother is the creator of humanity and both mothers remain abject (Creed 1993:27).

The maternal is a repeated image in horror. According to Tyler (2008:83), horror films offer their audiences "psychic relief / resolution in the form of an intense 'abject fix', which temporarily sates the raging primal need to endlessly destroy the maternal Other to whom we are in bondage". This construct of the maternal abject as horrific is seen in the film *Alien* (Ridley Scott 1974) where the maternal is shifted into a "site of an alien womb, externalized

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in the form of a deathly birth chamber of awe-inspiring proportions" (Tyler 2008:83). This alien birth chamber infects or contaminates the character Kane with an alien, which reaches its climax when the alien horrifically claws its way out of the Kane's chest cavity (Figure 19). Kane's death marks the abject as horrible, specifically returning to the idea that the usually stable man is now presented as unclean and as the corpse (Nel 2012:562).

Figure 19: Officer Kane's death, *Alien* (1979)
(Quora [sa]).

The figure Lilith can be examined in relation to the maternal as abject. This is because she is, at times, considered the Mother of Demons (Patai 1964:308). In the Jewish and Christian origin of Lilith, she is punished by God after leaving the Garden of Eden (Smith 2008:18). Smith (2008:18) notes that Lilith's punishment is the daily death of 100 of her demonic children. This conjures up the image of the infants as abject. The children are demonic and therefore straddle a binary in which demonic attributes depict the supernatural abject, whereas children depict innocence. Thus, the demonic baby or child causes an abject reaction as it traverses different binaries that sit uncomfortably next to one another. In addition, this punishment portrays characteristics of the corpse as abject, since over 100 of Lilith's infants supposedly die daily. The concept of children dying adheres to the taboo; according to Nel (2012:562), the abject is controlled by making it taboo and therefore excluding it from what is categorised as acceptable. This contributes to what Tyler (2008:81) observes when considering the abject: the maternal "has an oblique and deeply ambiguous status".

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In addition, this image of Lilith depicts the monstrous feminine as maternal. Lilith is often represented as supernatural (Osherow 2000:76). Thus, she already has an Otherness about her as she does not comply with normative boundaries. As Nel (2012:557) notes, "the boundary is central to the construction of the abject, and that which crosses or threatens to cross the border is abject."

Lastly, the third reason for the association of women with the abject resides in notions of castration anxiety. According to Sigmund Freud, man has an innate fear of women because she has the ability to castrate man with her *vagina dentata,* which translated means her vagina with teeth (Creed 1993:22).[58] On the other hand, Susan Lurie (1981:52) argues that men fear women, not because women are castrated but because they are not castrated. "The male fears woman because she is not mutilated like man might be if he were castrated; woman is physically whole, intact and in possession of all of her sexual powers" (Lurie 1981:52). Whichever argument is more accurate, as a result of the power held by womankind and its ability to castrate, man fears woman and deals with this anxiety by constructing and portraying woman as castrated within a range of "signifying practices of the film text" (Creed 1993:6). Physically, this is achieved in horror films where the woman is stabbed so many times that she looks like a wound, says Creed (1993:122). Symbolically, this is achieved when a woman is depicted as having lost all sanity and direction (Creed 1993:122). In these various ways, women are represented as abject. When examining the abject, one must consider whether it is freeing for women as it allows for a liminal and ambiguous state whereby one has the freedom to construct their own identity. However, I argue that the abject is not a kind of freedom from patriarchal control. It is not a liberating category for women. According to Tyler (2009:79):

> Kristeva develops the concept of the abject to describe and account for temporal and spatial disruptions within the life of the subject and in particular those moments when the subject experiences a frightening loss of distinction between themselves and objects or others.

Susan Pickard (2019:160) discusses the connection between women and the abject. she argues that a young woman lives "as a subject and simultaneously is alienated from her body which she views as if through the appraising male gaze". Ringrose and Walkerdine (2008:234) add that "abjection is the site of risk and contamination that any feminine subject is at the risk of slipping into". As Tyler, Pickard and Ringrose and Walkerdine argue, the abject is not an escape for women; instead, it forces her into the position of the Other. One

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[58] The *vagina dentata* belongs to the myth that female genitalia has the ability to bite off a man's phallus or penis once inside of her (Creed 1993:105). This irrational fear gives way to male anxiety that the female vagina has the power to castrate thus amplifying the male fear of castration anxiety.

can assume that the abject is mistaken for freedom because of its lack of boundaries and criteria. However, one could argue that it is that very ambiguity that becomes threatening to women as it has the potential to cause said loss of distinction between themselves and the Other (Tyler 2009:79).

In addition, it is alienating, as argued by Pickard (2019:160). As a result, women are forced onto the outskirts of normativity, which is outlined by patriarchal systems and the male gaze (Pickard 2019:160). When examining Lilith as abject, one sees how this can become problematic as it reinstates previous connotations or characteristics that cause Lilith to become the Other, on the outskirts of contemporary societal norms. As Ringrose and Walkerdine (2008:234) discuss: "abjection spirals out – it is the irrational, animalistic, sexualised, pathological constitution of the feminine, theorized from Freud to Lacan and beyond." Thus, while the abject is helpful when examining and navigating certain criteria such as liminal spaces and ambiguity, it does not assist in necessarily giving the representation of Lilith a platform or space where she can express herself or exist without garnering any negativity. The abject does pose problematic aspects that need to be evaluated when decoding certain characteristics and discourses surrounding women and specifically Lilith as a representation.

The female grotesque is a figure or trope that crosses the boundaries of both the *femme fatale* and the abject. According to Buckley (2019:4), the female grotesque exists predominantly within gothic tropes – of which *Shadowhunters* and *TCAOS* are examples. The female grotesque is further exemplified by characters such as the prostitute, the witch, the mad woman and the *femme fatale*. It is interesting to note that, according to Creed (1993:10), vampires, ghouls, zombies and witches are all figures of abjection, which attests to the close correlation between the tropes of the abject and the grotesque. For this reason, I do not regard the abject and grotesque as entirely separate tropes. "These character tropes derive from a cultural system that constructs women both as the subordinate half of a duality (man/woman) and via the dualistic image of the virgin and whore" (Buckley 2019:4). As Connelly (2003:9) argues, like the abject, the grotesque arises where it troubles an established boundary or territory. This mixture makes it difficult to define the female grotesque. Instead, one can address only certain characteristics evident in the female grotesque. According to Connelly (2003:8), "the grotesque is defined by what it does to boundaries, transgressing, merging, overflowing, destabilizing them. Put more bluntly, the grotesque is a boundary creature and does not exist except in relation to a boundary, convention or expectation."

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As argued above, the grotesque and abject are interrelated tropes that, when combined, cause ambiguity (Buckley 2019:3). Mallan (2000:23) explains that the female body as grotesque is "a mark of excess", and it may appear as an ultra-feminine character that almost looks like a pantomime. Mallan (2000:27) adds that the "out of control behaviour" of the grotesque "disrupts conventional images of the restrained female by their aggressive, often hysterical actions and by their conceiving of acts of extreme physical or emotional cruelty".

An example of the female grotesque is seen in the character Cruella DeVil from the film *101 Dalmatians* (Stephen Herek 1996). The film features the antagonist Cruella DeVil, who aims to kill and skin Dalmatian puppies to make a fur coat. Mallan (2000:31) describes Cruella as a *femme fatale*-type whose "lust replaces reason". This lust is the desire to have a fur coat made of puppy fur. Mallan (2000:32) notes that from her first entrance in the film, Cruella is depicted as an almost carnivalesque *femme fatale*, thereby closely intertwining the grotesque with the *femme fatale*. Initially the character is withheld from the audience, but then the camera reveals Cruella to the viewer bit by bit, forcing the viewer to look at her body as the camera pans upwards.

Cruella is a hyperbolic character. She has a short temper, loud voice and hysterical laugh. This out-of-control or hysterical behaviour results in the female grotesque becoming abject or Other as she challenges normative societal ideals and constructs of feminine behaviour. Mallan (2000:37) discusses how the female grotesque offers a contrasting image to more systematically accepted images of women as "the virgin, the domestic [and] the maternal". This image challenges the expected and, at times, misogynistic roles to which women are subjected. In this way, the female grotesque achieves a destabilisation and complete deconstruction of femininity "as a monolithic category" (Mallan 2000:37). Paradoxically, this Otherness, which could be deemed as a monstrosity, is what causes the fall of the grotesque in the end. Mallan (2000:37) argues that the fall of the grotesque (in *101 Dalmatians*) is "torturous and protracted, yet [it] occurs within a humorous sequence of events". This succeeds in reinforcing patriarchal systems and the "phallocentric order" (Malan 2000:37). In *101 Dalmatians* (1996), Cruella is defeated by the puppies and is comically made into a cake (Figure 20), which includes putting her into an oven and baking the cake. Cruella miraculously survives and at the end of the film Cruella has the last laugh – literally. When the police arrive at the end of the film, they announce to Cruella that they have a warrant for her arrest, to which Cruella replies deadpan, "Oh, is there something wrong?" According to Mallan (2000:41), "these violent, yet humorous antics can be viewed as embodying the spirit of carnival. The carnivalesque language and actions of the

grotesques and their companions are a departure from the norms of decency and etiquette enacted by the other wholesome characters."

Figure 20: Cruella DeVil is turned into a cake, *101 Dalmatians* (1996). Screen shot by author.

Contrastingly, while Mallan (2000) views the female grotesque as carnivalesque, Buckley (2019:9) views the female grotesque as a gothic trope that operates within the "conflicting dualisms inherent in patriarchal constructions of femininity". While Mallan (2000:37) sees the fall of the female grotesque as comical, Buckley (2019:4) argues that the female grotesque is always "moments from breath-taking flight or disastrous fall". Thus, Buckley (2019:4) suggests that the fall of the female grotesque is not comical or pantomime; instead, it is destructive and is used as a tool to return everything to a normative patriarchal system. In this manner, the fall of the female grotesque is similar to the fall of the *femme fatale* in that both of these tropes meet an untimely punishment or destruction as a means to return to the status quo, which, as discussed, is patriarchal (Buckley 2019:9).

Similar to the *femme fatale*, the female grotesque does not have a singular or even static identity, but instead she operates as "figurations of conflicting dualisms inherent in patriarchal constructions of femininity" (Buckley 2019:9). According to Buckley (2019:4), this dualism has the potential to cement itself, thereby labelling the female grotesque as troubling and ambiguous. This dualism can be compared to that of the *femme fatale*, as both

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tropes appear to "endorse feminist politics in [their] celebration of rebellious women, but it also evokes deep misogynist ideas about monstrous women" (Buckley 2019:3).

This dualism is seen in the series *Penny Dreadful* (2014–). However, in the series, instead of having one character represent the dualistic nature, two characters depict the dualism, namely Vanessa and Brona. *Penny Dreadful* (2014–) is a British-American horror series that explores supernatural myths that take place during the Victorian period in London. The character Vanessa is depicted as a beautiful and powerful clairvoyant who assists the protagonists in solving certain supernatural crimes. The character Brona is depicted as an Irish sex worker who is suffocated and reanimated by Victor Frankenstein. Once reanimated, Brona is renamed Lily Frankenstein and discovers that she now has enhanced strength, durability and is now immortal. While both characters embody the unclean and bodily waste seen in the abject, one must acknowledge that there is also a distinct difference between the two. Buckley (2019:9) observes that this difference is related to class. While Vanessa certainly embodies the monstrous, she is still adorned in beautiful gowns and has the potential to rid herself of the grotesque. According to Buckley (2019:11), "due to her upper-class whiteness, Vanessa is recuperated from grotesquerie and restored to an elevated position through a narrative of transcendence and martyrdom."

In contrast, Brona receives a less redemptive fate. She is an experiment in both society and to Frankenstein who aims to control her. As a response, Brona, "already unable to escape her bodily contexts, becomes further overdetermined when she rejects Frankenstein's makeover and chooses to become a *femme fatale*" (Buckley 2019:21). However, even though Brona retains some semblance of autonomous control, she is still operating within the female grotesque. This disjuncture in how different classes are treated is best explained by Ringrose and Walkerdine (2008:233). They ask: why is it that "bourgeois feminine characteristics […] are idealised then taken as normal through a pathologisation of the working class and particularly working-class women and mothers as threats to the moral order who must be monitored, controlled and reformed?"

It can be argued that the female grotesque does offer a certain degree of empowerment for a character or figure like Lilith, as seen by Mary Russo (1995:58). Russo (1995:58) suggests that "the image of the unruly or carnivalesque woman actually works to incite and embody popular uprisings". However, there are still facets about the trope that are problematic. As Buckley (2019) argues, the female grotesque does appear to support feminist discourses and their politics; however, the trope is equally entrenched in misogynistic constructs of what it means to be a "monstrous woman". In addition, the female grotesque woman needs to

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suffer some kind of fall, whether it be death itself or a punishment of sorts. For example, as discussed above, the character Vanessa dies and, in doing so, sheds her status as the female grotesque (Buckley 2019:11). In *101 Dalmatians* (Stephen Herek 1996), Cruella DeVil is not killed at the end of the film, but she is punished. She is arrested and her reputation is destroyed. Furthermore, she is humiliated, the Dalmatian puppies literally turn her into a cake, and she is arrested in this pantomime, thus destroying her image of a powerful, sexy, *femme fatale*-like character.

The ancient manifestation of Lilith also receives punishment. She is demonised throughout history, thus receiving a fate similar to Cruella's in that Lilith's reputation is destroyed. The biblical manifestation of Lilith is expelled from Eden for refusing to comply with normative patriarchal systems, namely submitting to Adam. Thus, while the female grotesque as a trope offers insight into the female grotesque and shows the viewer a potential space for women to explore their dualistic nature and inherent ambiguity (Buckley 2019:4), I argue that one should hesitate before considering this trope as empowering to women.

The female grotesque highlights the monstrous female and the various constructions of femininity evident within patriarchal constructs. According to Mallan (2000:14), while the female grotesque offers opposing images to supposedly normative feminine characters, the ways in which the character of the female grotesque is destroyed serves to only "reinforce the phallocentric order". As Russo (1995:59) argues, the female grotesque "perpetuates the dominance (and, in this case, misogynistic) representation of women by men".

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlined certain characteristics that Lilith potentially embodies, specifically as she relates to the three waves of feminism and postfeminism, with specific focus on postfeminism. This chapter examined the evolution of the different waves of feminism and what it means to label these feminist movements as waves. In addition, the postfeminist woman was explored with specific reference to how she interacts with contemporary popular culture and socio-political issues. It was apparent that Lilith, in some form or manifestation, applies to each wave of feminism in some manner. This is a valuable conclusion as it contributes to the potential of Lilith being considered a feminist icon.

This chapter also investigated the role of the *femme fatale* and how it has evolved throughout the years. The criteria of a *femme fatale* and to what degree Lilith complies with this criterion were also examined. One could argue that the figure Lilith is imbued with many characteristics synonymous with the *femme fatale*. Finally, this chapter explored both the

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abject and the female grotesque – two concepts that share certain similarities. It was determined that the abject and the female grotesque operate at the border between the acceptable and unacceptable, thereby producing anxiety in the viewer. This chapter has offered an investigative contextualisation of the three waves of feminism, postfeminism, the *femme fatale,* the abject and the female grotesque. These tropes and characteristics will be used to analyse the different manifestations of Lilith in the selected series in Chapter 4. Chapter 4 will focus on an in-depth analysis of how these tropes may apply to the representation of the Liliths in *Shadowhunters* and *TCAOS.* It will also look at how this reinforces – even if not unproblematically – Lilith's representation as a feminist icon in mainstream popular culture.

CHAPTER 4: CONTEXTUALISING LILITH IN SHADOWHUNTERS (2016–2019) AND THE CHILLING ADVENTURES OF SABRINA (2018–)

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 served as a contextualisation of the different portrayals and representations of Lilith in television, music, art, magazines, comic books, journals, festivals, sculpture, religious texts, folklore and mythology. The analysis of this expansive selection of texts in which she has made her appearance contributed to a better understanding of the multifaceted nature of the mythological figure Lilith. In Chapter 3, the three waves of feminism, the *femme fatale*, the abject woman and the female grotesque were examined and explored. This chapter combines the concepts and tropes outlined in Chapter 3 with the contextualisation of Lilith provided in Chapter 2 with a more specific focus on the series *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) and *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–).

To successfully complete this analysis, this chapter discusses the two series separately so that their exploration has the potential to be precise and coherent. Each section consists of a contextualisation of the chosen series in order to further expand on the selected Lilith within the series. After the series has been contextualised, the tropes and concepts evident within Chapter 3 are further explored and applied to the specific representations of Lilith. The specific tropes and concepts explored are, firstly, Lilith as a feminist and specifically a feminist icon as discussed by Osherow (2000:71). The second concept that is explored is Lilith as a potential *femme fatale;* the final trope that is explored here is Lilith as an abject/grotesque woman.[59] This chapter assists in applying the concepts and tropes explored previously. This chapter is necessary in completing the study of Lilith as a contemporary popular culture figure and what it represents. Ultimately, therefore, this analysis explores the implications of Lilith's resurfacing in contemporary popular culture.

4.2 Lilith in *Shadowhunters*: a contextualisation

Shadowhunters is a television series that aired from 2016–2019. The series is based on *The Mortal Instruments* book series that features six novels written by Cassandra Clare. However, the television series and book series plots differ considerably at times.[60] Ed Decter

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[59] As argued in Chapter 3, the abject and the grotesque share many similarities. Most notably, both trouble and transgress boundaries and normative conventions. Following Buckley (2019:2), I understand these concepts to be interrelated and, therefore, do not distinguish between them in the analysis of the television series.

[60] The books were written in the following order: *City of Bones* (2007*), City of Ashes* (2008*), City of Glass* (2009*), City of Fallen Angels* (2011*), City of Lost Souls* (2012*)* and *City of Heavenly Fire* (2014*).*

was the showrunner of Season 1 of *Shadowhunters*. However, due to a disagreement in how the show should progress and the demographic that the show should target,[61] Todd Slavkin and Darren Swimmer took over from Decter as the new showrunners in the middle of Season 2. The series has had multiple directors, but the main director was Matthew Hastings. The show was predominantly directed by men. This is important to note as it could have influenced the way in which women are represented in the show. As discussed in Chapter 3, this consideration alludes to what Farrimond (2018:8) refers to as Hollywood's own gendered history and what that implies.

The television series itself is based on a fictional world, called the Shadow world, that merges with the real-world. Within this world there are supernatural creatures that live among the mundanes.[62] These supernatural creatures are divided into two categories: the Downworlders and the Nephilim or Shadowhunters. The Downworlders comprise supernatural creatures, namely the werewolves, vampires, warlocks and seelies who have demon blood in their veins.[63] The Nephilim or Shadowhunters are warriors with angel blood in their veins. They protect the Shadow world and ensure that demons do not cause any harm to the mundanes.

The plot centres around a group of Shadowhunters and Downworlders in New York City. Clary Fray (played by Katherine McNamara) is the protagonist of the series. Clary is unaware of her lineage as a Shadowhunter until her mother Jocelyn (played by Maxim Roy) is kidnapped by men who work for her father Valentine Morgenstern (played by Alan van Sprang). Valentine is a prominent antagonist throughout the series, with plans to rid the human world of demons. However, in doing so he would kill countless innocent Downworlders. Season 1 predominantly revolves around Clary being introduced to the Shadow world by Jace Herondale[64] (played by Dominic Sherwood), Alec Lightwood (played by Matthew Daddario) and his sister Isabelle Lightwood (played by Emeraude Toubia). Clary's quest is to rescue her mother and destroy her father. Her 'mundane' best friend,

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[61] Cassandra Clare's novels are written for a predominantly female teen demographic. Ed Decter supposedly wanted to reinvent the series so that it appealed to the teen demographic and took on the role of action/sci-fi more than teen fantasy (Walker 2017.) The books, much like the series, are aimed at a teen and young adult audience who enjoy the fantasy genre.

[62] In *Shadowhunters* human beings are referred to as mundanes. A mundane is a term given to humans who do not possess any supernatural abilities. It is coined by the supernatural community.

[63] Seelies can be likened to faeries and are liminal because they are created or born with both angel and demon blood in their veins. The gives them enhanced beauty and dark malevolence.

[64] Jace becomes a love interest of Clary's, which, as it will later become apparent, is significant for the analysis of Lilith.

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Simon Lewis (played by Alberto Rosende), is always at her side. As a result of being put in the line of danger in Season 1, Simon is turned into a vampire.

Season 2 introduces a new character called Sebastian Verlac (played by Will Tudor). Sebastian is an apparent Shadowhunter, from the Paris Shadowhunter Institute, hoping to join the New York Institute.[65] As the season progresses, it is revealed that Sebastian is actually named Jonathan. Jonathan is the long-lost brother of Clary. In order to find his sister, Jonathan assumes the physical persona of the real Sebastian Verlac. Throughout Season 2, the viewer learns that Valentine had experimented on his children when they were infants. Initially Valentine suggests that Jace, Clary's love interest, is Clary's brother. However, it is soon revealed that Valentine had killed Jace's real father and had posed as his father in order to raise him and conduct experiments on him. These experiments included injecting Valentine's children with either angel blood or demon blood. While Clary and Jace were injected with angel blood, Sebastian was injected with demonic blood, and specifically, the greater demon Lilith's blood. At the end of Season 2, Jace murders Jonathan. With his dying breath, Johnathan summons his non-biological mother, Lilith (Figure 21). This context of Season 1 and Season 2 was necessary in order to understand the character Lilith (played by Anna Hopkins), who features prominently in Season 3.

Season 3, Episode 1, introduces Lilith as the antagonist of the season. Her purpose for returning to earth is to bring her non-biological son, Jonathan, back to life through demonic necromancy. According to the series, Lilith is able to bear only demons, not human children. As a result, this has left her desperate to be a mother. When Jocelyn conceived Jonathan, Valentine requested demonic blood from Lilith as she is a greater demon and therefore has immense power. Lilith willingly gives her blood, knowing that it is too powerful and will corrupt Jonathan, who she now sees as her son as her blood runs through his veins just as a mother's blood would. When Jonathan is eleven, he kills a neighbourhood boy. As a consequence, Valentine sends him to Lilith. Therefore, Jonathan grows up in Edom, where Lilith systematically mentally abuses him.[66] In Season 2, Jonathan escapes from Edom to find his sister Clary and, as mentioned above, is killed.

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[65] In the Shadow world there are institutions situated in all major cities. These institutions act as safe havens and training grounds for all Shadowhunters.
[66] While Edom is featured in the Bible as an ancient kingdom located between Jordan and Israel, within the Shadowhunter world, Edom is the name for hell.

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Figure 21: First appearance of Lilith, *Shadowhunters*, 2016–2019.
Season 2, Episode 20.
Screen shot by author.

Season 3 portrays Lilith as a vengeful antagonist, a demon who will stop at nothing to raise her non-biological son from the dead. In Season 3, Episode 10, Lilith is successful in bringing Jonathan back to life. However, her victory is short-lived when she is banished back to Edom shortly after Jonathan's resurrection. After her banishment, Lilith becomes a minor threat to the main characters and plotline. Thereafter, she featured only in Season 3, Episode 16, where Jonathan attempts to kill Lilith. She is saved from death when she is summoned to earth by the Shadowhunters. Lilith's final appearance in *Shadowhunters* (Todd Slavkin 2016–2019) is in Season 3, Episode 21. In this episode the Shadowhunters venture to Edom. Here, Lilith tries to kill the Shadowhunters and, in turn, Lilith is killed by the female Shadowhunter Isabelle (Figure 25).

4.2.1 A comparison between Lilith in *Shadowhunters* and Lilith in earlier contexts

When contextualising and comparing the *Shadowhunters* Lilith with the mythological figure of Lilith, there are certain characteristics and historical mythologies that the two representations share. It is evident that characteristics from Lilith's various mythological and religious representations are employed in the series and applied to the *Shadowhunters* Lilith. In *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019), Lilith predominantly shares historical characteristics with the biblical and Jewish manifestations of Lilith as outlined by Smith (2008:18). In addition, according to Cassandra Clare and Joshua Lewis (2002:66), the character Lilith in the series *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) closely follows the origin story of the mythological Lilith as

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represented in *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* (eighth to tenth centuries B.C.E.).[67] To recap briefly, this origin story positions the figure Lilith as the first wife of the biblical Adam (Smith 2008:18). According to Smith (2008:18), this biblical manifestation of Lilith refused to submit to Adam and, after pronouncing the Tetragrammaton, flew from Eden.

Smith (2008:18) notes that God sent three angels to retrieve Lilith, but Lilith refused to return. As punishment for not returning, God promised to kill 100 of Lilith's demonic children every day. Lilith agreed to these terms and, according to mythology, still serves out her punishment (Smith 2008:18). However, Clare and Lewis (2002:66) offer a similar origin story through a different lens. This lens is perhaps used to position Lilith as an antagonist, as seen in Clare and Lewis's (2002:225) description of Lilith as: "[...] mother […] of evil to come, the paragon of corruption and sin. [She was] created when the world was created, and roamed freely, creating other, lesser demons, sowing chaos."[68]

Clare and Lewis (2002:66) argue that "for [Lilith's] disobedience [in submitting to Adam] she was punished by being made unable to bear children." This inability to give birth to human children contributes to the desperation exhibited by the *Shadowhunters* Lilith when she brings her non-biological son back to life. The desire to have children and be positioned as a mother is seen in the following monologue from Lilith in Season 3, Episode 4:

> For thousands of years, I was unable to bear a child, but then
> Valentine came to me and he asked for MY blood for his unborn son.
> But I knew that my boy would be far too powerful for a mere
> Shadowhunter to raise. So, he eventually sent him to me, and I loved
> him with all my heart and I never knew if he loved me back until you
> killed him. When he called for me with his final breath … you will bring
> me 33 disciples so that my son can be reborn and then I will destroy
> you, like you destroyed him.

Another biblical parallel between the mythological Lilith and the *Shadowhunters* Lilith is found in the name given to hell, which is referred to as Edom in the series. In Isaiah 34, the

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[67] Clare and Lewis wrote a book called the *Shadowhunters Codex* (2002). This book is a fictional field guide for certain characters and plot points within the *Shadowhunters* novels and TV series. It provides valuable insight into the creation of the *Shadowhunters* Lilith as it details her fictional origin and exposes certain characteristics evident within the character in the novels, which are not always obvious in the television series.

[68] According to Clare and Lewis (2002:67) Samael is a greater demon within the *Shadowhunter* world. He is "thought to have been the great Serpent by which humanity was tempted and fell from grace" (Clare & Lewis 2002:67). In *Shadowhunters*, Samael was Lilith's consort, with whom she created and gave birth to demons. According to Gaines (2008:6), in the Jewish history of Lilith, Samael married Lilith after she was expelled from Eden. Patai (1964:308) discusses that God feared the power shared between Lilith and the greater demon Samael. As a result, God castrated Samael, leaving Lilith to seek out sexual relations with human men.

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prophet details the fall of Edom. Apparently, Edom was a godless kingdom punished by God or Yahweh (Bridge 2010:88). According to Gaines (2001:2), when God had completed punishing Edom, only the scavengers and predators were left in the desert land. Among these scavengers was the screech owl, a term given to represent Lilith as discussed in Chapter 2. Within the *Shadowhunters* world, Edom is the name given to one of the reams of hell that Lilith was banished to (Figure 22). This religious context aids in supplementing what the character Lilith found within *Shadowhunters* means. They position her as a character imbued with a rich historical background that surpasses the television series and connects her with the multiple representations of the figure Lilith. The final parallel that is discussed here is the metaphor of Adam's rib. In the Old Testament Bible, [Genesis 2:21–22], God takes a rib from Adam to create Eve:

> So, the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he
> slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh.
> And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a
> woman and brought her to the man.

This rib analogy is evident in *Shadowhunters* when Lilith acquires a rib from Valentine, the biological father of Jonathan. In Season 3, Episode 9 of *Shadowhunters* (Matthew Hastings 2016–2019), Lilith sends one of her subservient followers to retrieve Valentine's rib from his corpse. This use of the metaphor of creating life with Adam's rib is positioned as a macabre and darker parallel that will be explored further in the section on the abject in this chapter.

Figure 22: Edom, *Shadowhunters*, 2016-2019.
Season 3, Episode 21.
Screen shot by author.

4.3 Lilith in *Shadowhunters* as a potential feminist

According to Smith (2008:8) and Patai (1964:269), both the ancient and contemporary Liliths can be considered a feminist. Smith even goes so far as to argue that Lilith has the potential to be interpreted as a feminist icon. This section will explore the complex ways in which the *Shadowhunters* Lilith can be considered a feminist. According to Patai (1964:269), Lilith as a mythological figure has the potential to be positioned as a feminist as a result of her defiance against God and therefore, by implication, patriarchy. Patai (1964:269) argues that Lilith's refusal to submit to Adam had the dual result of both rejecting and challenging patriarchy. This repudiation of Eden, God and Adam was further cemented when the biblical representation of Lilith refused to return to Eden with the three angels, as discussed by Smith (2008:18). The direct challenge to and dismissal of patriarchal authority is of concern to all feminisms. It parallels characteristics evident within the second wave of feminism.

Specifically, Lilith embodies characteristics that Gray and Boddy (2010:375) refer to as radical feminism. This is acutely evident in Lilith's desire to develop her own "totalizing discourse as a way of supplanting the dominant male discourse", which is the particular way in which Gray and Boddy (2010:375) describe radical feminists. However, while Lilith's mythological history illustrates certain parallels with the second wave, one cannot ignore the fact that Lilith does not comply with the second wave's rejection of femininity. As Ferriss and Young (2006:89) argue, the second wave criticised the use of feminine sexuality as it apparently merely "perpetuat[ed] women's sexual subordination to men". Accordingly, conventionalised feminine beauty is not highly regarded by second wavers. In contrast, in all her incarnations, Lilith is always depicted as beautiful, a trait that is always emphasised in her various depictions.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Lewis (2011:7) states that Lilith's physical representations throughout history are just as diverse as her crimes against humanity, however, her immense beauty is the one aspect that stays static. The emphasis on her feminine beauty can be paralleled to characteristics found within the third wave of feminism and, more specifically, postfeminism. However, if the mythological manifestation of Lilith does represent a figure that actively challenged God and patriarchy (Patai 1964:269), then this contemporary manifestation of Lilith does not necessarily abandon second-wave characteristics as seen in the third wave and postfeminist movement. By this I am not suggesting that the third wave and postfeminist movement support patriarchal systems. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, the third wave of feminism and the postfeminist movement aimed to do away with the boundaries separating men and women. They wished

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to coexist together. Whereas the second wave of feminism desired to place more focus on uplifting women, here men were not considered in second-wave feminist ideals and politics. Thus, when I say that Lilith's desire to completely reject her patriarchal figure and counterpart (namely God and Adam) exhibits second-wave nuances, I am referring to the fact that the second wave of feminism largely rejected men and patriarchal systems.

The third wave of feminism chooses to position sexuality and femininity above masculinity and the rejection of femininity, which was prominent within the second wave of feminism. Gillis et al. (2007:xxi) argue that the third wave of feminism was eager to define their feminism as something different from the previous feminisms. According to Ferriss and Young (2006:89) this was exacerbated by the fact that this group wanted to be seen as "lusty feminists". Lilith as a mythological figure embodies beauty and displays an active need to have sexual relations. This is seen in multiple representations of Lilith. As Patai (1964:308) discusses, as seen in Chapter 2, in the Jewish depiction of Lilith, Samael – her husband – is castrated by God. As a result, Lilith seeks sexual relations with human men to fulfil her sexual needs. Similarly, Martínez-Oña and Muñoz-Muñoz (2015:613) argue that the contemporary manifestation of Lilith in popular culture is represented as an oversexualised, dangerous woman who seduces men and is driven purely by sexual desire. These qualities do not comply with the characteristics outlined by the feminists of the second wave, however. This alludes to the fact that Lilith as a representation in visual culture imbues qualities found in the second and third wave of feminism as well as the postfeminist movement. This contributes to the argument that Lilith is an ambiguous figure who is difficult to actively categorise into one wave of feminism or one specific trope.

While the mythological Lilith exhibits characteristics from both the second and third waves of feminism, she also embodies characteristics and traits found within the postfeminist movement. One could argue that the mythological Lilith is reinvented in *Shadowhunters,* where her iconographic details fit the postfeminist agenda and depiction of women. Postfeminism is an ambiguous movement that is difficult to directly define due to the fact that there are so many contrasting opinions and facts surrounding it, as I demonstrated in Chapter 3. According to Gill (2007:162), postfeminism predominantly encompasses the idea of freedom and gratifying one's own desires through the ability of choice.

Choice plays a large role in presenting postfeminist women as autonomous agents. Lilith as a mythological figure represents the ability to choose her own destiny. This is because after Lilith has been expelled from Eden, she is granted liberty (Smith 2008:18). While her liberty does come at a price, specifically the death of 100 of her demon children every day, Lilith

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still fits a postfeminist lens of what it means to be free. I refer to this freedom as a "postfeminist lens" because postfeminism is often criticised for considering itself as free, while still very much actively perpetuating the patriarchal order (Lazar 2009b:374).

As already discussed, within the series *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019)*,* Lilith shares characteristics of the feminist mythological figure Lilith. Although the *Shadowhunters* Lilith does not portray many characteristics evident within the second wave of feminism, the *Shadowhunters* manifestation of Lilith does challenge patriarchal structures to a certain degree. This is specifically seen in Season 3, Episode 9 of *Shadowhunters* (Matthew Hastings 2016–2019), where the character Heidi (played by Tessa Mossey) is talking with Lilith. Heidi is a vampire who is in love with the character Simon. Simon, however, rejects Heidi due to her volatile nature. Lilith makes use of Heidi's love for Simon to distract the Shadowhunter team that is attempting to locate Lilith and her hideout. Even though Lilith's intentions are manipulative, her response to Heidi, as seen below, shows traces of the second wave of feminism. Specifically, it has nuances of radical feminism, as suggested by Gray and Boddy (2010:375), who point out that radical feminism does not recognise men as feminists but instead regard most men and male interactions with suspicion. Lilith's exchange with Heidi in Season 3, Episode 9, is particularly illuminating:

> Heidi: He thought that I was out of control …
>
> Lilith: … as opposed to under his?
>
> My ex once told me the same thing and I wanted to change to please him … just like you. But then I realised that no woman should ever kneel to a man.

In addition to these radical feminist traits, the character Lilith in *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) exhibits qualities that both reject patriarchal systems while attempting to find a successful way to interact with men in society. These qualities are prominent within the third wave of feminism and the postfeminist movement.

Another third wave and postfeminist quality worth noting here is how the women of this movement chose to readopt a sexualised and feminine aesthetic image. According to Gill (2007:147), postfeminists present themselves in a relatively sexualised and objectified manner. Gill (2007:147) continues to argue that within the postfeminist movement, the sexy female body becomes a woman's key source of identity. According to Gill (2007:153–154) and, as discussed in Chapter 3, this produces two different strains of postfeminist women. These are the sexualised woman who uses her femininity to gain power and the sexualised

woman who uses her femininity because it "feels good". The *Shadowhunters* Lilith can be considered as a sexualised postfeminist representation that incorporates both of these different strains because she uses her sexuality to gain power and seems to do so simply because she wants to.

The *Shadowhunters* Lilith is visually represented as a postfeminist figure. She wears tight clothing and often wears darker, dramatic makeup that draws attention to the contours of her body and accentuates her beauty (Figure 23). Her outfits are made from expensive fabrics such as velvet and silk. In addition, her wardrobe consists of intense colours such as maroon, gold and emerald, which often signify royalty. These expensive outfits allude to what Lazar (2009b:372) refers to as entitled femininity. Entitled femininity has its origin in consumer culture.

Figure 23: Lilith awaiting feedback from her minions, Shadowhunters, 2016–2019.
Season 3, Episode 9.
Screenshot by author.

As Lazar (2009b:372) argues, the postfeminist sees the ability to consume as a right, conveniently ignoring that in this way female liberty becomes a marketable commodity. According to Kissling (2013:492), "consumerism is embedded in postfeminism." Thus, based on Kissling's (2013) observation, a female character that is inextricably connected to consumerism also embodies postfeminist characteristics. Hence, the fact that the

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Shadowhunters Lilith is always dressed in expensive clothing only contributes to the argument that this manifestation of Lilith is imbued with multiple postfeminist traits.

When investigating the *Shadowhunters* Lilith as a potential postfeminist figure, one must examine this manifestation of Lilith as a sexualised character. Postfeminism is notable for its ambiguous position regarding sexualisation, objectification and agency as discussed by Gill (2007:147). The *Shadowhunters* Lilith uses her sexuality as a means to gain power. When she is required to give additional strength to her followers, she does so with a kiss. This is seen when she kisses Jace in Season 3, Episode 6 (Figure 24).

Figure 24: Lilith kisses Jace, *Shadowhunters,* 2016–2019. Season 3 Episode 6. Screen shot by author.

4.4. Lilith in *Shadowhunters* as a *femme fatale*

According to Farrimond (2018:1), the *femme fatale* is one of the oldest enduring characters. It is very difficult to directly define the *femme fatale* as there is a multitude of different definitions and opinions surrounding the trope. As discussed in Chapter 3, Gillis (2005:84) argues that the *femme fatale* is not meant to be understood as an archetype; rather, she is a collection of different tropes and traits that emerge from discussions about women and power. It is through these tropes and characteristics that one is able to begin to define the elusive *femme fatale* as I did in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3.

To briefly recap, the *femme fatale* is known as the dangerous woman. She is a seductive temptress whose only aim is to see the downfall of the hero (Yarbrough 1999:52). The noir *femme fatale* was created during WWII as a reflection of male anxiety at the time. As Snyder (2001:8) argues, there was a growing fear that women would not want to return to the private or domestic sphere after the men returned from the war. As a result, popular culture and specifically film began to feature a character who became known as the dangerous woman. According to Snyder (2001:8), the dangerous woman was a seductress who derailed the hero's journey. Snyder (2001:9) continues that the dangerous woman was always disarmed and vanquished or punished at the end of the film. The eventual demise of this character was a foreboding threat to ambitious women who desired to move away from the domestic sphere. However, paradoxically, the *femme fatale* or dangerous woman was one of the few female roles that was read by female viewers as an active character that was powerful and dangerous. As Yarbrough (1999:57) discusses, the *femme fatale* is a character who does not sacrifice her beauty or femininity in the name of power. Instead, Yarbrough (1999:57) continues, she manages to retain both power and beauty.

This unwillingness to neither forego power for beauty nor beauty for power is well-suited to postfeminist ideals. Specifically, this *femme fatale* illustrates what Gill (2007:153–154) refers to as the sexualised woman who uses her femininity to gain power. Because the current feminist movement or "sensibility" (Gill 2007:163) is postfeminism, there is the potential to assume that the *femme fatale* has transformed from being a threat to women in the 1940s to being an emblematic figure for certain strands of feminism (Chapter 3). Both the *femme fatale* and the postfeminist share similar characteristics.

Lilith in *Shadowhunters* undeniably embodies certain qualities and characteristics of the *femme fatale.* Lilith is introduced in Season 3 as an utterly dangerous woman. She is sexualised and makes use of her femininity to garner power. As seen in Chapter 3, Yarbrough (1999:52) states that the *femme fatale* is best described as a gorgeous woman

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who is innately corrupt. She is someone who uses her beauty and sexuality as a means of power. Ultimately, she remains an evil character or figure that is equally mysterious and powerful (Yarbrough 1999:52). When examining this quote in correlation to the *Shadowhunters* Lilith, one sees that this representation of Lilith can be thoroughly applied to the arguments made by Yarbrough (1999:52). The *Shadowhunters* Lilith is a beautiful woman who is ultimately corrupt. This is seen in Season 3, Episode 2, where Lilith pollutes the ley lines of New York with her demonic energy.[69] These polluted lines cause power surges that affect the magic of warlocks and witches.

In addition, when analysing Yarbrough's (1999:52) quote in relation to the *Shadowhunters* Lilith, one can deduce that this Lilith uses her sexuality as a weapon. This is seen in Season 3, Episode 6 of *Shadowhunters* (Alexis Ostrander 2016–2019), where Lilith uses her kiss as a means of distributing power (Figure 24). Finally, *Shadowhunters* Lilith is "powerful and strong while evil", thereby accurately fitting Yarbrough's (1999:52) description of the *femme fatale*. Lilith is the antagonist for the majority of Season 3. Even when she is not a primary antagonist, she still remains a threat. Her power is exhibited by the fact that she is near-indestructible as there is only one way to kill her.[70] Throughout Season 3, Lilith exhibits characteristics and qualities of the *femme fatale*. Even in her death, Lilith still embodies the *femme fatale*. This is due to the fact that a *femme fatale* is required to fall or be killed in order to retain the status quo. As discussed in Chapter 3,

Doane (1991:2–3) argues that under patriarchal rule, the *femme fatale* is situated as evil and is habitually killed off or punished, which is not a feminist goal, but is rather a symptom of the anxieties of men. In *Shadowhunters* (Todd Slavkin 2016–2019), Lilith is dramatically killed near the series finale, where Lilith turns into a greater demon and is destroyed by heavenly fire (Figure 25). After Lilith's death, a semblance of order is restored. These qualities evident in the *Shadowhunters* Lilith contribute to the fact that, as a character, she could be considered as a *femme fatale*. While Lilith is imbued with multiple progressive and supposedly liberated postfeminist requirements, the *Shadowhunters* Lilith must, in the end, still conform to heteronormative order and be subjected to the ultimate punishment of death.

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[69] In *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) the ley lines are invisible lines that are scattered across the globe. These lines are powered by mystical energy and, within the context of the series, warlocks and witches draw power from them.
[70] The only way to kill Lilith is by harnessing pure heavenly fire, an angelic weapon. In Season 3, Episode 20, Lilith is killed with heavenly fire by Isabelle Lightwood.

Figure 25: Lilith is killed by Isabelle Lightwood*, Shadowhunters*, 2016–2019.
Season 3, Episode 21.
Screen shot by author.

4.5 Lilith in *Shadowhunters* as an abject woman and the female grotesque

Within the series *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019), Lilith shows signs of abjection, specifically of the abject as food loathing and woman as the abject, which explores motherhood as an abject construct and bodily waste as abject. Finally, Lilith shows signs of the abject manifested in castration anxiety. Throughout Season 3, Lilith acts as the antagonist. Initially, she is introduced as the demon that was summoned by Valentine. Valentine asks for her blood to strengthen his unborn child and potentially give him demonic powers. Before Lilith has even been established as a character within the series, she already conforms to the notion of bodily waste as a source of the abject when she gives her blood to an unborn child. Secondly, she decides that since this child (Jonathan) now has her blood running through his veins, she is his rightful mother. This repeats the idea that when a woman is represented as monstrous, it is usually in relation to motherhood or reproduction, as Creed (1993:47–48) argues.

This version of Lilith goes one step further within the realm of abjection because she is unable to have children, only demonic offspring. Her connection to Jonathan as her (quasi-biological) child crosses the boundaries of the abject and leaves the viewer feeling uncomfortable since Lilith is obsessed with him, due to her inability to create human life herself. Throughout the season, Lilith embodies the site of the abject Other. To procure

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minions to assist her with the resurrection of her son, she feeds them her blood. This alone demonstrates the abject fascination and repulsion with bodily waste, and in particular blood, as abject and it touches on the archaic mother as Lilith's minions refer to her as "mother".

Blood is again seen in association with Lilith when she repeatedly cuts the necks of her minions and instructs them to bleed into the altar housing her son's corpse (Figure 26). This is the corpse she plans to resurrect demonically. The final demonstration of abject behaviour is seen in Lilith's symbolic representation of the fear of castration. This is seen when she manipulates the male protagonist of the series and brainwashes him into becoming her foot soldier, a human tool she uses to enact her plans (Season 3, Episode 10). However, it is important to note that this version of Lilith dualistically castrates and is castrated, symbolically. According to Creed (1993:122), "woman is transformed into a psychotic monster because she has been symbolically castrated; that is, she feels she has been robbed unjustly of her rightful destiny." The Lilith in this manifestation comes to earth only to resurrect her son, who was murdered by the protagonists of the series. Her purpose is to supposedly rectify an injustice and enact revenge on the parties she deems guilty. This version of Lilith turns into an arguably psychotic monster (Figure 27) who feels that she has in fact been robbed of her rightful destiny, specifically motherhood (Creed 1993:122). This hysteria is best presented when Lilith loses her non-biological son Jonathan and in turn brings him back from the dead.

Figure 26: Lilith performing a blood-sacrifice, *Shadowhunters*, 2016–2019.
Season 3, Episode 3.
Screen shot by author.

While specific instances or manifestations of Lilith have been analysed and compared to the abject thus far, it is important to address how the figure Lilith embodies the abject. According to Smith (2001:26), "as the killer of children, Lilith subverts the role of women as mother; she becomes the abject mother."[71] In addition, Lilith is abject because she represents the male fear of castration. Both figuratively and psychologically, in her previous mythological, religious, artistic and literary incarnations, she has been feared by men as a temptress that usurps patriarchal and male power.[72] Lilith denied not only Adam, but also God when she refused to return to Eden (Smith 2001:18). Symbolically, this is the ultimate rejection of patriarchy. Thus, it serves as a figurative castration of patriarchal systems as a whole. Another figurative manner in which Lilith embodies the fear of castration is seen in the act of stealing men's semen while they sleep or being the cause of their wet dreams (Martínez-Oña & Muñoz-Muñoz 2015:613). The act of stealing a man's semen could symbolise the act of stealing their virility and thereby psychologically castrating them.

Figure 27: Lilith reacts to the death of her minions, *Shadowhunters*, 2016–2019.
Season 3, Episode 3.
Screen shot by author.

Thus, one can see that the *Shadowhunters* Lilith exhibits many abject characteristics. Much like how that which is abject is ambiguous by its very nature by crossing territories and boundaries while attempting to distinguish itself within liminal spaces (Creed 1993:14), Lilith has been seen to embody these qualities. As Smith (2001:27) explains: "[Lilith] is abject and 'Otherly', and her very nature as the undominated, undeterred, surviving female, symbolises

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[71] The version of Lilith that Smith (2001:18) is referring to is found in a Jewish and biblical context and does not necessarily represent all manifestations of Lilith, but it certainly does apply to Lilith in *Shadowhunters* (2016-2019).

[72] As explored in Chapter 2, Lilith became a prominent muse for artists of the Pre-Raphaelite era. It is paintings such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* (1866–1868) that assisted in strongly forming Lilith's visual characteristics.

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their ideals for how modern women should be." In this sense, then, Lilith is a figure of potential empowerment and agency.

As discussed in Chapter 2, whether she is killing babies or giving birth to demons, historically, Lilith is associated with childbirth in an utterly monstrous manner (Smith 2001:26). It is important to note that Smith (2001:46) argues that, historically, strong women have the potential to be turned into demons in male-dominated societies. Smith (2001:26) continues that representations of Lilith demonstrate a "pattern of demonised female figures across the world". When examining Lilith and her connection with childbirth, it can be argued that Lilith embodies the abject maternal figure. In addition, it can be argued that Lilith embodies qualities associated with the female grotesque. The female grotesque shares certain qualities with the abject, such as ambiguity and a liminal Otherness that exists in-between concepts and binaries. As Connelly (2003:9) argues, the grotesque only arises when it troubles an established boundary or territory.

As seen in Chapter 3, the grotesque female body is a mark of ambiguity and navigates' boundaries. Similarly, Russo (1995:58) argues that "in liminal states, thus, temporary loss of boundaries tends to redefine social frames". Thus, according to Connelly (2003) and Russo (1995), the female grotesque trope is grounded in an attempt to engage with the female body. According to Mallan (2000:23), the female body as grotesque is a "mark of excess"; it is an ultra-feminine character that almost looks like a pantomime. The female grotesque is carnivalesque. Lilith in *Shadowhunters* displays the grotesque as spectacle or excess. As Mallan (2000:26) argues, this excess can take the form of "too much make-up, outrageous clothes, loud laughter and behaviour, which flaunts the limits of physicality, sobriety and sexuality". The *Shadowhunters* Lilith is always adorned with rich fabrics and beautiful jewellery (Figure 23). She is always depicted with darker make-up on, which includes heavily lined eyes and a dark red lipstick.

Mallan (2000:30) discusses how the female grotesque exhibits exaggerated unconventional bouts of emotion and, at times, aggression. Mallan (2000:30) continues that this near-hysterical display of the grotesque merges with the abject and causes ambiguity. This hysteria, as discussed above, is often seen in the behaviour of the *Shadowhunters* Lilith. In Season 3, Episode 7 of *Shadowhunters* (Joshua Butler 2016–2019), Lilith details her plan to bring back Jonathan. She discusses this plan with Jace, a protagonist that Lilith has brainwashed. In the beginning of her discussion, Lilith appears composed. However, at the end of the discussion, Lilith becomes incensed and details how she plans to kill Jace and his friends once her plan is carried through. This almost pantomime-like switch between calm

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and aggravation displays Lilith as the female grotesque. This is seen by the following exchange between Lilith and her brainwashed minion Jace:

Lilith: Now go and find me my last virtuous mundane.

Jace: I will.

Lilith: Rise … I know you're in there, Jace Herondale. I know you're suffering. When I'm done using you, you will return to find your friends dead and your world on fire, burning at the hands of the son you so *callously took from me!* And when you scream and beg for death, I will smile. Now kiss me, you will need your energy.

During this scene, Lilith shifts between different emotions. This display concludes with a kiss (Figure 24). Another example of this pantomime form of expression is seen when two of Lilith's foot soldiers are killed in Season 3, Episode 6. When the minions are killed, the camera quickly switches to Lilith screaming in agony. She is the only person present in the shot (Figure 27). Her hair flies around her dramatically; she breaks the fourth wall and looks at the audience while she screams.

As I have shown above, the *Shadowhunters* Lilith exhibits qualities of what I refer to as a postfeminist *femme fatale*. She is sexually alluring, beautiful and cunning, and she threatens the masculinity of the men who encounter her. Moreover, in keeping with her mythological, Christian and Judaic ancestors, she is represented as a wily demoness and displays abject qualities. Her grotesque attributes include her ambiguous age that sits between youthfulness and middle age. In addition, the *Shadowhunters* Lilith is depicted with dramatic makeup and expensive clothes, thus displaying excess. Finally, the *Shadowhunters* Lilith's hyperbolic personality switches between hysteria and an almost cold or harsh indifference. This multifaceted nature depicts conflicting dualisms, which allude to certain patriarchal constructions of femininity (Buckley 2019:9).

4.6 Lilith in *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–): a contextualisation

The *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* is a Netflix television series that was created by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa and has been running since 2018. The series is based on the comic book titled *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* and published in 2014. Sabrina is relatively well known as she was also a character featured in the Archie comic book world. While Sabrina is easily recognisable within the Archie comic book world, Lilith is a new addition. However, one can argue that while Lilith is not a familiar character within the Archie comic book world,

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she does feature within the Marvel comic book world. As discussed in Chapter 2, Lilith was initially introduced as the daughter of Dracula in the 1975 comic *The Haunt of Horror* and has featured in a number of different comic book series since then, as outlined in Chapter 2 (Dennis & Dennis 2014:83). The character Lilith (played by Michelle Gomez) in *TCAOS* is present in every single episode to date. This has allowed the *TCAOS* character Lilith an opportunity to experience substantial character development throughout the series that was not available to the *Shadowhunters* Lilith.

The series *TCAOS* is about the protagonist Sabrina Spellman (played by Kiernan Shipka). Sabrina is a teenage half-witch who lives with her two aunts Hilda (played by Lucy Davis) and Zelda (played by Miranda Otto) who are also witches, and her cousin Ambrose (played by Chance Perdomo) who is a warlock. All four of them live in a house that doubles as a mortuary. In Season 1,[73] Sabrina must make a decision to stay with her mortal friends or sign her name (and soul) away to the Dark Lord in the Book of the Beast.[74] Lilith is introduced at the beginning of the series, in Season 1, Episode 1, as a handmaiden to the Dark Lord. Lilith's task is to ensure that Sabrina signs her name in the Book of the Beast and completes certain tasks in order to fulfil a prophecy. In Season 1, Episode 1, the viewer is introduced to Mary Wardwell who is a teacher at the Greendale high school, Baxter High.[75] Mary Wardwell, or Ms Wardwell as she is known by her students, dresses very blandly and conservatively. Her shirt is buttoned up to the collar; she wears thick glasses and has only a little if any make-up on (Figure 28).

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[73] Netflix refers to the different seasons of *TCAOS* as parts. For example, instead of naming the first season as Season 1, it is referred to as Part 1. For the sake of consistency, this study will refer to the different seasons as Season 1, Season 2 and Season 3.
[74] The Book of the Beast is a comprehensive register of all the witches and warlocks who have signed their souls away to the Dark Lord.
[75] Greendale is the fictional town where *TCAOS* takes place.

Figure 28: First appearance of Mary Wardwell, *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina,* 2018–. Season 1, Episode 1. Screen shot by author.

One night, as Mary Wardwell is driving home from a film, she notices a young lady on the side of the road. The young lady is barely dressed and is clearly in need of assistance. Being a kind person, Mary Wardwell offers the young lady a lift as well as a place to stay for the night. Once home, in an attempt to make small talk, Mary asks the young lady what happened to her. The young woman responds that "the woods did it" (Season 1, Episode 1). Little to Mary's knowledge, the young woman is Lilith in search of Sabrina Spellman. Once the woman, through careful interrogation, clarifies that Sabrina is a student at Mary Wardwell's school, she violently kills Mary Wardwell by stabbing her in the neck with scissors and assumes Mary's physical likeness through a magic spell and shapeshifting.

Once Lilith successfully mimics Mary Wardwell's form, she begins to impersonate her entirely and assumes Mary Wardwell's life. Initially, Lilith, as Mary Wardwell, assumes the role of a mortal teacher with a soft spot for Sabrina. However, the true nature of her intentions is soon revealed to the viewer. It is established early within Season 1 that Lilith is manipulating Sabrina in order to appease the Dark Lord. Throughout Season 1, Lilith is able to gain Sabrina's trust and, consequently, she is able to successfully manipulate Sabrina. Lilith's character origin and her motives, however, do not receive any contextualisation throughout Season 1. She is only established as the Mother of Demons and as the Dark

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Lord's foot servant. Near the end of Season 1, Lilith successfully convinces Sabrina to sign her name in the Book of the Beast, thereby causing Sabrina to sign her soul away to the Dark Lord.

Season 1 ends with Lilith revealing her true name as Madame Satan or Lilith to both the viewers and Principal Hawthorne, whom she has captured and tied up. Season 1, Episode 11 concludes with Lilith eating the principal of Baxter High. Once Lilith has finished eating him, her familiar Stolas[76] suggests that the Dark Lord may be grooming Sabrina for the seat of Queen of Hell. Lilith responds by snapping her familiar's neck. In Season 1, Lilith is very much positioned as an antagonist.

Season 2 of *TCAOS* presents a more in-depth account of Lilith's historical context and offers new emotional depth to the character. Throughout Season 2, Lilith is positioned as the new principal of Baxter High. There is a level of comic irony to this employment position as Lilith dislikes being the principal. However, since she ate the last principal, she (as Mary Wardwell) is offered the opportunity to replace him. Throughout this season, the viewer sees a more evolved manifestation of Lilith. She no longer willingly does the Dark Lord's bidding and in Season 2, Episode 1 of *TCAOS* (Kevin Rodney Sullivan 2018–), Lilith challenges the Dark Lord. This act of Lilith challenging the Dark Lord is reminiscent of the mythological Lilith who challenged God (Smith 2008:18). In *TCAOS*, the Dark Lord is positioned as the saviour or Yahweh.

Season 2 provides the viewer with a comprehensive background of the character Lilith. Within the history of the witch's coven, the origin of Lucifer or the Dark Lord is a well-known tale. In Season 2, Episode 2, this tale is presented as a theatrical production within the Academy of Unseen Arts.[77] The play is called *Paradise* and it re-enacts Lilith and Lucifer's first meeting. The play shares a parallel to the mythological figure Lilith and her origin story found within *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* (Fernandes 2015:734) and the Kabbalistic telling of Lilith (Gaines 2008:6). In the play *Paradise,* Lilith couples with the fallen angel Lucifer. In the play, Lilith is positioned as weaker than Lucifer. He offers her power, magic, immortality and a throne at his side as the Queen of Hell in return for her servitude. Lilith agrees. In the play, Sabrina is cast as the role of Lilith. As the play takes place, the viewer sees an emotional

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[76] In *TCAOS* a familiar is a goblin that takes on the form of a common animal and assists the witch or warlock however they can. Stolas is a mix between a raven and a crow.
[77] The Academy of Unseen Arts is a school for young witches and warlocks. It teaches students about the history of witchcraft and assists them in developing their powers.

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Lilith watching the portrayal of her own life. When Sabrina, as Lilith, agrees to Lucifer's terms, Lilith begins to cry.

This display of vulnerability and depth is explored further in the season when Mary Wardwell's fiancé named Adam (played by Alexis Denisof) returns. He is a doctor in "physicians without borders" and in Season 2, Episode 3, he returns home in time for Valentine's Day because he states that it was his promise to Mary Wardwell. It is ironic, slightly amusing and probably not coincidental that the character's name is Adam, of course, as the mythological figure Lilith rejected the biblical Adam in the Garden of Eden. In the beginning, Lilith (in the body of Wardwell) is very sceptical of Adam. However, she soon falls in love with him.

In Season 2, Episode 6, Adam is killed by the Dark Lord and is fed to Lilith. The Dark Lord shapeshifts into Adam's image and offers to cook a meal for Lilith. This meal is Adam (Figure 34). The Dark Lord reveals the truth to Lilith after she has consumed the meal. He demands to know how Lilith ever thought that she could belong to somebody other than the Dark Lord himself. This is a very emotional episode for Lilith. The viewer empathises with her pain. At the end of the episode, Lilith states that Lucifer is neither omniscient nor omnipotent, so he will not see what is coming next. After this encounter with the Dark Lord, Lilith decides to kill Sabrina, as she is vital in the Dark Lord's plan.

In Season 2, Episode 8, Lilith creates a scarecrow monster and gives it life by removing one of her own ribs and placing it within the monster. This act of creating life through one's rib is similar to God creating Eve from Adam's rib in Genesis [2:21–22] of the Bible. However, instead of creating wholesome life, the *TCAOS* Lilith uses her rib to create a homicidal monster. Once Lilith has created her monster, she names it Adam. This provides an element of dark comedy as the Christian context of the rib is upended. In addition, the viewer is able to understand why Lilith calls this monster Adam within the context of the series.

While Lilith puts a lot of effort into the new Adam, he is quickly destroyed once Nick Scratch (played by Gavin Leatherwood), Sabrina's boyfriend, removes the rib from the monster. Upon finding the rib, Sabrina and Nick put everything together and discover that Lilith has been guiding Sabrina from the start. As a result of Lilith's manipulation, in Season 2, Episode 8, Sabrina discovers that she has been slowly fulfilling a prophecy as the Herald of Hell. Sabrina and Nick confront Lilith and she tells them everything regarding her true motives and connection to the Dark Lord. Sabrina finds a way to get rid of her powers

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thinking that it will stop the prophecy but, as Lilith points out, it only fulfils the prophecy. This results in Lucifer returning to his angelic form on the earth (as seen in Figure 29).

Figure 29: The Dark Lord's angelic form, *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, 2018–. Season 2, Episode 9.
Screen shot by author.

The season finale of Season 2, in *TCAOS* (Rob Seidenglanz 2018–), sees Lilith taking on the role of a potential antihero. Season 2, Episode 9 begins with the *TCAOS* Lilith's origin story as told by Lilith. There are, however, details from the story and the *Paradise* play that differ. Firstly, according to Lilith's account of her origin, she wandered into the wilderness after leaving Eden, whereafter she eventually came to Greendale. In Greendale, Lilith found the fallen angel Lucifer. She healed his wounds with her magic and the two fell in love as seen in the following monologue from Lilith in Season 2, Episode 9:

> Lilith: I had been wandering the wilderness for months. If not years. Because everything outside the garden was a vast, stony, wasteland. That's where he found me. This man, this beautiful man … angelic really, with two wounds on his back. He lifted me up and then I helped him. I healed him. I wasn't just the first woman you see; I was the first witch too … Lilith. And he? Was Lucifer, the Morningstar, soon to be our Dark Lord. I was his handmaiden and he; he was my master.

According to Lilith, Lucifer was initially gentle and kind, but the longer he stayed on earth, the more he became a creature (Figure 30). Eventually he had to return to hell. When he was in his angelic form, Lucifer promised Lilith power and a throne at his side in return for

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her servitude. Lilith agreed to serve Lucifer. However, he did not uphold the promises that he had made her. This is seen in the following dialogue between Sabrina and Lilith:

> Sabrina: When I was playing Lilith in the passion play, I kept wondering "why does Lilith bend to the Dark Lord? Why does she do his bidding?"
>
> Lilith: Promises were made … that if I served him faithfully, he would lift me up, make me Queen of Hell. It's all I've ever wanted.
>
> Sabrina: And you believed him?
>
> Lilith: (laughs softly and then sighs) You don't understand. He was kind at first … gentle. We'd spend our days near the place where he'd fallen and hit the earth. Where thousands and thousands of years later, the old town of Greendale was founded.
>
> Sabrina: Is that why Greendale is so messed up?
>
> Lilith: It's a nexus, a cursed place.
>
> Sabrina: What happened then? With the Dark Lord?
>
> Lilith: The more time passed from the fall, the more he turned into this thing of darkness.
>
> Sabrina: And why do you still serve him? Even now?
>
> Lilith: It's all I've ever known.

The finale of Season 2 sees the Dark Lord or Lucifer return to earth. Throughout this finale, the viewer learns that Lucifer is Sabrina's true father and that he intends for Sabrina to rule at his side in hell. When Lilith realises that she is not going to get what she was promised, she rejects her loyalty to the Dark Lord and assists Sabrina and her family in capturing and subduing the Dark Lord. Their first attempt is not successful, but the second attempt proves to be a success. The Dark Lord becomes bound physically to Nick to trap him. Season 2 ends with Lilith as the Queen of Hell. To show her gratitude, Lilith returns Sabrina's powers and resurrects Mary Wardwell. Lilith takes Nick with her to hell to stop Lucifer from breaking free.

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Figure 30: The Dark Lord's demonic form, *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, 2018– Season 1, Episode 3.
Screen shot by author.

Season 3 of *TCAOS* does not feature Lilith as a prominent character. While Lilith still features in every episode, she is portrayed as more of a secondary character that aids Sabrina. Season 3, Episode 1 of *TCAOS* (Rob Seidenglanz 2018–), sees Sabrina, Harvey (played by Ross Lynch), Theo[78] and Roz venturing to hell to retrieve Nick. When Lilith learns that the trio have entered hell, she attempts to kill them in a series of traps that resemble filmic aspects of *The Wizard of Oz*.[79]

In hell, the viewer is introduced to a new character called Caliban (played by Sam Corlett).[80] Eventually, Lilith permits the trio into her kingdom and makes a request to Sabrina. She asks if Sabrina would officially crown her as Queen of Hell as the Princes and Court of Hell refuse to recognise her position. In return, she will give Nick to Sabrina. Sabrina agrees but when she talks to the court, they refuse to acknowledge Lilith as their queen; they refer to her as a "concubine not a queen". This results in Sabrina declaring that she will take on the role of queen and Lilith shall become her regent. In Season 3, Episode 2, Lilith acts as an advisor to Sabrina; she guides Sabrina in how to collect souls that belong to the devil. While Lilith is teaching Sabrina about the duties of being a queen, Caliban collects 666 signatures and challenges Sabrina to a gauntlet of challenges for the throne. The challenge is to locate and collect the three items of the Unholy Regalia. While Lilith may not feature as a primary character in this season, she still exhibits character growth. When Sabrina takes Lilith's

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[78] Theo was the character Susie in Season 1 and Season 2. However, as he begins to identify as a male, Theo eventually renames himself in Season 2.
[79] There is a tinman, a scarecrow and a pathway that one should not diverge from.
[80] Caliban is made from the clay in the pits of hell.

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throne from her, she does not retaliate, nor does she plot a way to usurp Sabrina. Instead, she puts a lot of effort into helping Sabrina prepare for the throne so that they can rule together.

Lilith becomes more prominent in Season 3, Episode 5, where she learns that Lucifer is free and walking about. While in hell, Lilith is sent a gift from Lucifer as a thinly veiled threat. As a result, she flees to Mary Wardwell's house and takes on the appearance of Adam, who Mary Wardwell thought to be dead. In Season 3, Episode 6, Lilith is found by Lucifer and his human prison, which was first Nick and then Faustus.[81] Lucifer demands that Lilith separate him from Faustus; she agrees. Thinking resourcefully, Lilith suggests that Lucifer sleep to make the separation process easier.

While Lucifer sleeps within his human prison, Faustus, Lilith offers Faustus a deal. She will bestow the mark of Cain on him to protect him; in return, he will impregnate her with both his and Lucifer's seed. Faustus agrees and when Lucifer awakens, separated from Faustus, he makes a move to hurt Lilith. However, she explains that she is pregnant with his son and if he kills her, he would be killing an heir. Lucifer states that Lilith is not being pardoned. Instead, her execution has merely received an extension period. The season finale sees Sabrina win the gauntlet of Unholy Regalia and ascend the throne. Lilith is tasked with preparing Sabrina for her coronation, where she gives Sabrina the following advice: "every queen must be made battle-ready, every girl must prepare for war."

This section has provided a thorough explanation of the plot of *TCAOS,* which was necessary for the discussions that follow. In the next sections I focus more closely on Lilith's potential as a feminist figure in this series.

4.7 Lilith in *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* as a potential feminist

The representation of Lilith in the series *TCAOS* embodies characteristics that are evident in the mythological figure Lilith and in feminism. *TCAOS* Lilith embodies traits from the second wave of feminism, the third wave of feminism and postfeminism. Similar to the mythological figure Lilith, T*CAOS* Lilith exhibits radical feminist traits. Specifically, she embodies what

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[81] At the end of Season 2, Lucifer was bound to Nick. Nick acted as a human prison to contain the Dark Lord. In Season 3, Episode 1, Lucifer is transferred from Nick to Father Faustus Blackwood. Father Blackwood is a misogynistic antagonist who attempted to poison the majority of his occult congregation.

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Gray and Boddy (2010:375) refer to as the desire to repudiate patriarchal structures as the dominant discourse. However, in Season 1, Lilith does not exhibit second-wave characteristics. She is a foot servant to the Dark Lord, and she does not question his orders or motives whatsoever. In Season 1, Episode 1 of *TCAOS* (Lee Toland Krieger 2018–), Lilith is seen kissing the hoofs of the Dark Lord and pleading for mercy. At the end of Season 1, the viewer begins to see a shift in Lilith's representation. By Season 2, this newer manifestation of Lilith is evident. Throughout Season 2, Lilith directly challenges the Dark Lord, which suggests that she has begun to imbue the qualities of a radical feminist. In Season 2, Episode 1 of *TCAOS* (Kevin Rodney Sullivan 2018–), Lilith summons the Dark Lord and demands to know what plans he intends to carry out with regard to Sabrina.

Another characteristic found within the second wave of feminism is evident in *TCAOS* (Antonio Negret 2018–), Season 2, Episode 7, where Lilith discusses her unwillingness to marry her lover Adam. She describes marriage as follows:

> For the men perhaps, but if it were really a blessing, truly a desirable state, would we need to dress it up with lace and silk and frill? Litter the bride's path with rose petals? No, because marriage is a walk down the primrose path towards a woman's destruction. It's nothing less than the complete obliteration of a woman's personhood. It takes everything from her. Her body. Her independence. Even her soul and gives nothing in return.

This opinion mirrors the opinions of many radical second-wave feminists who chose universal womanhood instead of what they deemed patriarchal structures such as marriage (Krolokke & Sorensen 2006). Gray and Boddy (2010:375) discuss how radical second-wave feminism "favoured a cultural focus on women's personal lives, personal stories and personal narratives". As Krolokke and Sorensen (2006:10) argue: "women [have the] right to their own bodies and a sexuality of their 'own' – a sexuality that is disconnected from the obligations of marriage and motherhood." Thus, it is suggested that marriage viewed through a second-wave feminist lens is constricting, unnecessary and a violation of women's rights.

In Season 2, Episode 8, the Dark Lord kills Lilith's lover Adam. Instead of complying with the Dark Lord's wishes to never stray from his side, Lilith chooses revenge and plans to kill Sabrina as retaliation. At this point in the series, the Dark Lord was manipulating Sabrina to fulfil a dark prophecy. To fulfil the prophecy, Sabrina needed to be alive. Another point at which Lilith displays second-wave characteristics is at the end of Season 2, when Lilith usurps the throne of hell from Lucifer. Lilith succeeds in toppling the patriarchal structure within hell. In Season 3, Lilith still embodies second-wave characteristics as seen in how she

battles the all-male court in the kingdom of hell. However, Lilith does not necessarily enact any further notable second-wave behaviour thereafter.

While *TCAOS* Lilith does embody second-wave characteristics, much like the mythological figure Lilith, she also embodies traits and characteristics that are aligned with the third wave and postfeminist agendas. When Lilith kills and takes over Mary Wardwell's life in Season 1, Episode 1 of *TCAOS* (Lee Toland Krieger 2018–), Lilith gives Mary Wardwell a postfeminist makeover. Lilith as Mary Wardwell appears in tighter and more revealing clothing (Figure 31). This adheres to what Ferriss and Young (2006:88) refer to as the purpose or aim of the third wave of feminism.

Figure 31: Lilith as Mary Wardwell, *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, 2018–.
Season 1, Episode 5.
Screen shot by author.

Ferriss and Young (2006:88) argue that third-wave feminists favoured a women's sexual freedom and pleasure, seeing them as signs of independence and power. In addition to her tighter clothing, Lilith as Mary Wardwell begins to wear darker makeup and more expensive outfits. This alludes to the postfeminist concept coined by Lazar (2009b:372), specifically the notion of "entitled feminism". Lazar (2009b:372) discusses how postfeminists argue that "we deserve lipstick if we want it, and free speech; we deserve to be sexual and serious". This quote assists in understanding that while Lilith is portrayed as more sexualised, she simultaneously retains her power and overall objectives of wanting power, acclaim and a throne in hell. Equally, the Lilith in *TCAOS* embodies both strains of postfeminist theory as outlined by Gill (2007:153–154). Specifically, the sexualised woman who uses her femininity to gain power and the sexualised woman who uses her femininity because it "feels good".

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This concept of wanting to always look attractive is seen by the *TCAOS* Lilith in Season 3, Episode 1. In this episode, directed by Rob Seidenglanz, Sabrina and her friends venture to hell to collect Sabrina's boyfriend Nick. Once in hell, all three are captured by Lilith and are forcefully 'invited' to a dinner party that she hosts. When seated at the table, Sabrina turns to Lilith and asks:

> Sabrina: I have a question. Why do you still look like Ms. Wardwell?
>
> Lilith: Well, I grew comfortable wearing her skin and a face like this? It's hard to beat.

This exchange proves that Lilith would rather be depicted as what she determines as an attractive witch than be depicted as her true demonic form, as chillingly depicted in Season 1, Episode 10 (Figure 32). This demonstrates that Lilith's sex appeal is something that matters to her. She likes being sexy. Even in the pits of hell, Lilith's makeup and hairstyle are immaculate and she is still dressed in tight-fitting clothing (Figure 33). This proves that the Lilith represented in *TCAOS* embodies contrasting feminist qualities that aid in contributing to Lilith's overall ambiguity. Specifically, Lilith embodies a rejection of patriarchy, which can be seen figuratively when she demands that a transgender figure, Theo, be able to try out for the basketball team. It can be seen literally when Lilith eats the misogynistic principal of the Greendale High School (which is also closely tied, as I discuss later, with abjection). Lilith does not seek to live in harmony with men, but rather to usurp their power as seen when Lilith steals the throne of hell from Lucifer. However, Lilith is still imbued with postfeminist qualities, namely the desire to display her sexuality and sex appeal as explained above.

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Figure 32: Lilith revealing her demonic face, *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, 2018–. Season 1, Episode 10.
Screen shot by author.

Figure 33: Lilith as the Queen of Hell, *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, 2018–. Season 3, Episode 1.
Screen shot by author

4.8 Lilith in *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* as a *femme fatale*

As already mentioned in this chapter, the *femme fatale* is a dangerous temptress whose only desire is to see the defeat of the protagonist (Jancovich 2011:102). According to Sidney Braun (1982:140), the *femme fatale* is a perilously beautiful woman with a desire for

revenue. The *femme fatale* is an ambiguous trope especially as this figure resurfaces in contemporary visual culture.

As discussed at length in Chapter 3, the more contemporary version of this trope challenges the viewer who anticipates that the *femme fatale* will be pure evil, by seeming simultaneously good and bad as a character. This newer manifestation initially positions the *femme fatale* as a supposedly innocent, and highly feminine character (Jancovich 2011:108). This supposedly naïve character imitates the antithesis of her true nature, which is revealed to the viewer before it is revealed within the plot (Jancovich 2011:108). This newer manifestation of the *femme fatale* is certainly also evident in *TCAOS.* Throughout Season 1, Lilith masquerades as Mary Wardwell, a God-fearing, virginal schoolteacher. Lilith reinvents Mary Wardwell's appearance so that it appears to align with more postfeminist concepts of sex appeal, as I discussed above (Gill 2007:153–154). However, the community surrounding Mary Wardwell and protagonists of the series do not discover the truth about Lilith's identity until Season 2, Episode 8. When Lilith's true nature is discovered, it is due to the fact that Lilith brazenly attempts to kill Sabrina, which, as a result, directly leads Sabrina and her boyfriend Nick to Lilith's front door. However, as Jancovich (2011:108) explains, the viewers know about the true nature of the *femme fatale* before the characters in the series do. The viewers know about Lilith from Season 1, Episode 1, and they learn Lilith's true name in Season 1, Episode 10.

The Lilith in *TCAOS* does not necessarily embody qualities of the noir *femme fatale*. While Lilith is beautiful, her ultimate behaviour is not entirely self-serving and evil (Yarbrough 1999:52). In addition, Lilith falls pregnant in Season 3, Episode 8 of *TCAOS* (Rob Seidenglanz 2018–). Virginia Allen (1983:4) argues that the *femme fatale* does not conceive. This points to two possible considerations. The first is that Jancovich's (2011:108) contemporary *femme fatale* has evolved even further in the twenty-first century and now can fall pregnant. The second consideration is that this *TCAOS* Lilith actively embodies certain criteria found within the *femme fatale* archetype and, in turn, embodies additional characteristics that are not part of the *femme fatale* archetype. I argue that the former consideration could be favoured over the latter.

The reason for this is two-fold. Firstly, the contemporary *femme fatale* exists in parallel with postfeminist ideas and influences. A significant characteristic of the postfeminist movement is individual liberty. Gill (2007:162) argues that the notion of liberty and gratifying one's own desires through the freedom of choice plays a large role in presenting the postfeminist women as an autonomous agent whose freedom is not constricted in any way. This

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autonomy has the potential to influence the construction of female characters and archetypes in film, such as the archetype on which the contemporary *femme fatale* is based.

The second argument for this new manifestation of the *femme fatale* lies in the following note by Gillis (2005:84). She suggests that the *femme fatale* is not meant to be understood as an archetype, rather the *femme fatale* is a "constellation of tropes and characteristics emerging from concerns about women and power". However, it is important to note that while Gillis (2005:84) argues that the *femme fatale* is a grouping of different characteristics and tropes, she is still aware of the fact that this grouping or constellation is always ultimately controlled by heteronormative patriarchal values. Thus, Gillis (2005:84) is also referring to men's concerns about woman and their power.

Gillis's (2005:84) idea is that the *femme fatale* is a grouping of different tropes and characteristics. Based on this, one could argue that when Lilith falls pregnant, it is merely an extension or newly developed trope that contributes to this ambiguous archetype known as the *femme fatale*. This potential new addition to the representation of the *femme fatale* does not necessarily mean that this contemporary *femme fatale* is maternal or vulnerable in any way. In *TCAOS,* Lilith uses this pregnancy as a means to protect herself from being killed by the Dark Lord. Another example of a pregnancy being used by a *femme fatale* is seen by Amy in *Gone Girl* (David Fincher 2014). Without consent, Amy impregnates herself with her husband Nick's semen to ensure that he does not leave her. In a similar manner, Lilith impregnates herself with the Dark Lord's semen while he is trapped within Father Blackwood. This suggests that the *femme fatale* is constantly evolving and is potentially producing a new version of the dangerous women for the twenty-first century. This newer trope of the *femme fatale* appears to have the potential to be empowering to women. However, the *femme fatale* trope will always have certain limitations that need to be considered, namely that it is a trope created within heteronormative patriarchal systems. Thus, while it may offer a stronger female figure for women to potentially emulate, it is still constructed under patriarchy.

It is also important to note that this manifestation of Lilith has yet to experience a dramatic character fall or death in order to restore the status quo (Snyder 2001:9). This is either because the series has not ended yet and Lilith's inevitable demise is imminent, or it could potentially suggest that this contemporary manifestation of the *femme fatale* will not experience destruction. One will be able to draw a conclusion only once the series has come to an end. It is also necessary to once again return to Lazar's (2009b:381) notion of "entitled femininity" in this discussion of Lilith in *TCAOS*. Entitled femininity involves postfeminist

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women adopting terms and stereotypes that exist prominently under patriarchal structures and rewriting their indexical meaning so that they now read as symbols of strength and not oppression. One could hypothetically consider that entitled femininity could extend beyond phrases and stereotypes, eventually going so far as to refigure an archetype, so that it now reads as a positive postfeminist icon. This is, what I suggest has, at least partially, happened to the *femme fatale*. In her current manifestations, and in *TCAOS* specifically, the *femme fatale* exhibits both good and evil qualities. Extending beyond this archetype, one could also suggest that the figure of Lilith has been rewritten, or perhaps redrawn, under the paradigm of "entitled femininity". If the contemporary *femme fatale* is considered a postfeminist ally and Lilith is considered the first *femme fatale* in history (Smith 2008:19; Osherow 2000:71), one could surmise that entitled femininity (Lazar 2009b:381) has assisted in recreating Lilith in the image of a postfeminist icon.

4.9 Lilith in *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* as an abject woman and female grotesque

As discussed above, there are three aspects of the abject that form the focus of this study. The first is food loathing; the second is woman as abject and the third is castration anxiety. These concepts are explored throughout *TCAOS*. One such concept of the abject is seen when Lilith is tricked by the Dark Lord into eating her human lover Adam (Season 2, Episode 6). This scene (Figure 34) reflects Creed's discussions on both biological bodily waste, food loathing and the corpse as an abject entity. The episode finishes with Lilith reaching into her own chest cavity and taking a rib from her ribcage to create a Frankenstein-like scarecrow monster to enact her revenge against the Dark Lord.

Figure 34: The Dark Lord serves Adam's head to Lilith, *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina,* 2018–. Season 2, Episode 6.
Screen shot by author.

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This entire episode explores multiple aspects of abjection. It looks at the act of cannibalism and eating human flesh which, according to Creed (1993:23), is one of the ultimate forms of abjection. In addition, it highlights the castration anxiety in a more figurative manner, as Lilith planned to abandon the Dark Lord and elope with Adam. Thus, she would have been out of the Dark Lord's control and would then embody a woman who causes misogynistic anxiety (Creed 1993:54) because she is defying patriarchal systems and, as a result, enacts the castration fear.

Finally, Lilith in *TCAOS* embodies the maternal figure as abject on two levels. Within the series, Lilith is referred to as the "Mother of all Demons". This places Lilith in the position of the archaic mother, "the image of the mother as sole origin of all life" (Creed 1993:18). However, Lilith is positioned as being more of an abject figure or unknown entity because she is not creating human life, but demonic life. According to Creed (1993:7), "when a woman is represented as monstrous, it is almost always in relation to her mothering and reproductive functions". Thus, it can be argued that motherhood itself is abject. This abjection coupled with abjection surrounding supernatural figures, as discussed in Chapter 3, suggests that Lilith is constantly positioned as an abject figure. The second level in which this manifestation of Lilith represents the maternal figure as abject is when she falls pregnant at the end of Season 3. Lilith tricks the Dark Lord into impregnating her so that he cannot kill her, as she is now the mother to his unborn heir. This conception is used as a survival tactic, not as normative conception.[82] In addition, the actress who portrays Lilith, Michelle Gomez, is 51 years old. This adds another layer to the maternal figure as abject because it is not a young, patriarchally acceptable maiden who is pregnant, but rather an older, demonic woman who is powerful and monstrous.

Lilith in *TCAOS* exhibits certain characteristics of the female grotesque. The female grotesque is a symbol of female excess. As discussed above, and according to Mallan (2000:27), the female grotesque is an embodiment of ultra-femininity, which can be depicted as carnivalesque or similar to a pantomime. According to Russo (1995:56):

> There are especial dangers for women and other excluded or
> marginalised groups within carnival, though even the double jeopardy
> that I describe may suggest an ambivalent redeployment of taboos
> around the female body as grotesque (the pregnant body, the aging
> body, the irregular body) and as unruly when set loose in the public
> sphere.

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[82] While Lucifer is trapped within Father Blackwood like a human prison, Lilith has sex with Father Blackwood. Because Lucifer is imbued with demonic energy, Lilith conceives a demonic child after having sex with Father Blackwood while he is possessed by Lucifer.

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In *TCAOS,* Lilith is often depicted in fashionable clothes with dark makeup, specifically heavily lined eyes and red lipstick (Figure 31). Interestingly, it is with this version of Lilith that one sees the excessive grotesque most profoundly. In Season 1, Episode 1 of *TCAOS* (Lee Toland Krieger 2018–), Mary Wardwell is possessed by Lilith. The viewer's first impression of Mary Wardwell is that she is demure and wears conservative clothing. Once Lilith possesses her, the 'new' Mary Wardwell wears tighter, more revealing clothing and her make-up is heavier and darker. This offers the viewer a direct transformation, with Lilith being identified as a *femme fatale* or female grotesque with a "mark of excess" (Mallan 2000:26). As Buckley (2019:4) argues, the female grotesque is derived from a cultural system that "constructs women both as the subordinate half of a duality (man/women) and via the dualistic image of the virgin and whore". This duality is evident in the *TCAOS* Lilith. However, there is an abject result of this duality as one character embodies both dualisms. Mary Wardwell is virginal, while Lilith could be categorised as the whore. This version of the female grotesque does not have a singular or static identity. Instead, like the female grotesque, *TCAOS* Lilith operates as a "figuration [...] of conflicting dualisms inherent in patriarchal constructions of femininity" (Buckley 2019:9).

Another manner in which *TCAOS* Lilith embodies characteristics of the female grotesque is seen in the fact that the grotesque opposes the maternal figure. Creed (1993:11) argues that while the female viewer sees the maternal figure itself as natural, both male and female viewers always see the maternal figure as abject. This argument contributes to the fact that Lilith is pregnant at the end of Season 3, Episode 8 of *TCAOS* (Rob Seidenglanz 2018–). This reemphasises the notion that through this pregnancy Lilith is situated within the realm of the female grotesque that is "in excess" and the maternal figure as abject.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the role of the feminist, the role of the *femme fatale* and the role of the abject woman and female grotesque within *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) and *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–). These tropes and concepts that were investigated and contextualised offer valuable insight into the character makeup of these representations of Lilith. Both these series are part of contemporary popular culture, which serves as an indicator as to how Lilith and these concepts have been refigured and reconstructed within contemporary popular culture. This chapter assists in providing effective examples of how feminism, the *femme fatale* and the abject woman and female grotesque are being employed within contemporary popular culture mediums, specifically series.

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As I have argued throughout, Lilith is an important figure and character. This is due to her ambiguous nature. Being inherently dualistic, Lilith, as a figure, does not have to embody certain traits or characteristics in order to adhere to certain tropes. Instead, Lilith is able to display both dark and light qualities; she is both an icon of feminist politics and simultaneously she is a reproduction of patriarchal constructs. As Mallan (2000:19) notes, an ambiguous character (like Lilith) has the potential to "offer both pleasure and fear as well as rebelliousness and suppression". Lilith's ambiguity and multifaceted but equally fragmented chronology makes it difficult to offer one direct conclusion regarding Lilith's relevance and her reach. One must note that 'Lilith' characters in contemporary popular culture still adhere to certain characteristics that are often attributed to Lilith. These include traits from the *femme fatale* trope as outlined by Yarbrough (1999:37), references to Lilith's Judeo-Christian origin and the fact that she is prominently, if not always, represented as a supernatural figure (Smith 2008:11,14). However, this contemporary refiguration of Lilith is interpreted very differently. Lilith no longer necessarily embodies a terrifying demonic creature; instead, she is now contextualised within the series as a whole. Even if Lilith is represented as an antagonist, as seen in *Shadowhunters*, her character still has depth and purpose. As seen in Chapter 2, Lilith has been represented as a Babylonian goddess, a greater demon, Adam's first wife, a witch, a vampire and the Queen of Demons. However, she is also seen as a symbol of female empowerment and has even been labelled a strong female role model in an article written by Aviva Cantor titled *The Lilith Question* (1976) found in the first edition of the Jewish magazine *Lilith* (1976).

This suggests that Lilith and her multiple representations and manifestations can be interpreted as both positive and negative. Put another way, the Liliths in these series are both limiting and empowering for their female audiences. Lilith is often depicted as a strong woman. This is seen in both *Shadowhunters* and *TCAOS*. However, it is debatable whether or not she always embodies the "strong female role model" as perhaps too generously described by Cantor (1976). Lilith's liminal nature does offer up certain concerns, such as the fact that while one manifestation may offer value, another manifestation may be detrimental or may be imbued with problematic characteristics, but this concern of duality is arguably intrinsic to human nature in itself. Thus, the overall diverse nature of Lilith as a figure offers a more realistic contemporary character. By realistic, I mean that since Lilith embodies both positive and negative qualities, this sees her become a more relatable character than a character that embodies only certain heroic qualities or adheres to only one feminine trope. According to Lewis (2011:2), Lilith has been and continues to be:

> whomever and whatever humanity desires because she is the fear
> most prominent in mankind's life at the time of innovation. That fear
> not only determines her crime of the moment by the severity of that

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crime as well. When humanity invokes Lilith with fearful thoughts, she is, she exists.

Thus, one can argue that Lilith is used as a means, for women and men, to express their fears, anxieties and desires. Hence, Lilith, is an important figure to analyse because she may be interpreted in a variety of ways.

As explored in this chapter, Lilith expresses characteristics and qualities found within the *femme fatale*, the abject and the female grotesque tropes. All three of these tropes offer both empowering and problematic notions for women to emulate. As discussed, all three of these tropes were initially constructed under heteronormative patriarchal society. Thus, one must approach them with trepidation and must critically evaluate each character that is imbued with traits from the *femme fatale*, the abject and the female grotesque.

As discussed, the *femme fatale* as a trope refers to the dangerous woman, a sexualised figure who desires to see the destruction of patriarchal (predominantly misogynistic) figures. This offers women, and more specifically Lilith, an opportunity to emulate this strength while still maintaining a feminine and sexualised look or style. The *femme fatale* provides an active female character that does not supposedly sacrifice her beauty for power (Yarbrough 1999:57). However, one must take into account the fact that the *femme fatale* often suffers a downfall or death at the end of her story or film. This downfall only serves as a return to heteronormative patriarchal order. Thus, one must question the value of women fully emulating the *femme fatale.*

In turn, the abject offers women and Lilith an opportunity to identify through liminality and Otherness. There is a strength in ambiguity; however, there is also alienation in Otherness (Ringrose & Walkerdine 2008:234). The abject is often rejected from society or made in the antagonist. Thus, problematising the emulation of the abject for women as the abject woman does not comply with normative society. Similarly, the female grotesque offers freedom in the monstrous feminine as it offers a contrast to what is expected of women. According to Russo (1995:53), "for a woman, making a spectacle of herself had more to do with an inadvertency and loss of boundaries". In addition, hyper-femininity challenges normative feminine aesthetics (Mallan 2000:26). However, much like the *femme fatale,* the female grotesque often has to be destroyed in one way or another for society to return to its normative (misogynistic) patriarchal standard. Hence, much like any concept, ideology or trope, the *femme fatale*, the abject and the female grotesque do offer valuable qualities for women to emulate and adopt as each of these tropes provides women with new ways of

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imagining themselves and reinventing themselves. However, one must not forget that there are certain limitations that come with such tropes that are created under patriarchal systems.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study of how Lilith is represented in contemporary popular culture and whether one can consider her to be a postfeminist icon. The chapter begins by considering the different chapters and results of this study. It then examines how this study has contributed to the analysis of Lilith as a representation and how her manifestations are affected by contemporary popular culture and the different tropes explored in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. Finally, this chapter explores the limitations of this study and investigates how this study can be furthered in future research studies regarding Lilith and her representation within the *femme fatale* trope, the abject and female grotesque, postfeminism and mainstream popular culture.

5.2 Summary of chapters

As discussed within this study, Lilith as a representation in visual culture exists as many different manifestations. Lilith has been the seductive demon of the night, the succubus, the child-killing witch and the *femme fatale*. Lilith is Adam's first wife; she is the Queen of Hell and the Mother of Demons (Patai 1964; Smith 2008; Fernandes 2015; Dennis & Dennis 2014; Martínez-Oña & Muñoz-Muñoz 2015). She is an enduring character or figure that has existed throughout a variety of different manifestations. As seen in Chapter 2, Lilith has been depicted throughout mythology, folklore, history, art and literature. Her history is enriched with different portrayals and depictions. This is seen in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (2000 B.C.E.), the *Burney Relief* (1800–1750 B.C.E.) and *The Alphabet of Ben Sira* (between the eighth and tenth centuries B.C.E.) to name a few (Patai 1964). In addition, Lilith as a representation in visual culture is depicted in art, as seen in Michelangelo's *The Fall and Expulsion from Garden of Eden* (1512) and Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *Lady Lilith* (1866–1868).

Lilith is also depicted in contemporary texts and mediums. For example, she has existed within the comic book world as an antihero, a villain and a myth (Dennis & Dennis 2014). She is a trope or common figure within the contemporary advertising world (Martínez-Oña & Muñoz-Muñoz 2015) and a prominent character in literature (Osherow 2000). Lilith has inspired the feminist music festival titled "*Lilith Fair*" and she has been depicted throughout film, music and television series. All of these depictions, manifestations and different representations serve to demonstrate how diverse and enduring Lilith is as a character.

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When examining Lilith and the characteristics surrounding her different representations, one finds that she has not necessarily evolved as a character. She is always depicted as a beautiful, supernatural woman, with long hair (either fiery red or black) and an Otherness or ambiguity about her. Lilith is often seen as a temptress who leads men astray. However, as demonstrated throughout this study, Lilith can be seen as both a scapegoat and as a means to control women (Lewis 2011). Lilith was depicted as an example for what happened to women who sought empowerment or independence during a time where women did not have a lot of freedom.

Thus, as this study has shown, Lilith was demonised primarily for two reasons: the first being that Lilith destabilises the hierarchy of patriarchal systems, which incites anxiety. The second is that Lilith challenges religious control and patriarchal rule (Lewis 2011). As argued in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, while these reasons contributed to her demonised representation, these arguments lead one to consider the implications of a mythological figure that has supposedly yet to evolve (Martínez-Oña & Muñoz-Muñoz 2015:612). However, her relevance within mainstream society has varied dramatically throughout history. One can potentially consider that while Lilith's innate characteristics may not change, how she is reinterpreted has and does change (Gaines 2001).

This shift in contemporary popular culture and how the representation of Lilith has been refigured can be connected to the fact that, at different historical moments, Lilith has been resignified as a feminist figure and a postfeminist icon. As I have shown in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, Lilith has characteristics that relate to each wave of feminism and the postfeminist movement. Lilith did emulate qualities of the first wave, specifically the desire for bodily autonomy and equal rights, which can be compared to Lilith's desire for equality in her partnership with Adam and the third wave of feminism. Interestingly, however, it is the second wave and postfeminist movement in which one sees Lilith most active. Lilith has the potential to be seen as a second-wave feminist icon as she emulates a lot of the different qualities that were valued at the time, such as supporting radical feminism, independence and the destruction of patriarchal values (Dennis & Dennis 2014; Osherow 2000; Walton 2011; Gaines 2001). However, as seen throughout this study, Lilith is best suited as a potential postfeminist icon as she embodies freedom and the destruction of patriarchy, while still remaining a sexualised figure who wants to remain beautiful and tempting. Lilith is a representation in visual culture that embodies feminist ideals while still remaining sexualised under patriarchal rule. This is a struggle faced by many postfeminists who desire to retain their sexuality through concepts like entitled femininity, or bodily

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autonomy. However, as seen throughout this study, these postfeminist women risk still being sexualised by the male gaze and patriarchal systems (Lazar 2009b; Lee 2006; Lewis 2011).

Overall, the fact that Lilith embodies qualities from two contrasting movements – second-wave feminism and the postfeminist movement – contributes to her overall ambiguity and fluid nature. However, Lilith is much more than a figure that aligns with different feminist waves; arguably, she can be seen as a symbol of liberation (Lewis 2011). The fact that Lilith has been resignified is potentially emblematic of woman readopting and refiguring aspects that were used to negatively impact them. As I have argued throughout this study, Lilith is still a figure that is defined by man, but now women are reinterpreting her effect on society and the potential that she possesses.

As seen in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, Lilith exhibits a lot of qualities synonymous with the *femme fatale*. As discussed, Lilith is often portrayed as a beautiful temptress or vixen. She leads men astray or to their destruction and must in turn be destroyed or punished for society of the time to return to the norm, which in this case is patriarchal rule. One could even argue that Lilith was the most powerful, if not first, *femme fatale* in history (Lee 2006; Allen 1984; Smith 2008). Braun (1982:140) goes as far as to suggest that Lilith had a role in forming certain characteristics of the *femme fatale*, specifically during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Therefore, if Lilith is not only one of the first *femme fatales* but also considered a potential muse that contributed to a certain manifestation of the *femme fatale,* it would not necessarily be incorrect to consider Lilith as a potential *femme fatale* icon. The fact that Lilith is designated as an original, if not the first, *femme fatale* by such a large number of theorists, one must consider whether or not she does have the potential to be a *femme fatale* icon. I argue that Lilith is a *femme fatale* icon. This is based on the texts that support my argument, but it is also based on the fact that, like Lilith, the *femme fatale* at her core has not evolved dramatically (Martínez-Oña & Muñoz-Muñoz 2015). Thus, if the *femme fatale* has largely remained the same throughout history, one can then assume that if Lilith had such a large influence on the establishment of traits synonymous with the *femme fatale*, she can be considered a *femme fatale* icon.

The fact that Lilith could be seen as a *femme fatale* icon has mixed results. On the one hand, as discussed, the *femme fatale* has potentially been readopted and resignified to form a more positive postfeminist icon. However, one must still acknowledge the fact that the *femme fatale* was created by men as a scapegoat for male anxiety. As a trope, the *femme fatale* was vilified, and her character always met an untimely death or punishment of sorts. Thus, even though the recontextualisation of the *femme fatale* is potentially seen as

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empowering, the origin or foundation of the trope is drenched in patriarchal misogyny. I therefore argue that Lilith's being a *femme fatale* icon can be both empowering and limiting for the postfeminist woman. This result is apt when considering the mixed responses of the postfeminist movement. As seen in Chapter 3, the postfeminist movement lacks direct clarity in its goals, characteristics and overall nuances. It is therefore understandable why a figure as conflicted and ambiguous as the *femme fatale* is seen as positive in postfeminism. Lilith as a *femme fatale* icon does have the potential to empower viewers. Her strength, femininity and overall representation in visual culture is something that a postfeminist viewer would both appreciate and want to emulate. However, regardless of how the *femme fatale* is refigured, one must not forget where the trope originated from and what that implies. Furthermore, one must recognise that while the *femme fatale* icon is a positive trope in some respects, it still has limitations that must be acknowledged.

Lastly, this study has explored Lilith as the abject and as the female grotesque, specifically in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. As seen in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, Lilith exhibits qualities of both the abject and the female grotesque. From her origin, Lilith has displayed abject characteristics (Osherow 2000; Fernandes 2015; Dennis & Dennis 2014; Patai 1964). Lilith is an ambiguous and a liminal figure that depicts different abject criteria throughout her different manifestations and representations. In addition, she displays the female as abject, with focus on bodily waste and the corpse, as discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 (Creed 1993). When discussing the Judeo-Christian origin of Lilith, Fernandes (2015) refers to Lilith's ability to fly out of the Garden of Eden as a display of the abject supernatural. Fernandes (2015) hypothesises that Lilith was either created by God as a supernatural entity with the ability to fly or, in uttering the Tetragrammaton, Lilith gained the abject power of flight. According to Fernandes (2015), this distinguished boundary of defining Lilith as an animalistic hybrid thus creates a liminal state in which Lilith's self becomes the Other or abject.

Another contributing argument to consider when exploring Lilith as abject is her relationship with the maternal. As discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, the maternal represented as abject is often seen in film (Creed 1993). For example, Lilith portrays the maternal as abject in both of the selected series, namely *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) and *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–). While Lilith is often connected with birth and children, it is not always a flattering connection. According to Allen (1984), Patai (1964) and Osherow (2000), Lilith can be seen as a child-stealer; she is a tormentor of men, women and children alike. One must also consider Lilith's connection with children when examining her through a Judeo-Christian lens whereby Lilith was rebuked by God and was fated to have 100 of her

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demonic children die daily as her punishment (Walton 2011). All these contributing images do not create an image of Lilith as a maternal figure but rather position Lilith as the maternal as abject.

Lilith retains maternal qualities while exhibiting sexual characteristics (Osherow 2000). This embodiment of both the maternal and sexual contributes to Lilith's abjection. This concept of mixing the maternal with the sexual also refers to the female grotesque, in which conflicting dualisms of femininity constructed by patriarchal structures are juxtaposed, thus creating an abject reaction (Buckley 2019). Therefore, as these different theorists have argued, Lilith represents how the abject offers a liminal response within the viewer. This is due to the fact that Lilith does not comply with a single binary but rather embodies qualities of both binaries, thus rendering her abject. One can determine that Lilith is a creature that traverses boundaries. Due to her ambiguous and liminal nature, one can conclude that Lilith is an abject creature with markings of the female grotesque.

When examining what it means to label Lilith as both the abject and the female grotesque, one must first explore whether these traits/tropes are empowering or not. As discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, the abject and the female grotesque both have complicated representations. While some theorists see the abject as a gateway for female empowerment, others see it as alienating and an Otherness. I argue that Lilith as the abject offers some value in that the abject can be seen as liberating. Its boundarylessness enables the viewer to decode and examine Lilith as she exists within the liminality found in the abject. However, Lilith as the abject is also problematic. The abject tends to alienate those who associate with it as they are now the Other or outside normative limits. As a result, Lilith as the abject becomes alienated, which means that Lilith can be interpreted as unattainable or an exception or anomaly in contemporary society. Thus, while remaining an empowering female figure, to a certain degree, Lilith encounters the adverse effect of potentially being considered an exception to the rule. Hence, her rebellion against patriarchy also has the potential to become an exception or anomaly. With regard to the female grotesque, again Lilith as a representation has the opportunity to embrace the monstrous feminine and explore her duality as a character or figure in visual culture. However, similar to the abject, Lilith as the female grotesque also has limitations. Much like the *femme fatale*, the female grotesque is destroyed at the end of the tale or film. Hence, this trope must be destroyed in order to return to a heteronormative patriarchal society. Thus, even if the female grotesque evolves into a more empowering role, its origin as a trope is embedded in misogynistic patriarchal ideals, which is problematic.

I argue that Lilith as both the abject and the female grotesque has positive and negative considerations. Both these tropes offer the viewer the opportunity to view Lilith as a liminal figure and to see that female characters can have a lot of depth and complicated identities. However, much like the *femme fatale*, one must acknowledge the origin of these tropes, thereby confronting the limitations that these tropes face. I therefore argue that Lilith as the abject and the female grotesque does have the potential to empower viewers and, to a certain degree, liberate the identity of women under patriarchal rule. However, this can be achieved only once the limitations of these tropes are acknowledged.

In conclusion, this study has investigated whether or not Lilith complies with characteristics commonly found within the three waves of feminism, postfeminism, the *femme fatale*, the abject and the female grotesque. After an extensive examination of both written and visual texts, I conclude that Lilith can be considered as both a feminist icon and a *femme fatale* icon. This study has shown the relevance that the mythological and contemporary manifestations of Lilith hold. As Gaines (2001) examines, Lilith is a reflection of generations that have come and generations that will come. Even though Lilith remains static at her core, how she is interpreted differs with each manifestation she represents. She is important because she holds up a mirror to society each time she resurfaces. Thus, an influx of Lilith in media and mainstream contemporary popular culture holds value as Lilith is a marker of both the anxieties and desires of the time.

5.3 Contribution of study

This study contributes to the ongoing research of Lilith as a figure in visual culture. Furthermore, this study has contributed to the analysis of contemporary manifestations of Lilith and how they are represented in popular culture. The purpose of this study was to highlight the relevance of Lilith as a contemporary figure and to show how frequently Lilith resurfaces in mainstream contemporary popular culture. In doing so, this study assists in contributing to the examination of the multiple manifestations and representations of Lilith. Lilith is being portrayed in contemporary series such as *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) and *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–), and is going to be portrayed as a character in the upcoming film *Borderlands* (which did not have a release date at the time of writing). These contemporary depictions of Lilith prove that she is a topical character choice. Consequently, Lilith still remains a subject worth further research and critical examination. Thus, this study contributes to the further research on the representation of Lilith in both historical and contemporary visual culture.

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In addition, this study contributes to the discourses of the *femme fatale,* the abject, the female grotesque and the postfeminist movement and how they are represented in contemporary popular culture. This study has also contributed to the possibility of a new and contemporary trope of the *femme fatale* that may be emerging in recent films and series. Moreover, this study has explored the different concepts and tropes that Lilith exhibits or is portrayed as. Thus, this study contributes to further research that may include Lilith represented as a *femme fatale*, the abject, the female grotesque and as a postfeminist. Furthermore, this study has contributed to the argument that, as a *femme fatale*, abject and grotesque woman, Lilith is a postfeminist icon. This stance can be used for further research and debate in future studies.

5.4 Limitations of study

When examining this study, one must address certain limitations evident in it. As discussed in the introduction, this study focuses on a more westernised or Anglophonic interpretation of Lilith as a mythological representation. Different cultural interpretations of Lilith are briefly discussed in Chapter 2, such as Babylonian, Assyrian, Bulgarian and Greek interpretations. However, the Judeo and Christian interpretations are favoured when examining the different tropes, concepts and media influenced by Lilith as a representation or figure. This limits the scope from which one can examine Lilith as the reader does not have a fully encompassed view of Lilith as a representation. Instead, these influences are dominated by predominantly westernised or Eurocentric interpretations. Hence, an examination of the different cultures and religions that have a representation of Lilith would be of great value when examining her overall representation and reach.

In addition, another limitation is that this study has predominantly focused on a series analysis of *Shadowhunters* (2016–2019) and *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–). While this has been effective in analysing two different manifestation or representation of contemporary Lilith in mainstream popular culture, it again limits the scope of analysis. The reason for this is due to the fact that Lilith, as a representation or figure, exists within a large array for different mediums and different texts. As seen in Chapter 2, Lilith is represented in film, art, series, literature, comics, music, festivals, mythology, folklore and history. While it was necessary for me to limit my scope and choose a specific medium through which to analyse Lilith, there is still a large selection of different mediums that I was not able to touch on, let alone fully examine. Thus, a thorough examination of the different mediums in which Lilith is manifested could offer some interesting results that contribute to the representation of Lilith overall.

Another limitation found within this study is the fact that the series *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–) has not concluded yet. Supposedly, the series is set to show its final season at the end of 2020 or at the beginning of 2021. Because it has not concluded yet, the viewer does not know the fate of the character Lilith. At the end of Season 3, Lilith evades death by becoming pregnant with the Dark Lord's child, as discussed in Chapter 4. I cannot determine what the final fate of the character Lilith is as it has yet to be portrayed. Thus, I do not know if this manifestation of Lilith will comply with the characteristics of Lilith that are often depicted within her multiple manifestations or representations. This ambiguity of the fate of the character Lilith in *TCAOS* (2018–) also influences how Lilith is interpreted within the different tropes or concepts found in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, specifically the *femme fatale*. As discussed in Chapter 3, the *femme fatale* often suffers a downfall or punishment at the end of a film or series; however, currently the Lilith in *TCAOS* (2018–) has yet to suffer such a downfall or punishment. Due to the fact that the series is unfinished, one does not know if this lack of a punishment is a result of a contemporary *femme fatale* emerging or if this downfall is imminent and will take place in the final series. Thus, an examination of how the character Lilith is at the end of *TCAOS* (2018–) could assist in analysing this contemporary manifestation of Lilith as well as whether or not *TCAOS* (2018–) Lilith is a *femme fatale* who experiences a downfall.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

Lilith as a representation in visual culture has the capacity for further research. As this study has shown, Lilith is a figure that resurfaces again and again in a multitude of different media. It is important to continue studying the development of Lilith as she continues to resurface within mainstream popular culture. Cate Blanchett will portray Lilith in the highly anticipated film *Borderlands*, which is adapted from a popular video game of the same name. Here Lilith is a protagonist in the video game and film adaption. This already marks a development in characterisation as the two series that I studied, namely *Shadowhunters* (2016–2018) and *The Chilling Adventures of Sabrina* (2018–), depict the character Lilith as an antagonist and antagonist-turned-antihero respectively. This new manifestation of Lilith on the horizon also restates the fact that Lilith is a pertinent character or figure that remains within contemporary popular culture.

Furthermore, one could consider a study of Lilith within a different medium, for example the video game world. One could specifically focus on the *Borderlands* video game series and study the development of the character Lilith. Similarly, one could complete a study on Lilith

within comic books. Although it was briefly touched on in Chapter 2, it is evident that Lilith has a rich history in the comic book realm.

Within comic books, Lilith has taken on the role of the vigilante in the 1975 Marvel comic book titled *Lilith Daughter of Dracula.* She has appeared as the Mother of Demons, a repeated title as seen throughout this study in the 1992 *Lilith in Ghost Rider.* Her character has even been portrayed as an antihero in the 2007 comic book titled: *Nick Fury's Howling Commandos.* If one wanted to further examine Lilith's history instead of her contemporary role in mainstream popular culture, then they could examine Lilith through art, specifically looking at Lilith's mythological role in *Lady Lilith* (1866–1868) by Dante Gabriel Rossetti. My point here is that Lilith's rich origin in past manifestations, her topical relevance in contemporary manifestations and her potential to resurface in future manifestations means that she will always be a topic of discussion. There will always be a new layer to add to her research and examination as a representation in visual culture.

Another potential consideration for future studies is the evolving role of the *femme fatale* as discussed in Chapter 3. The *femme fatale* in contemporary film does not necessarily comply with previous manifestations of the trope. Instead, there is a *femme fatale* who appears all powerful and does not necessarily receive the punishment or the character downfall expected of the noir *femme fatale.* This newer *femme fatale* is a character that gets married, has children and, most importantly, has the potential to appear completely innocent to the other characters of the film, as seen in *Gone Girl* (David Fincher 2014). I propose that a study of the different *femme fatale* tropes, with specific focus on film, could allude to a newly emerging type of *femme fatale* that has the potential to represent a different kind of fatal woman, with different goal and ideals. Not only could this be a valuable study in its own right, as it adds to the research of female roles within contemporary film, but it also contributes to decoding Lilith's representation. As suggested throughout this study, Lilith exhibits many characteristics synonymous with the *femme fatale.* If the *femme fatale* is evolving as a trope, then one could examine how this evolution impacts Lilith as a represented figure in contemporary visual culture and whether or not this contemporary Lilith embodies the qualities of this potentially new *femme fatale.*

Overall, this study has contributed research to the analysis of Lilith as both a mythological figure and as a representation within contemporary popular culture. As contemporary culture and this current postfeminist economy evolve and develop, it would be of value to continue analysing and researching how Lilith resurfaces and is affected by or effects the way in which contemporary popular culture evolves. Thus, I argue that the study of Lilith will always

have the potential for further research as Lilith as a representation in visual culture has value to offer in the way in which we interpret how women are represented in mainstream media economies. As it has been alluded to in this study, Lilith is a marker for how men interpret women who possess power. She has the potential to be considered a scapegoat who was demonised in order to maintain the status quo. Thus, how Lilith is interpreted and received within mainstream contemporary culture offers insight into how powerful women have the potential to be examined. Hence, there will always be a capacity to continue studying Lilith as a representation within both historical and contemporary popular culture.

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