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5. THE UNCANNY HUMAN CONDITION IN *BEING HUMAN*

Jules Zanger has observed that the late twentieth century heralded a “new” vampire, whose connection to evil was more complex than earlier figures. This “new” vampire tends to be “communal,” and, Zanger argues, “[n]o longer embodying metaphysical evil, no longer a damned soul, the new vampire has become, in our concerned awareness for multi-culturalism, merely ethnic” (Zanger, 1997, p. 19). The BBC series *Being Human* (2008–2013) presents such a “new” vampire, John Mitchell (Aidan Turner). Mitchell, as he is known, has for a century been part of the wider community of vampires, but is struggling to break ties with them and to invert an old vampire paradigm: rather than invading and destroying a home, he is attempting to create one. That he ultimately fails, however, demonstrates that while this “new” vampire may not present a straightforward embodiment of evil, he is evil nevertheless. In struggling with his vampire nature, Mitchell is certainly not unique among contemporary representations, but being a vampire is not the only way that Mitchell is “ethnic”: Mitchell is also an Irishman trying to make a home in England. Mitchell’s struggles as a double outsider create parallels between supernatural beings and ethnic others that may just reveal some cracks beneath a façade of a “concerned awareness for multiculturalism.”

In this essay I will examine Mitchell’s attempt to make a home in *Being Human*, particularly in relation to the role of the home, the “*Heim*,” in the uncanny or “*Unheimliche*.” I argue that Mitchell and the two other supernatural beings he attempts to create a home with, George Sands (Russell Tovey) and Annie Sawyer (Lenora Crichlow), are all double outsiders, an Irish vampire, a Jewish werewolf and a mixed-race ghost, whose ultimately failed efforts to fit into the world of humans reflects an uneasy relationship between ethnic outsiders and mainstream culture. If the “new” vampire “might well be our next door neighbour,” (Zanger, 1997, p. 19) then *Being Human* suggests that, as attractive and sympathetic as those neighbours might be, they are still also dangerous.

At the centre of my analysis is a reading of a single episode, “Another Fine Mess” (1.4), which depicts Mitchell befriending a human neighbour with disastrous results. In subsequent episodes the ultimate futility of Mitchell’s attempts to control his vampire nature becomes clear. In the end, no matter how compelling and well meaning a creature Mitchell is, even those closest to him agree that he is a threat to the human world, thereby demonstrating a profound unease with “monsters” among us. The home these supernaturals attempt to create is impossible to keep, not only because they are uncanny to humans, but also because they are uncanny to themselves.

Mitchell’s quest for a home reveals the very heart of the meaning of the uncanny, a concept most famously explored in Freud’s 1919 “*Das Unheimliche*.” Freud begins with an etymology of the German *unheimlich*, usefully illuminated by Rosemary Jackson in her discussion of fantasy literature and the uncanny. Jackson (1981) explains that the German word *heimlich*,

...signifies that which is homely, familiar, friendly, cheerful, comfortable, intimate. It gives a sense of being ‘at home’ in the world, and its negation [*unheimlich*] therefore summons up the unfamiliar, uncomfortable, strange, alien. It produces a sense of estrangement, of being not ‘at home’ in the world. (p. 65, cited in Creed, 484)

But as Barbara Creed (2005) has argued, the uncanny does not simply exist in a state of simple opposition: “The uncanny is created when something that should have remained hidden is revealed, brought into the familiar world of the everyday” (p. 484). The uncanny can also have political meaning by revealing the hidden within social structures and thereby subverting the “unifying structures and significations upon which social order depends” (Jackson, 1981, p. 69).

Creed refines the idea of the uncanny through the concept of the “everyday uncanny,” which she discusses in specific relation to sexuality. Sexuality is, she points out, something that society tries to “regulate,” creating a space for the “supposedly free expression of so-called ‘normal’ everyday sexual desires and acts” (Creed, 2005, p. 484). Creed describes a picnic held in the Melbourne Botanical Gardens, a popular area for gatherings such as family picnics, by the Melbourne Lesbian and Gay Liberation Group in the 1970s, of which she was a part. A large number of members of the Lesbian and Gay Liberation Group arrived for their own picnic with some attendees cross-dressed, memorably including two men in dresses with full beards and a little umbrella. After lunch they began to play Spin the Bottle before an

ever-growing crowd of spectators, until the arrival of the police. The officers broke up the game by announcing that only “normal games were allowed,” but not before the group had garnered some quite surprising sympathy from onlookers that was later echoed in the press (Creed, 2005, p. 486–487).

Events like this picnic were part, Creed argues, of how gay rights activists helped to change consciousness. The picnic challenged the idea of the “everyday” as “a space best described as heterosexual and familial” by introducing the uncanny presence of sexual minorities, who at that time had no public space of their own (Creed, 2005, p. 487). 1970s Melbourne was not a city where seeing “out and proud” gays and lesbians in the park was an everyday occurrence; the picnic was an example of something hidden, Melbourne’s gay and lesbian community, being revealed; the picnic is an example of the everyday uncanny. Creed examines how this kind of uncanny disruption of everyday sexuality has played out in media, specifically U.K. television shows like *Kath and Kim*, *Little Britain* and the U.S. show *The L-Word*. Through these programs, she argues, “Viewers can sit back and safely watch irruptions of the extra-quotidian from the security of the couch” (Creed, 2005, p. 486). Creed wonders whether it is still possible to shake up the everyday through these types of considered introductions of the uncanny, but within the media she contends that some programming partakes in a “commitment to the idea that not only is the familiar never set, but the unfamiliar, the uncanny, is also constantly changing” (Creed, 2005, p. 493).

By portraying monsters in our midst, *Being Human* also unsettles the familiar, using a supernatural “everyday uncanny” to explore the definition of the human, an exploration that touches on current debates about civil and human rights. *Being Human* imagines the lives of alienated individuals lacking a “normal” place in society, but who are not trying to destroy or threaten it, but to fit in. The protagonists of *Being Human* are, to borrow from *True Blood* (Home Box Office [HBO], 2008-current) trying to “mainstream;” they want to act, if not to be, human. A central premise of *Being Human*, *True Blood* and even *Twilight* is that monsters are present not in some gothic graveyard or forbidding forest, but right in the centre of town: in a bar, a high school, even at the supermarket. By employing the everyday uncanny, *Being Human* explores what it means to “be human,” to have a home and to create a family, including a non-traditional family, here the three flatmates, George, Annie and Mitchell.

The desire to be human is also a central component of the Byronic vampire hero, a figure that has been a major part of the contemporary vampire narrative since Anne Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* (1976). We can trace

Being Human's uncanny domesticity back to Anne Rice's *Interview*, which first gave us the uncanny vampire family of Louis, Lestat and the child vampire they create, Claudia. In considering the implications of this uncanny "queer" family we would do well to consider George Haggerty's analysis of Rice's vampire world as ultimately a conservative one. As he wryly notes of the popularity of Rice's vampires: "it may seem almost too good to be true that queer figures go down so well, that they leap out of their darkened hiding places into the hearts of millions. I argue that it *is* too good to be true" (6). While Rice uses homoeroticism to create her sensuous and alluring vampires, their sexuality is deployed in a way that aligns it with danger, not acceptance. I would argue that the same could be said of Mitchell, the vampire heartthrob of *Being Human*, as well as of his supernatural friends. The show depicts supernaturals with complex relationships to humanity and maps their uncanniness not onto their sexuality but instead onto their race and ethnicity. Indeed the show often plays the three supernatural outsiders against a range of outsiders whose sexual practices, such as BDSM and dogging, are on the fringes of normative sexual behaviour; the trio themselves are all heterosexuals seeking monogamous relationships. But while George, Annie and Mitchell can, on the surface of things, pass as "normal," the show also reinforces their uncanny difference not through their sexuality, but by marking their ethnic differences from normative white, Protestant English identity.

Being Human is a mixture of the flatmate comedy and horror genres and was originally conceived as a drama focused on three main characters, each suffering from an "issue," each of which would, tellingly, make it difficult for an individual to fit in to mainstream society. Annie was agoraphobic, Mitchell was a recovering sex-addict and George had anger management issues.¹ These characters morphed into supernaturals with issues: Annie becomes a ghost, Mitchell a vampire, and George a werewolf. Mitchell and George have fallen in together, with Mitchell attempting to help George, a newly minted werewolf, to cope with his condition. Mitchell is trying to stay on the wagon, to separate himself from the vampire community of blood addicts and killers of which he has been a notable part for nearly a century. In *Being Human*, the vampire state is most strongly characterized by this addiction to blood.

But Mitchell is not only marginalized by his vampiric addiction. Mitchell is also Irish, a group long seen as outsiders to British society. As a white male he can pass visually as "English," but he is marked through his accent.² Mitchell's Irish identity is referenced explicitly three times in the show, in

each instance by a member of an organization sponsored by the State. Mitchell and his maker, Herrick, recall Mitchell's vampiric revenge on a soldier who had taunted him as a "Mick," a derogatory term for the Irish (1.4). Mitchell is later referred to as "the Irishman" by a visiting social worker that he has only just briefly met (3.5). Finally a cop, volunteering reasons why someone might have it out for Mitchell notes that they might have found "that accent really annoying," to which Mitchell responds only with an indignant look (3.6). In Mitchell's encounters with individuals who are part of social, specifically State-run institutions – soldiers, social service and police officers – he is marked as a man from another (contested) homeland in the very land where he wishes to make a home. Because of his appearance Mitchell can "pass" as part of the dominant culture, but his difference is noted whenever he speaks, specifically here by those who play roles in keeping order in society, that very social order that, as Rosemary Jackson points out, the uncanny disrupts (Jackson, 1981, p. 69). It is Mitchell's vampire identity that truly makes him dangerous, but his being marked as Irish creates a parallel between these two "ethnicities." If one considers the colonial struggles between the English and the Irish, the element of danger in the vampire, a threat to civilization itself in the designs of Herrick and other vampire leaders, Mitchell's Irish identity becomes linked to a threat far more sinister than mere annoyance.

Like Mitchell, George's appearance allows him to pass as a typical Englishman; at least as long as he does not reveal the Star of David he always wears around his neck (except, of course, for that one night per month when he becomes a werewolf). George removes the marker of his Jewish identity only during these transformations, which makes practical sense, but can also be seen as symbolic of his belief that his "curse" makes him unworthy of his religious identity, as he notes in a conversation with a priest in "Bad Moon Rising" (1.6). Despite this sense of unworthiness, however, George asserts that his religious beliefs are "still very important" to him (1.6). George's Jewish identity is referenced at various points in the show, but it is this moment, when George is seeking an interpretation of 1 Cor 13: 11, which he has heard the priest recite in the face of vampiric aggression, that best illuminates the significance of George's identity as an English Jew (1.6).³ This depiction of a Jew entering a church for a clarification of a New Testament passage evokes a history of Jewish-Christian relations in England that can be dated back at least as early as Henry III's founding of the London *domus conversorum*, or "house for converts," in 1232. Jews such as George, whose only indelible mark of Jewishness is, presumably, his circumcision, may have the ability to "pass" as "normal" English Christians, but for Jews

the need to hide one's identity and one's faith in order to survive has been a part of European history from as far back as the Rheinland massacres of 1096 through the Inquisition and the Holocaust. Historically, Europe has proved an uneasy and dangerous home for Jews and they have often served as Europe's uncanny Other. As with Mitchell the Irishman's encounters with representatives of the State, George the Jew's encounter with the Church serves as a parallel to his marginalization as a supernatural being. European literary representations of the werewolf have been linked to hybrid religious and ethnic identities as far back as the Middle Ages, as the figure emerged in works that describe contact zones between Christians, Jews and Muslims and between Norman and Welsh and Irish identities in the British Isles.⁴ The modern werewolf, of course, has some strong connections to Jewish identity. Curt Siodmak, the creator of *The Wolfman* (1941) with Lon Chaney, was a German-Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany. He often thought of the Wolfman in terms of the persecuted Jew.⁵ In *Being Human*, The werewolf is a threat, but also is persecuted by vampires who cage werewolves and humans in "dog fights," an interesting contrast to the even deeper and more constant threat posed to humans by vampires.

George and Mitchell move into a house in Bristol at 1 Windsor Terrace and there they encounter Annie, who died in this house she now haunts. Annie is played by Lenora Crichlow, the daughter of a white English mother and the Trinidad-born activist Frank Gilbert Crichlow (1932–2010), who "was a stalwart symbol of black urban resistance in the face of police persecution."⁶ The show's early depiction of Annie is one of alienation. When we see her at her wake, we are struck by her alienation from those around her, as a ghost she is invisible to them as she is on and off at various points in the series. While Annie is always visible to other supernaturals, her visibility to humans waxes and wanes depending on her own confidence and sense of self. It could be said that as a member of a minority group who is visually marked by her mixed-race background, Annie's character reflects the status of people of colour in the UK. She is part of society, but never fully; she is subject to recognition by those around her. This is also true of Mitchell and George, but with Annie this question of visibility is made very literal: at times she is undetectable to all humans except those who possess psychic powers. As a ghost Annie is the least visible to humans of the three supernatural types, but in her human life Annie did not have, like Mitchell and George, the same possibility of passing into the dominant society.

Annie's mixed-race identity is most specifically referenced in series 2 when she meets Saul (Alex Lanipekun) at the small pub, the New Found

Out, where she briefly holds a job. The handsome Saul is Annie's first-ever customer and she flirtatiously and outrageously greets him as a regular even though she has never met him before. When he is a bit taken aback she responds: "No, you don't look like our usual clientele. Well, it's like *Driving Miss Daisy* in here." By alluding to a film in which a black chauffeur serves a white employer, Annie seems to signal to Saul that they share a bond as two people of mixed race in an establishment owned and predominantly patronized by whites. Mitchell and George have had their ethnicity marked in interactions with representatives of the State and Church; those between Annie and Saul take place primarily in another British "institution," the pub, or public house, which can be the focal point of a community, a kind of home away from home for those who live in its vicinity. Saul later reinforces that this pub is associated with "traditional" England when he quips to Hugh (Nathan Wright), now his rival for Annie's affection: "Man, I love this pub! It's so authentic, you know?" (2.2). Saul's remark here is meant somewhat condescendingly. Saul is an ambitious young property developer, while Hugh, who apparently has no career, is merely stepping in to help out at his father's (nearly empty) pub. But also at play is what constitutes the "authentic" in English culture and identity, a definition from which people of colour have typically been excluded.

That Saul faces discrimination as a mixed-race man in England is referenced briefly when he recounts to Annie how, in the course of foiling a robbery, he is mistakenly arrested: "So I chase him into someone's garden, and he's struggling so much I'm literally having to lie on him. I'm thinking, 'This has stopped being heroic now, this has got kind of funny.' Anyway, finally the police show up and they arrest me for trespassing!" (2.2). Later, as Annie is discussing both Hugh and Saul with George as rivals for her attention, she tells him: "Saul and I have a lot in common." George replies, "What's that supposed to mean?" as though Annie were choosing Saul over Hugh based on shared racial background (2.2). But what Annie really means is that both she and Saul have experienced death. Saul's recounting of his arrest foreshadows his sharing another story with Annie—his frightening encounter with death—a secret that he has been manipulated to reveal to Annie through communications from "the other side." Annie has already rejected death and now the spirits of the afterlife attempt to use Saul to force her into the afterlife. Under their malicious influence Saul first assaults Annie, but ultimately redeems himself by saving her from being sent to Purgatory. Once again, a character's supernatural identity mirrors her minority identity. Annie and Saul share not only their mixed-race identity, but also their connection to death and the afterlife.

The minority identities of all three supernaturals may also be reflected in the setting of the first two seasons of the program in Bristol. In the twentieth century Bristol had an important role in race relations in Britain. The Bristol Bus Boycott of 1963 is credited with catalysing anti-discrimination legislation in England, including the landmark Race Relations Act of 1965.⁷ Long before that, in the first half of the eighteenth century, Bristol was a leading port for the slave trade in England, and also a major landing spot for the Irish and the persecuted Jews of Europe. The show's creators felt that, given this historical role, the port city would have been easy for vampire outsiders to infiltrate, as it was for other minorities.⁸ In 1.5 we learn that Richard Turner, a vampire who engaged in the slave trade, ran for Parliament and killed over 1000 people, was the first vampire to "have a double life," which he led in Bristol. The show also draws on this history in terms of its imagery. In Series One, Episode 6, Annie frees from the vampires' headquarters a group of humans imprisoned and used for their blood. In a striking sequence in which Annie draws upon hitherto untapped powers, she liberates the trapped and exploited human prisoners, first among them a black woman. With eyes glowing a florescent blue and her hair whipped by supernatural winds Annie not only frees others, but also reaches a new level of power for herself. This new power is also tied to Annie's personal story. While it seems at first that hers was an accidental death caused by a fall down a flight of stairs, the audience learns later that her fiancé, Owen, actually pushed her to her death. Discovering this and avenging herself is the unfinished business that keeps Annie from moving on to the afterlife. When Annie's time does come, though, she will refuse to leave, so bound has she become to the familial structure and home she and her friends create together.

Each of the "trinity" of supernatural characters is then, a double outsider and each has an ethnic background that could also make possible a kind of uncanny revelation, as those of Irish, Jewish and mixed-race backgrounds can sometimes "pass" as part of a dominant "English" community, just as the three supernaturals attempt to "pass" in the world of humans, interacting with colleagues, neighbours, friends and even lovers unaware of their "true nature." "That these beings have "true" natures is made clear, especially in relation to Mitchell. The vampire Daisy admonishes Mitchell as he encourages a group of vampires to stop killing: "A shark can only ever be a shark. Maybe it's you who's in the wrong, for hating what you are so much" (3.3). Her words echo those of Herrick, Mitchell's maker, to Mitchell 1.1: "You're a shark. Be a shark" (1.1). Annie's refusal to join the dead in the afterlife is very much like the refusal of her friends George and Mitchell

to accept their own identities. Mitchell vacillates, but ultimately rejects the vampire community that welcomes him, and George never fully accepts his “condition.” Indeed each of the characters continually rejects attempts by their respective communities to welcome them in, choosing the human world that does not accept them over worlds where they would have “homes” if they accepted their “true” natures. These characters not only figure as uncanny to viewers, they are uncanny to themselves. If we think back to the German root of uncanny it seems that to be “*unheimlich*” to oneself would make the possibility of finding a home, much less of being “at home” with oneself, impossible.

This focus on the uncanny and the untenable role of the outsider is nowhere clearer than in Series 1, Episode 4. The episode opens with a shot of Bristol’s city centre at night and with a voiceover by Mitchell, who soon appears in the heart of the city: “Where do I belong? Where do I fit? Who are my people? Where do my loyalties lie? We all choose our tribe” (1:4). Mitchell is a monster hidden in our midst; observing humans as they move about the city and wondering about his place in the world. He continues, “It’s that need to belong. To live within boundaries. ’Cause it’s scary on the outside; on the fringes,” we see a shot of police in the foreground and Bristol’s cathedral in the backdrop, representatives of English institutions—State and Church. Then there is a cut to George, also shot in front of a place of worship, a mosque, doing a kind of werewolf walk-of-shame in tight, dirty, effeminate clothes he has presumably scrounged after a rough night of transforming in the woods. As a group of men standing in front of the mosque look at George in disapproval we hear: “Some labels are forced on us. They mark us, set us apart.” Next we cut to Annie, isolated in darkness in her own home: “‘til we’re like ghosts just drifting through other peoples’ lives.” Finally there is a cut back to Mitchell walking outside in the city at night, morphing through the various wardrobes he has adopted in his last hundred years of trying to “find himself”: “But only if we let the labels hold. You can piss your whole life away trying out who you might be. It’s when you’ve worked out who you are that you can really start to live.” Then follows a cut to the series title: “Being Human,” as though this monologue has captured not only the essence of Mitchell’s searching, but of the human condition itself.

The episode explores the relationship of the outsider to the mainstream through its focus on Mitchell’s struggle to “be human.” Directly after this opening monologue we see Mitchell stride through the door at the vampires’ Bristol headquarters. He formally breaks with Herrick, who had turned Mitchell into a vampire on the battlefield during the First World War and

with whom Mitchell had killed for decades. Herrick has scoffed at Mitchell's "fad" of attempting to be human and expects him back, telling him there will always be a place for him, but Mitchell is determined to work on the new life he has been building with George and Annie at Windsor Terrace, a desire that we learn later in the series seems to have emerged in him when he met George two years earlier. In earlier episodes he has already begun to try to interact with neighbours, much to George's dismay, since George doubts that supernaturals can ever have a place in the human world. There are several sequences that repeat shots of Mitchell leaving the entrance to his home, squinting up at the daylight and entering the world. And when he does, he encounters his neighbour, 12-year-old Bernie (Mykola Allen), a bullied boy whom Mitchell defends and takes under his wing, with the blessing of Bernie's mother, Fleur (Julia Ford), a single mom who seems attracted to Mitchell. The burgeoning friendship, part of a conscious campaign by Mitchell to become a true part of the neighbourhood, is continually shot through shifting interiors of the kitchens and sitting rooms of the two households, with Mitchell and Bernie entering each other's domestic spaces and creating a friendship.

There are two other plot lines in the episode that also deal with questions of identity. The peace of the household is becoming threatened by Annie, the ghost, who is acting like a Poltergeist in reaction to her discovery that her fiancé, Owen, is actually her murderer. George the werewolf is falling for Nina, a nurse he's met at work, but he is tormented by the thought that he is dragging her into a world of danger (he is) and that he is not actually "fit to live among decent people" (1.4).⁹

The Mitchell/Bernie relationship is, however, the heart of the episode. Mitchell has taken on the role of father figure to Bernie and after a day of fun and an impromptu junk food party for the pair and George at Mitchell's house, Mitchell has sent Bernie home with a DVD. Mitchell thinks it is one of his Laurel and Hardy comedy collections, but it is actually a kind of vampire snuff film that he had stashed in a Laurel and Hardy cover because he has been unable to give it up as he had promised George and Annie, despite his attempt to embrace humanity. This struggle to contain his vampire nature is one to which he will, in the end, admit defeat, finally showing the truth in the werewolf McNair's assertion that "Vampires don't reform," and suggesting the essential perversion of the outsider, despite good intentions (3.7).

Bernie is caught viewing the vampire DVD by his mother who, enraged, crosses over to Mitchell and accuses him of being a paedophile. The whole neighbourhood joins in, forming a mob in front of the house, pelting it with

eggs and tomatoes and spray-painting “pervs” on the front wall and on the front door the epithet, “peedos,” the misspelling of which George later points out to comic effect. Finally a brick is thrown through the window of the house, shattering any sense of security. In an ironic reversal of monster narrative, George the monster must board up a broken window. That night George and Mitchell sit watching the 1925 Lon Chaney classic, *Phantom of the Opera*. As a mob chases the Phantom on the screen Mitchell voices the classic interpretation of the solitary, misunderstood Monster. For George, now feeling vulnerable in the former sanctuary of his own sitting room, the scene seems straight out of a “documentary” (1.4).

The incident threatens all that the trio has been trying to build. Soon Mitchell, George and Annie are standing in their entryway debating the difference between humans and monsters before the backdrop of a large mounted poster of a Buddha statue, a visual image of the contemplative path to “being human,” something that seems completely out of reach for them. The episode’s climax comes when Bernie tries to set things right but is tragically mowed down by a car when he responds to his mother’s command to return home. As Bernie lies dying in the hospital, Mitchell offers Fleur to give him life as a vampire, an offer she ultimately takes. The last we see of her and Bernie is at a train station with Mitchell, as he sees them off to an unknown new life.

The episode’s focus on belonging and the difficulty of determining who is a “monster” is in keeping with Nicholas Royle’s observation that the Uncanny ‘has to do with a strangeness of framing and borders, an experience of liminality’ (2003, p. 2). The episode visualizes the liminal uncanny of this “new vampire” as an everyday liminal uncanny. Mitchell is continually framed as moving through the doorway of his house out into the world. He encounters Bernie crossing the street, they move in and out of each other’s homes, sitting in each others’ kitchens or sitting rooms, always punctuated with shots of the crossing of thresholds. This focus on shooting through the threshold is echoed by shots of George and Nina communicating on the thresholds of their respective homes, trying to bridge the gap between them created by George’s secret identity. Annie observes the chaos caused by Bernie’s death from the threshold of her home. Bernie looks fearfully and with some longing out his window to Mitchell; he is trapped within his home by the wishes of his mother and the misunderstanding between her and Mitchell. The window of Mitchell’s home has been breached by the brick. Mitchell and George sit together on their couch watching a movie with mugs of tea in what should be the most comfortable, homey moment possible, but

we can see the curtains moving and George complains of the cold, since their window glass is now destroyed along with their comfort and sense of security.

All of these visual moments evoke the “*Heim*” in “*unheimlich*,” as well as the uneasy boundary between these two opposites. At Windsor Terrace Annie, George and Mitchell attempt to create a space where they can try to live “hidden in plain sight,” seemingly assimilating into the human world, but also protected and apart. In this way their situation seems to parallel the relationship of other excluded minorities to the dominant society. And while George remains so worried that they are the monsters, not fit to move among humans, by the episode’s end Mitchell has decided that he cannot have a home in the human world. When Mitchell met Fleur they seemed to agree that “modern living” was isolating and alienating. When Fleur learns that Mitchell lives just across the way, she says “That’s modern living for you. I don’t know half the neighbours. Bin Laden could be stashed away in #6 and I wouldn’t know” (1.6). The episode’s evocation of the everyday uncanny raises the spectre of threats to the world of the home. Who are your neighbours? What are they up to? What is hidden behind the closed doors of seemingly secure, stable and even cosy homes? The reference to Osama bin Laden implies that the foreigner living next door could be an arch-terrorist, a kind of nightmare example of fear of the immigrant outsider. It is not that the humans are completely innocent in the tragedy of this episode. While Mitchell is a dangerous being, it is Fleur who leads the neighbourhood charge on Mitchell, George and Annie. The mob has eggs, tomatoes and spray paint instead of torches and pitchforks, but the mentality is the same. It’s a witch-hunt just as in *The Phantom of the Opera*. And it is Fleur who is at least in part, if not wholly responsible for Bernie’s death. She is the one who, seemingly open and liberal, led the charge against Mitchell. And yet, the catalyst for the episode’s tragedy is Mitchell, and more specifically, his desire to assimilate. Because of Mitchell’s vampire nature, however, finding a secure place doesn’t seem possible. And it is his inability to break with vampire desire, here shown in his hiding of the video, which demonstrates that he is a latent danger even when he doesn’t kill. Annie says of him in “Your Body Is a Condemned Wonderland” (3.8): “A bomb is still a bomb, even if it hasn’t gone off yet.” Having a “monster” in our midst whether he is bin Laden or a vampire seems a recipe for disaster. That this vampire is also an Irishman and thereby associated at least for some in England with terrorism on English soil only deepens the association between Mitchell’s dual “ethnicities.”

After his experience with Fleur and Bernie, Mitchell returns to the vampire headquarters and the episode ends with him presenting himself to Herrick and declaring, "I'm in." Mitchell has tried to become a part of the human world, but he has found it impossible, his innocent gestures of friendship twisted through misunderstanding. His opening questions, "Where do I belong? Where do I fit? Who are my people? Where do my loyalties lie?" seem to have been answered: he belongs with the vampires. After the events of 1.4, Mitchell's tenuous hold on his humanity seems to break. He is welcomed back into the vampire fold in 1.5 with a celebration at the funeral home that the vampires use as a front for their activities. Mitchell addresses his fellow vampires: "Thank you for taking me back. I've seen what humanity is really like. And this is where I belong. I'm home now" (1.5).

After this seeming return to the vampire fold, Mitchell bounces back and forth between the vampire community and his home with George and Annie, unable to choose a side and unable to satisfy members of either group. The series two storyline for Mitchell concerns whether or not he can be redeemed. He meets Dr. Lucy Jaggert (Lyndsey Marshal), who is part of a religiously inspired research program targeted at supernaturals. She believes that Mitchell can change, but ultimately, when he finds out that Lucy has betrayed him, he and the vampire Daisy (Amy Manson) horrifically slaughter 20 people in a train car. This "Box Tunnel Massacre" seems to reconnect Mitchell irretrievably to his vampire nature. As George observes: "Mitchell's gone now" (2.8). By 3.8, his last episode, Mitchell, realizing he cannot overcome his vampire nature and will therefore always pose a threat to an innocent humanity wants to "do the decent thing," and begs George to end his life by staking him in the heart (3.8). While George at first hesitates, in the end, Mitchell cannot be allowed to exist and George kills him out of love so that Mitchell cannot be used as a deadly pawn by the vampires.

With Mitchell's death the show's focus on the everyday uncanny shifts into a more epic mode as Series 4 opens with a scene depicting an apocalyptic future of vampire domination which Annie, George and their friends become central to averting. This story line too draws upon questions of race and insider/outsider. Vampires create concentration camps for humans in the nightmare apocalyptic scenario that is foretold and one scene visually evokes Auschwitz as well as mixing the iconography of Nazism with contemporary political imagery (4.7). This has been foreseen in terms that echo the genocides of World War II by the vampire Ivan, who foresees chaos and mass death if the existence of the supernatural, that quotidian uncanny, becomes known.¹⁰ Ultimately this terrifying apocalypse for humans can only

be averted through the sacrifice of the supernaturals. Just as Mitchell has realized that he must die in order to avoid committing any more violence against innocent humans, George and later Annie sacrifice themselves to save George and Nina's baby, Eve, who, according to prophecy, must also die in order to prevent humanity's domination and destruction by vampires.

What does it mean that Mitchell, Annie and George each sacrifice themselves in order to protect humanity? One way to answer that question might be to return to Jules Zanger's observation that the "new" vampire is "merely ethnic." In a world where diverse identity is truly embraced then it might be possible to be "merely" ethnic, having one identity among many accepted possibilities. Through Annie, George and Mitchell's identities as double outsiders, however, *Being Human* subtly reveals the cracks in a façade of "concerned awareness for multi-culturalism." Relationships between different groups that are superficially harmonious are actually tenuous and fraught.

Being Human is not a political allegory and the series is arguably designed more to entertain than to challenge, allowing audiences to glimpse the uncanny from Creed's "safety of the couch" (2005, p. 486). The picnic in Melbourne that Creed describes where gay and lesbian activists put themselves on the line by being "out" in society in every sense of that term is obviously much more politically engaged than a show *such as this*, which is not an explicitly political work, but an imaginative representation. Nevertheless, the show has political implications and finally, while the depictions of Annie, George and Mitchell as sympathetic and attractive may seem on some level progressive, their portrayals ultimately reflect deep-seated anxieties about the Other next door, as exemplified by Mitchell. That these double outsiders, both supernaturals and minorities, are each ultimately willingly sacrificed to save humanity also seems to point to the uneasy place of minorities in English society. The supernatural trio's unease with their "own kind" and their willingness to die to save the very group that cannot accept them suggests an impossibility of assimilation and acceptance and even of self-acceptance. Minorities, such as those of Irish, Jewish or mixed-race backgrounds, may be highly assimilated, but, if we consider them in relation to normative institutions of the State, the Anglican Church or even the "authentic" pub, they are nevertheless still an everyday uncanny for the dominant imaginary. For such outsiders, uncanny even to themselves, there can be no home, and, significantly, no one else's home is safe while they exist in our midst. The "new" vampire next door turns out to be not so new after all. We might

welcome in the outsider, we might tolerate him, but he is (and will always be) a monster.

NOTES

- ¹ <http://www.ugo.com/tv/exclusive-writer-toby-whithouse-on-being-human> Accessed 13 October 2013. Many thanks to U. Melissa C. Anyiwo for her insightful editing and comments on this essay.
- ² On voice as a distinctive and racialized marker of Irish identity see Walter, 162–167.
- ³ The priest recites the King James translation of 1 Cor 13: 11: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”
- ⁴ See Lampert-Weissig, 41–63.
- ⁵ <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/feb/03/entertainment/la-et-classic-hollywood3-2010feb03> Accessed 10 October 2013.
- ⁶ <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/sep/26/frank-crichlow-obituary-civil-rights-activist> Accessed 20 October 2013.
- ⁷ Paterson, Roz (29 September 2003). “The day they took racism on board; It all started in Bristol in 1963, when the conscience of Britain was awoken by one black community worker.” *The Herald*, archived at *LexisNexis* (Glasgow: Scottish Media Newspapers). Accessed 13 October 2013.
- ⁸ On the choice of location see: Joanne Black, *A Guide to Being Human: Series 1–3*. Classic TV Press, 2011, Location 8400 of 9125. On Bristol as a slave port see Coules.
- ⁹ George later accidentally infects Nina through a scratch and she too becomes a werewolf.
- ¹⁰ For a reading of this speech, particularly in the context of defining the human, see Germanà, 67.

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