

Atalie Gerhard

The Monstrous Return of the Commodified Female: How *Zombie Strippers* (2008) and *From Dusk Till Dawn* (2014) Transgress Foundational American Cultural Values

Abstract: This article examines how the film *Zombie Strippers* (2008, dir. Jay Lee) and the first season of the series *From Dusk Till Dawn* (2014, created by Robert Rodriguez) deploy the Gothic mode to stage monstrous transgressions of commodified females in the American historical and cultural contexts of the home front and the borderlands. By transforming into monsters, the erotic dancers in the two films above challenge the patriarchal foundations of their culture by subverting their objectification, literally consuming the bodies of male consumers. I further explain how their rebellions reference the frontier history of America, which provided Western horror cinema with tropes of evil “otherness” that blend stereotypes of Native Americans with Gothic fantasies of excess. My readings cite canonical theories from the fields of cultural and literary studies, but also more recent scholarship on the philosophical paradoxes of the eternal zombie condition or the sexually transgressive dimension of vampirism.

Keywords: frontier, horror cinema, feminism, Gothic Studies, eroticism