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Queer Fear:
Vampirism and the Transmittable Evil of Homoeroticism

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Queer Fear: Vampirism and the Transmittable Evil of Homoeroticism

By

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B.A, Emory University, 2020

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An abstract of
A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the
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Abstract

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By Carla-Joan Carmona

The alluring vampire has consistently been one of media's most resourceful monsters. As a human-monster hybrid, authors ascribe societal fears to the vampiric figures—fears that often resort to villainizing the unknown or the dissenting. Vampires are often queer-coded individuals who transgress heteronormative hegemony. This queer-coding resulted in the vampire becoming a figure of excess and ultimately, the utilization of the vampire to communicate the fear of the queer. This thesis explores the intersection between queerness and vampirism. While vampirism can be a metaphor for the transgression of the status quo, the vampire's grim fate invites speculation over queer-coding's effectiveness—and ultimately, its intentions. To audiences, the lines between fiction and reality may blur. Therefore, the analysis of homophobic messages in vampiric fiction is necessary to understand why these tropes are employed. This thesis analyzes monumental vampiric texts, such as *Dracula*, *Carmilla*, and *Interview with the Vampire* to understand how each text's manifestations of queerness mold narrative human fears.

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Introduction

Queering Horror, Queering the Vampire

"What have I become in becoming a vampire?

Where am I to go?"

-Anne Rice, *Interview with the Vampire*

Literary horror employs tropes that invoke societal fears. To invoke such fears, authors rely on recognizable themes, scenarios, and imagery that ensures readers' disgust. Yet, the most remarkable horror technique employed by authors and filmmakers is the usage of monsters—embodiments of horror so vile that they transgress human imagination. Monsters make recognizable antagonists, since they not only possess unique traits that distinguish them from humans, but their reign of terror is malleable to authorial and societal concerns. A study by *Huffington Post*'s contributor, Outspeak, determined a correlation between the politics of the United States and the popularity of certain monsters in film. Editor Zac Thompson reports, "When a Republican is in power we get zombies and when a Democrat is in power we get vampires. Each monster represents the fears of the opposition power." Although this may seem like an uncanny coincidence, this correlation can be read as intentional. Representations of monstrosities are inherently political since they represent communal fears.

Although most monsters cause intrigue, the figure of the vampire embodies what Clive Bloom describes as "the most enduring of all gothic monsters mutating and developing with each

generation of writers" (185). The vampire has remained relevant throughout centuries. The creature possesses a cultural range unheard of for other monsters. From embodying unholy and parasitic manifestations of evil to being an object of adolescent desire, the vampire consistently reinvigorates itself through written and filmic means. The overwhelmingly popular vampire succeeds in representing politicized fears of the humans on which it preys.

Perhaps what intrigues humans so much about the vampire is the fact that these monsters are not always represented as morphed, grotesque figures. The vampire may possess a human physique, thus enabling its predatory rampage through the human masses. Rebekah Sheldon states, "The vampire … not only brings into focus the symptomatic anxieties of his age in a way that makes those symptoms readable, he also disturbs the causal relation between disease and diagnosis" (177). The disturbance Sheldon mentions characterizes the societal paranoia with which vampiric narratives struggle, especially since the vampire's success rests upon the creature's ability to remain anonymous. The blurring of the vampiric ailment and humanity, at least physically, represents a major dilemma for human protagonists under the vampiric threat. To discern imposter from human daunts the morally righteous in vampiric narratives.

While many readings can be attributed to vampiric tales, vampiric narratives exploit political concerns that allude to marginalized folks—particularly because the vampire is a creature that masquerades throughout its supernatural existence. The unseen and unheard subject attracts authors, spawning the creation of vampiric stories in which the vampire stands for the dissenter, the foreigner, and most notably, the homosexual. Queer readings of vampiric tales are common scholarly takes on these narratives, especially since the act of feeding often possesses the language of intimacy. Scholar Richard Dryer researches the queerness of vampiric nature, and analyzes the following on sexual readings of vampiric narratives: "Yet the vampire seems

especially to represent sexuality, for his/her interest in humans is not purely instinctual, and s/he does not characteristically savage them – s/he bites them, with a bite just often described as a kiss" (Dryer 75). The motif of the kiss is a common image that appears in vampiric texts, and it is given to humans regardless of gender identity. The fluidity of the vampire adds to the assumption of inherent vampiric queerness, and such fluidity in most monumental texts is controversial. Dryer also observes the following concerning the vampire and its inherently sexual nature:

> Vampirism is not merely, like all our sexuality, private, it is also secret. It is something to be hidden, to be done without anyone knowing. The narrative structure of the vampire tale frequently consists of two parts, the first leading up to the discovery of the vampire's hidden nature, the second concerned with his/her destruction. (78)

The privacy of intimacy and vampirism resonates with the language of queerness. The secretive nature of the vampire and the vampire's eventual uncovering possess queer-coded analogies to the experiences of queer folk. I define queer-coding as the implied homoeroticism of vampiric nature, and the characterization of characters (in this case, vampiric) as queer through indirect methods—such as mannerisms, appearance, and attitudes that diverge from the heteronormative status quo. The vampire is often a queer subject through dissenting actions, yet, many texts fail to explicitly confirm the sexualities of their human-monster hybrids. The mere implication of queerness raises questions about the motives of these narratives.

As with other monsters, the vampire's existence embodies the political through the viewpoints of notable works—especially since notable vampiric antagonists embrace their queerness. The way vampires embrace their queer nature could often laud vampirism, yet, this is not true in the case of monumental vampiric works. Recognizable vampiric tales, such as Bram

Stoker's *Dracula*, punish the vampire and invoke the audience's sympathy by characterizing the vampire as a fiendish, unreasonable creature. Rarely are the monsters as understandable as Mary Shelly's behemoth. The uncovering Dryer describes often leads to the destruction of the vampire, and therefore, the prevalence of humanity and morality. What concerns me about the destruction of the vampire is that the monster, in the narratives' viewpoints, merits extinction because of the characteristics that make it a queer subject. The private feeding, the unholy impulse, and the conversion of others to vampiric queerness warrants correction. The vampiric queer-coding, instead of celebratory, is fatal.

The queer-coding of literary and filmic villains is a common practice among authors and filmmakers. This coding implies that average readers and viewers will perceive queerness as an evil trait. One of film history's most recognizable villains, Norman Bates from Hitchcock's *Psycho*, cross-dresses as a visual indicator of his dissenting attitudes. His gender troubles with his own identity and his mother's seem intended to horrify the viewer at first glance—the assumption being that someone who struggles with identity will, logically, resort to unfathomable violence. *Gothic Histories: The Taste of Terror, 1764 to the Present* examines Norman Bates and how *Psycho* treats his fluid identity: "Hitchcock's film recruited Freudian theory on behalf of horror effect and by so doing redirected the gothic imagination firmly towards the human-made-monstrous, its hero the marginalized, *sexually* deviant psychopath" (Bloom 180). Although effective in harnessing the fear of Hitchcock's viewers by exploiting the issues of an unhinged psychopath, the effects of queer-coding villains go beyond the horror of viewers.

The repercussions of queer-coding villains affect queer individuals, who see themselves portrayed in media as hunted, predatory monsters. The piece "Who's Afraid of the Big, Bad

Trans Woman? On Horror and Transfemininity" analyzes the possible effects of queer-coding villainous characters (such as Norman Bates) and horrific monsters in media. The author states, "When people look to pop culture and see trans women portrayed as dangerous impostors that they should be afraid of, they cease to see trans women as people and start seeing them as monsters" (Rude). An already marginalized community of folks faces not only the scrutiny of the heteronormative who seek their "correction," but they also receive the added paranoia of being characterized as depraved villains. For many, the lines between fiction and reality begin to blur.

This project examines the queer-coded vampires that have shaped vampiric and horror fiction. The monumental texts *Dracula*, *Carmilla*, and *Interview with the Vampire* have more than their vampiric subjects in common: their villains are hypersexualized, queer-coded monsters who interlope the human masses and seek companionship among unexpecting humans. Their queerness and transgression against the righteous heteronormative seal their fates as tragic. Although these texts present their villains as controversially depraved, the implied evil of their homoerotic impulses haunts the texts' didactic purposes. What concerns me is the possibility that queer-coding can be a source of necessary societal transgression, yet, the destruction of queer-coded vampires may be interpreted as grounds for latent homophobic messages. In what I can only describe as "queer fear," these texts employ queerness in their portrayals of villainy as a method to evoke collective horror. Yet, what queer fear showcases is disdain for queer subjects, and an apprehension for impending realities.

Chapter One

Dracula and the Fear of Penetration: The Plight of Jonathan Harker

"Enter freely and of your own free will!"

-Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* is a versatile novel. Academic arguments concerning what the novel can embody usually gesture towards narratives that explore contemporary societal anxieties and fears. Whether it is the fear of the foreigner, the usurper, or the queer, themes of societal horror and paranoia seep into the novel's scholarship. The resourcefulness of horror stems from how responsive these narratives are to human concerns; where authors look to the paranormal and the gothic in hopes of exploring communal dread.

Count Dracula is one of the most recognizable monsters in media—sharing the spotlight with Frankenstein's monster and other gothic and tragic figures. Quite like Shelly's sensitive behemoth, Stoker's villain has inspired gothic culture throughout the centuries. Fueling the vampiric literary tradition readers and film-viewers know today, *Dracula*'s tale has encouraged the communication of fears and desire through the vampiric allegory. By "the vampiric allegory," I gesture towards the multi-faceted richness of the literary monster. Whether it be vampiric intention, vampiric desire, or an aspect as tangible as vampiric physicality, the vampire

possesses traits or employs methods through which evocative horror ensues. A hybrid creature who prowls the night, the vampire is an imposter whose paranormal abilities go undetected.

The anonymity of the vampire concerns the masses in the average plot, since the monster's tools of oppression are usually unseen. A common metaphor and tool of oppression in vampiric fiction rests in the monster's mouth—the sharp, hidden weapon through which the bloodsucker terrorizes human masses. The threat of penetration through bite pervades vampiric texts, posing a threat to anyone hypnotized by the alluring human-monster hybrid. Fangs as phallic objects correspond accordingly to the vampire's heightened sexuality. Since the vampire is usually a creature of intense sex appeal and a ravenous desire to conquer, a strong sexual appetite accompanies the appetite for blood—at least allegorically. I use the word "allegorically" because, in many narratives, the vampire cannot engage in conventional sexual intercourse. Sexual satisfaction in traditional vampiric lore derives from feeding and other vampiric activities.[1]

In Stoker's *Dracula*, humans fear the vampire's quest for sexual gratification and they attempt to vanquish it for fear that such erotic gluttony will colonize their humanity. The mysterious Count Dracula from Transylvania crosses the European continent seeking to strengthen his vampiric claim to power. Therefore, the human social project in *Dracula* dedicates its energy to preventing what Leila S. May would describe as "bodily invasion" (8) by freeing England from his clutches. In May's essay "'Foul Things of the Night': Dread in the Victorian

[1] Though, in recent narratives such as Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight*, the vampire is capable of conventional sexual intercourse and reproduction. While the traditional canon conflicts with this notion, the revival of vampiric media in the late 2000s and early 2010s constantly challenges traditional lore to address cultural trends and anxieties.

Body," she analyzes the connotations behind Count Dracula's reign of terror and offers insight on why humans must thwart the sensual threat of the vampire. May states:

> Significantly, Dracula, the walking, waking emblem of the nineteenth-century horror of disease and contagion, infects not men (*although the threat that he might do so pervades the text*) but women, who, much like prostitutes, act as 'reservoirs of infection' and 'potential pollutants of men'. … The true threat lies in the fact that the danger is invisible; it spreads in such a way that the source of contagion is rendered nearly impossible to trace. (18, my emphasis)

The "invisible danger" May highlights in this passage exists due to the presence of Count Dracula's fangs. Penetrating humanity is only possible because of the existence of a weapon that can transform masses into paranormal monsters. Though the threat may seem universal, May is correct in the observation that the threat is gendered. If the threat materializes itself as gendered, why does the text express fear over what Count Dracula can do to humankind, rather than just women? The text devotes its first chapters on the terror the young lawyer Jonathan Harker experiences with his encounter with vampires. Yet, Jonathan is never bitten, even though Count Dracula expresses interest in feeding upon him. By constructing a narrative that threatens violence against men, Stoker employs horror tropes (such as imprisonment and psychological manipulation) that allow the protagonists to engage in a struggle. The struggle is symbolic and presents a simple question that characterizes one of the core themes in *Dracula*: will good prevail over evil? Automatically denoting that the penetrator, Count Dracula, is evil, and the potentially penetrated, Jonathan, is good. *Dracula*'s initial chapters use Jonathan Harker's plight as an allegory for endangered manhood.

The threat of infection coincides with the fear of penetration—the feminizing ritual that would result in the subversion of the masculine. What interests me about Stoker's *Dracula*, among all things, is the fact that the vampire's fangs are a threat that psychologically tortures men, yet only actually penetrates women. The paranoia surrounding penetration represents not only the frailty of masculinity in the text but how homoerotic behavior exists as an inherent threat. In this chapter, I examine the threat of masculine penetration in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Furthermore, I analyze the purpose of *Dracula*'s usage of non-consent, concluding with how the homoerotic is inherently perceived as a social malady—a social malady unable to recognize the boundaries of the heteronormative.

Dracula's narrative begins with the frightening account of Jonathan Harker's travels. His journey to Transylvania is quite eventful: the locals warn him against reaching his destination, he is given trinkets corresponding to local superstitions, and wolves attack his carriage. Yet, neither the tumultuous journey nor Jonathan's "queer dreams" (Stoker 8) prevent the young lawyer from achieving his business goals at Count Dracula's castle. Quite some time after his arrival, Jonathan realizes, "The castle is a veritable prison, and I am a prisoner!" (Stoker 39). The novel foreshadows Harker's imprisonment through the events that preceded his arrival. Yet, Stoker's narrative also connotes Harker's naïveté as careless—not heeding various warnings and chances to turn back, the ambition of a young man overshadows judgment and may lead to his death. Though the narrative may present this diligence as selfless and dutiful, the reader may infer Jonathan's ambitions as potentially mortal. While the narrative contends Harker's death, his traumatic experiences brought by imprisonment are guaranteed.

Imprisonment in *Dracula* could be interpreted as an allegory for queerness and its inferred predatory nature, specifically because the vampire's moral compass tolerates misguiding

prey into submission. Stoker's novel utilizes the trope of the predatory queer man to communicate impending danger. Though this trope is problematic by implying that queerness is inherently deceiving and predatory, the trope complements both the vampire and the paranoia of being forcefully penetrated. *Dracula* exacerbates this paranoia by weaponizing the stealthy and sexually fluid essence of the vampire. The deceiving nature of the vampire reveals itself in *Dracula* by the subversion of a particular vampiric quirk: invitation.

Count Dracula reverses the vampiric necessity by posing the invitation to his prey, thus, equating himself and his nature to Harker's own—regardless of whether Harker is aware of this. The Count enthusiastically announces upon meeting Harker "Welcome to my house! Enter *freely* and of *your own will*!" (25, my emphasis). The logic the Count employs phrases a simple proposition: the admittance into a space. Jonathan accepts. Harker consents to enter Dracula's abode, and though unknowingly, also grants Dracula permission to view him as prey. Readers are supposed to sympathize with Harker and the plight he unknowingly faces because logic infers that the exchange between Count Dracula and Harker is non-consensual. The assumption of non-consent stems from the actuality of the invitation scene: consent cannot be reached if one party deprives the other of crucial information. This lack of consent, or malice, subconsciously establishes Count Dracula as a depraved villain, one who weaponizes his knowledge and preys on someone of his same gender.

Imprisonment also possesses a literal interpretation in *Dracula*. While allegorical and literal readings can be interpreted, both analyses may complement each other when one explores the predatory nature of Stoker's vampire. By utilizing the vampiric logic of consent as presented in this text, Count Dracula feels entitled to restrict Jonathan's movements throughout his extended stay. He warns, "Let me advise you (…) that should you leave these rooms you will not

by any chance go to sleep in any other part of the castle. It is old, and has many memories, and there are bad dreams for those who sleep unwisely" (Stoker 47). Although retrospectively, the reader understands this warning to be against encountering vampiric horrors, Count Dracula's claim to Harker's body and mind permeates this worry.

The claim to Harker's body stems from the idea of imprisonment, and the environment Stoker constructs aids this assumption. Because of this entitlement to the body, queer readings of Castle Dracula are plausible. The insistence to claim Harker as his own escalates after Harker disregards his warnings and stumbles into the brides' lair. Count Dracula fervently claims, "How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him *when I had forbidden it*? Back, I tell you all! *This man belongs to me*!" (55, my emphasis). This assertion is explicitly queer because it uses sexual and romantic language—claiming a right to ownership. Some readings of *Dracula* conclude that the relationship between the heteronormative and its subversion rests on the locale in which the plot develops. Specifically, Castle Dracula can be interpreted as a place of private desire rather than conventional human norms. Barry McCrea theorizes the following in regard to the concept of desire and the closet:

> In telling us something about the relationship between private, individual desire and the social mechanisms through which it is channeled or narrated, the examination of *Dracula* through the lens of the closet can also tell us something about the creative imagination—itself a kind of closet, a sealed realm of private fantasy—and how it relates to the "real" or "official" world outside. (252)

If such a place exists—a place where conventions of the closet manifest themselves through private fantasy—then Castle Dracula embodies the realm in which the "official" world outside is irrelevant. The narrative treats this space as abnormal. Any occurrence at Castle Dracula is

abnormal because the environment exists outside of the realm of normativity by employing flamboyant aesthetics. The characters' relationship to their environment exalts this abnormality. During his stay, Harker ponders the "odd deficiencies in the house" (30), and in this "sea of wonders," Jonathan states "I doubt; I fear; I think strange things which I dare not confess to my own soul" (29). The relationship between the characters' actions and the environment complicates the notion of righteousness. When a space divorces itself from what is considered the norm, anything goes. In Count Dracula's lair, the vampire feels justified in bending the norms of sexuality and gender. Any human in this realm is subject to the will of the vampiric—even if it means utilizing nefarious methods to make private desires a reality.

Dracula's perception of gender norms is strict: humans view gender as dichotomized categories of man and woman. This dichotomy is presented as a model of normative societal issues, upheld by the human protagonists of this novel. Linda Heidenreich offers insight into historical and cultural affairs that might have influenced Stoker's writing and treatment of gender in the text. Stoker's take on gender stems from cultural anxiety, as Heidenreich states:

> At the close of the nineteenth century, British culture underwent a change in gender roles that coincided with fears of the foreign within its midst and of losing empire. Narratives such as *Dracula*, where passing vampires are exposed and destroyed, while men and women, in their respective gender roles, triumph over the cultural threat, helped to bolster the confidence of Britain's emergent white middle class and move the empire onto further colonial victories. (93)

Triumph over adversity is an important aspect of Stoker's work, given that it connotes correct moral codes in a time of much anxiety for the British Empire. Stoker entertains the idea of the nation potentially being penetrated through Count Dracula's interest in making a home in

London: "…I have come to know your great England; and to know her is to love her. I long to go through the crowded streets of your mighty London…" (31). Suddenly, a nation is more alluring than a vampire, and the collective love for a nation unifies both human and monster. However, Stoker symbolically frees Britain of Count Dracula's presence—purging vampiric influence over England and indicating that interlopers are not welcome. Since humans are the victors in this novel, Stoker entertains the idea that the human's worldview, not the vampire's, is correct because it serves to uphold the values of the nation. Therefore, whatever moral code by which humans abide is righteous, even if it entertains inflexible notions of gender.

Gender expressions are explicitly male and female for *Dracula*'s humans. Any opposition to this rule meets a violent end. While the human challenger of gender roles will be discussed in chapter two of this thesis, the vampire remains the major threat to this status quo. While humans live in a strictly gendered society, vampirism explores a variant of the human social model. While Count Dracula's fledglings are all women and respond to him (mimicking the patriarchal model), gendered expressions possess significant flexibility in comparison to humans—especially concerning sexual desire and impulses. How these vampires employ their sexuality, however, threatens humanity through the rejection of chastity and the heteronormative. This menacing behavior must be thwarted because *Dracula* recognizes the threat as something potentially alluring even for those who, like Jonathan Harker, follow the standard faithfully.

Jonathan Harker is an average man. Harker is an ambitious lawyer who seeks recognition in his professional circle, and his pursuits make him an attractive man, bachelor, and business partner. His superiors even describe him as follows: "He is a young man, full of energy and talent in his own way, and of a very faithful disposition. *He is discreet and silent*… He shall be ready to attend [Dracula] when [he] will during his stay, and shall take [Dracula's] instruction in

all matters" (27, my emphasis). In Stoker's narrative, Harker is the model of what a citizen ought to be because he represents the best his circle has to offer. Otherwise, his pursuits in business and romance would not succeed. *Dracula* establishes that Harker abides by the laws set by his human world; and the narrative recognizes this through the note Dracula receives upon Harker's arrival. Harker's superiors offer a man worthy of praise—one who will be obedient and "silent" (27) for a mysterious foreign client such as Count Dracula. This description, however, surpasses its literal meaning and complements the systems of gendered and sexual power that fuel the novel's plot. The heteronormative system the novel endorses relies on the traits Jonathan possesses—silence and discretion—to thrive. Those who follow what *Dracula* considers normative must not only employ these behaviors in their intimate conduct, if not, they must also abide to these behaviors so the system can remain unquestioned.

Jonathan Harker's docile behavior is used against him once he is acquainted with Castle Dracula. Though the narrative's moral compass does not treat this docility as a flaw, the vampire rejects the moral code of Stoker's story. This allows the vampire to utilize the motif of invitation to aid self-enlarging schemes. The praise Jonathan Harker receives from his superiors is used as an admittance of weakness by Count Dracula. Weaponizing this inferred weakness, the Count seizes the invitation to utilize Jonathan's remarkable traits for his own gain. What causes the vampire to have the advantage is Jonathan's inability to divorce himself from his meekness due to his propriety. The depraved villain in Dracula assumes that Jonathan cannot break from the expected mold of behavior and etiquette for self-preservation. The vampire is correct in this assumption. Readers witness this inability to break silence once Harker arrives at Castle Dracula and he states, "This was all so strange and uncanny that a dreadful fear came upon me, and I was afraid to speak or move" (21). The acceptance of his fate, despite his discomfort with his

surroundings, proves that Jonathan prioritizes the interests of others over his intuition. Despite numerous warnings, Jonathan's debt to his human circle is greater than his instinct for survival when he states early in his journey, "It was all very ridiculous, but I did not feel comfortable. However, there was business to be done, and I could allow nothing to interfere with it" (12). This prioritization, while foolish, is depicted as dutiful in *Dracula*.

Jonathan's stubbornness in the name of appeasing the normative seeps into aspects of ideology the novel asserts as righteous, such as the strict stances on gender. His beliefs on the enforcement of the normative is evident when he writes, "It would shock and frighten [Mina] to death were I to expose my heart to her" (59). In this passage, he reiterates the narrative's ideas concerning heteronormativity: women are fragile and ought not to share the burdens of men. Furthermore, the sentence connotes that vulnerability on his behalf would startle his fiancée—attaching the logic to the idea that women cannot bear such horrors. What makes *Dracula*'s tale so haunting, perhaps, is that despite the averageness or goodness of Jonathan's persona, the Count produces a vulnerable prisoner out of him. Threatening Harker with the possibility of the vampiric kiss, the male figure by excellence faces the possibility of being penetrated—thus, divorced from the masculine ideal the narrative hails as a paragon.

The possibility of penetration begins with emasculation. Yet, for Harker to reach the point of an emasculated victim, the vampire must resort to methods that will efficiently demoralize the target. Since the vampire is an immoral creature, demoralization equates with ridding the target of whatever righteousness they possess—which, for Jonathan Harker, will result in the tarnishing of his sexual reputation. The slightest weakness in judgment on Harker's part is enough to claim Count Dracula as victorious because not only did he successfully imprison Harker; he aims to demonstrate how Harker errs. *Dracula*'s vampires are monsters of

excess, especially sexual excess. Therefore, indiscretion through sexual impulses is the appropriate entrapment for a man of virtue in the eyes of the vampire.

Yet, Jonathan Harker does not possess sexual fluidity. Harker is notoriously heteronormative. To appeal to his lack of fluidity, the vampire must explore the human's existing interests and exploit the weakness of judgment that emerges from the situation. Dracula's brides prove themselves as capable bait—regardless of whether the meeting was intentional.[2] Harker approaches the lair in which Dracula's brides sleep, not knowing that what lies behind those doors will test his chastity. Harker finds "three young women, ladies by their dress and manner" (Stoker 53), denoting a distrust in how the environment portrays other folks. However, this distrust vanishes when he recognizes one of the brides as a figment of his dreams. With contradicting emotions, Harker writes:

> I seemed somehow to know her face, and to know it in connection with some dreamy fear, but I could not recollect at the moment how or where. All three had brilliant white teeth, that shone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips. There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips. It is not good to note this down, lest some day it should meet Mina's eyes and cause her pain; but it is the truth. (Stoker 53)

The acknowledgment that desire overrides logic makes Harker an imperfect, yet self-aware, man. The shadow of the righteous man the narrative claims him to be emerges with the recognition of the harm his desire will cause his fiancée. However, this goodness weakens at the sight of the

[2] Count Dracula warns Jonathan Harker against exploring the castle in several instances. Whether Dracula had intended for the meeting to occur when it did is debatable.

vampiric women, and he surrenders. One bride claims, "'He is young and strong; there are kisses for us all'" as Jonathan "lay quiet, looking out under (his) eyelashes in an agony of delightful anticipation" (Stoker 53). This "delightful anticipation" is interrupted by Count Dracula, who after confronting the brides, states, "Well, now I promise you that when I am done with him you shall kiss him at your will" (Stoker 55). By relating to Jonathan's heterosexuality, Count Dracula lures him into the scheme and allows him to claim dominance over the sensual encounter with the brides. Instead of Harker feeling "delightful anticipation," now the anticipation is Count Dracula's—whose dominance over the situation declares him as the one to be pleasured, and not Harker. Although Jonathan possesses virtue, the possibility that he may demonstrate weakness in judgment concerning sexual impulse is an alluring test to the vampire. This enables the predatory Dracula to seize the opportunity and torment his victim—usurping his victim's pleasure and claiming it for himself.

The denial of pleasure is violent. At least, Stoker's *Dracula* typifies the hostility of denial, because of the emasculation that occurs through torture. The denial of the brides upsets Harker, who wishes to escape the premises of Castle Dracula soon after the encounter. Though Harker regrets his decision and states, "for nothing can be more dreadful than those awful women, who were – who *are* – waiting to suck my blood," (57) the denial of pleasure constitutes one of the last phases in the plight of Jonathan Harker. The environment that allows for sexual fluidity denied him that expression, and is actively being used against him. Forcing Harker to divorce himself from the man he once was, Dracula moves closer to triumph.

The efficiency of emasculation in *Dracula* haunts Harker. His anxiety to leave permeates his attempts as the terror of his surroundings agitates his sanity. What is striking is that in the moments he has to himself, his gestures become feminized. The description Jonathan Harker

offers concerning his journaling is emasculating: “Here I am, sitting at a little oak table where in old times possibly some fair lady sat to pen, with much thought and many blushes, her ill-spelt love letter, and writing in my diary in shorthand all has happened since I closed it last” (51). He explicitly compares himself to a fair lady and mocks the actions she would take. Despite this attempt to displace himself from the image, the comparison still stands. Regardless of the frivolous tone he adopts, he enacts the frivolity of the fair lady. Marjorie Howes studies the ways male homosexuality and the feminine create anxiety in *Dracula*, and how these may be signifiers of repressed desires. Howes states:

> Because the fundamental ambivalences motivating the novel revolve around an issue which few fin de siècle texts could discuss explicitly, male homosexuality, *Dracula* uses the feminine to displace and mediate the anxiety-causing elements of masculine character, representing the forbidden desires the men fear in themselves as monstrous femininity. (Howes 104)

By weaponizing the anxiety Howes analyzes, Count Dracula demoralizes Harker to a terrifying degree. Stoker does not pose this triumph as something to be celebrated, if not, a possibility to be feared. Dracula comes to an eerily close victory when Jonathan Harker momentarily submits to his captor’s will. He states in resignation, “What could I do but bow acceptance? … The Count saw his victory in my bow, and his mastery in the trouble of my face, for he began at once to use them…” (Stoker 46). The Count believes this resignation, rightfully.

An exhausted Harker recounts, “The last I saw of Count Dracula was his kissing his hand to me; with a red light of triumph in his eyes, and with a smile that Judas in hell might be proud of” (69). The ruler of evil in Transylvania leaves Harker with a coquettish gesture, both accepting his victory and ownership over Harker through a kiss. The motif of the kiss in *Dracula*

stands for the metaphor of the vampiric bite—the fate that would have awaited Harker had he not escaped the castle. Upon his escape, he makes a speedy recovery and quickly marries Mina, rectifying any harm that Castle Dracula may have done physically and emotionally. By reinstating his claim to masculinity and escaping the environment that warped gender and sexuality, Harker ensures that the righteousness of his character returns. Dracula's claim over Harker's body weakens once Harker returns to human society.

In *Dracula*, vampirism is unhinged and knows no boundaries. The horrors recounted in the plight of Jonathan Harker ignite the flame that aims to rid the Earth, specifically England, of the threat of vampirism. When Jonathan Harker states, "A terrible desire came upon me to rid the world of such a monster," (71) the man vociferates a violent urge that will echo throughout the novel. Count Dracula displays motives and actions that are clear in the introductory chapters of the novel—he is a monster with no understanding of consent or the heteronorm. The goals the monster possesses must be thwarted to uphold the sanctity of the novel's human values. To penetrate humanity through the vampire's fangs, hypnosis, and depravity would mean the fall of what Stoker's *Dracula* demarcates as righteousness.

The threat of penetrating masculine figures is abstract in *Dracula*. Though women present an easier target (as will be discussed in the next chapter), men are Count Dracula's ultimate goal. To deprave the upholders of humanity through the act of penetration goes beyond weaponizing fangs as a means to achieve vampirism. Depravation begins at the physical level, eventually reaching psychological ones—the removing of the subject from a space in which humanity is upheld, the manipulation of consent, the methods of emasculation, to eventually feeding with the intent of either murdering or turning the subject into the paranormal. All of these processes are forms of penetration. Although no man is ever fed upon in *Dracula*, this does

not mean that penetration does not occur. Though thwarted, the fear permeates the novel. What is shocking in the viewpoint of the narrative is the fact that this penetration is perhaps equal to rape—it happens without consent or warning, and only with the intention of self-enlargement in the name of excess. A text that inherently implies the conniving nature of queer-coded and dissenting individuals, *Dracula* constructs its horror around warning others of such penetration. The allegory of the vampire antagonizes anyone who falls under the label of "other." If the vampire is capable of symbolic rape, then it has no place in human society. If others are capable of penetrating—entering—the population, then it is assumed that they will do so in similar, depraved ways. This is *Dracula*'s warning.

Chapter Two

The Sapphic Vampire Carmilla and the Queering of Lucy Westenra

"from his Lip

Not Words alone pleas'd her."

-John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

The threat of vampirism haunts men because their downfall equates with the corruption of the heteronormative system's ruling members. The domination of patriarchal figures presents a danger with horrifying yet avoidable consequences in texts like *Dracula*. Although the literary monster gestures towards men as the pièce de résistance of the plot towards power, women are prioritized as the most accessible targets. Often, the vampire successfully infiltrates the human space through the domination of women. The way Stoker describes vampiric women emphasizes the vampire's oversexualized, grotesque body. Embodying a hypersexual version of the vampiric allegory, the "voluptuous wantonness" (271) the text describes is a common portrayal of the vampirized woman. A fetishized creature, the female vampire utilizes her sexuality as a means to penetrate any victim she pleases. Stoker's Lucy Westenra horrifies the men witnessing her vampiric revival when she beckons her fiancé, "Come to me, Arthur. Leave these others and come to me. My arms are hungry for you. Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband, come!" (271). After the death of her humanity, the vampiric woman weaponizes the fetishes and desires of those around her.

Sexual predation shapes readers' and viewers' understanding of vampirism, which results in the vampire being a fetishized creature. The vampire's sexual prowess transcends the gender of the monster; both vampiric men and women use their sexuality and preposterous morality as a means to gain prey and power. The predatory monster invokes the longing and secretive desires of their victims for social mobility and masquerade, regardless of gender. Although the vampire possesses a great ability to imitate humanity, human masses present impasses that complicate the monster's claim to power. As the vampire pervades the masses, the vampire is subject to human social codes of conduct and etiquette. This restriction, unlike the paranormal, takes the monster's gender into account. The unstoppable force is met by gendered norms to be followed, and it is comical to think that the paranormal subject is affected by the patriarchy it constantly tries to subdue. What is in theory equal for male and female vampires is a dissimilar hunting ground perverted by the expectations of humankind.

As I invoke the female vampire in this chapter, I wish to highlight the effects patriarchy has on the paranormal. *Carmilla* by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and *Dracula* by Bram Stoker are monumental pieces of vampiric fiction that capture the gendered experiences the female vampire faces relative to the male vampire. While a horrific monster, the vampirized woman has the vigilant eyes of the heteronormative on her, especially in regard of her movement through society. Once she falters by employing her heightened sexuality, the vampirized woman is subject to correction by defeat. *Carmilla* and *Dracula* examine the conditions that lead towards a woman being allured by the promises of vampirism—conditions that connote the misogyny and patriarchy of the respective texts.

Carmilla and Lucy, the female antagonists of Stoker's and Le Fanu's texts, share similar burdens with regard to sexism. Ranging from queer loneliness to desiring sexual agency, the

conditions that lead to the destruction of these vampires are seen as triumphs in their respective texts, yet to a modern feminist reader, the texts are pervaded with the lack of female agency of the vampiric literary tradition. The defeat of the vampirized woman distinguishes itself from the defeat of her male counterpart because the conditions for the former derive from the vampire's usage of sexual agency for self-gain, rather than the subversion of the heteronormative system as a whole. What makes the vampirized woman an unholy force to be reckoned with is not necessarily her paranormal abilities, her gothic castle, or her sharp teeth, but rather the fact that she can persuade the women around her to join her and view vampirism as a blessing, rather than a curse.

While most notorious vampiric fiction centers around the pleasure and desires of masculine entities, Le Fanu's *Carmilla* sets a precedent for gothic literature. *Carmilla* explores the sapphic desires of two young women scandalously for its time, especially due to the unbound nature of the protagonists' physical and emotional relationship—which is ultimately interrupted by the adult men surrounding the couple. Yet, this intervention is not a preventative measure. Rather, it serves as a correction of what has already occurred. Laura and Carmilla have already exchanged affection, and the role of the men in *Carmilla* is to prevent the vampire from taking the life of another girl. As a vampire, Carmilla is prone to masquerading identities, and has already taken the life of Laura's friend Bertha under the pseudonym of Mircalla prior to the events of the novel. Although the novel is problematic in its execution, there is no denying that the queer politics of *Carmilla* work in ways that perhaps Le Fanu had not considered. This vampiric tale inherently threatens patriarchal authority, and as Elizabeth Signorotti claims:

> In "Carmilla" Le Fanu chronicles the development of a vampiric relationship between two women, in which it becomes increasingly clear that Laura's and Carmilla's lesbian

> relationship defies the traditional structures of kinship by which men regulate the exchange of women to promote male bonding. On the contrary, Le Fanu allows Laura and Carmilla to usurp male authority and to bestow themselves on whom they please, completely excluding male participation in the exchange of women… (607)

While a powerful exchange between women occurs in the novel, the execution of the text's queerness is problematic. Signorotti's observations on the protagonists' relationship exalt the contradictory nature of the novel: it both indulges in the freedom sapphic love brings and is complicit in denouncing sapphic love as dangerous. It especially indulges in the sapphic because the text does not concern itself with ascribing male suitors to the narrator, nor do the men in the text prioritize this type of mingling. *Carmilla* attempts to highlight the dangers of queer liberation but ultimately fails to pose this freedom as nothing less than desirable. The novella's messages are contradictory.

Le Fanu's writing explores tropes and attitudes that affirm the queerness of the text, yet, proceeds cautiously enough to denounce the actions of the protagonists. Le Fanu achieves this contradictory effect by making one of his characters, Carmilla, a predatory, sapphic vampire whose unholy presence affects peasant and aristocratic women alike—disrupting the innocence of human women. The letter informing Laura of Bertha's death states that "She died in the peace of innocence, and in the glorious hope of blessed futurity" (11). Through this description, Bertha's father reiterates an idea that defines the gendered assumptions of the novella. Because men are the heroes of this tale, they dictate that human women are beings of purity. Although Bertha possesses innocence even in death, the vampire does not. The letter also states, "The fiend who betrayed our infatuated hospitality has done it all. I thought I was receiving into my house innocence, gaiety, a charming companion for my lost Bertha. Heavens! What a fool have I

been!" (12). Although ignorant to Carmilla's vampirism, the father's accusation asserts the vampire's depraved nature. Viewing human and vampiric women as contrasted beings, the sexualized vampire in *Carmilla* enacts her passion in ways that threatens the chastity of her victims. Lured by the innocence of feminine humanity, the sapphic vampire seeks self-enlargement through the corruption of purity and the indulgence in forbidden affairs.

Carmilla is a correctable force. The idea of a correctable force, however, affects more beings than the sapphic vampire in *Carmilla*, especially since the vampire is not the only active participant in romantic relationships. While predatory, the vampire is only a hunter in a space in which she is allowed. The use of vampiric invitation in Le Fanu's novel is not as single-functioned as it is in *Dracula*. The passion expressed in *Carmilla* is somewhat consensual—unlike that of any of the encounters Count Dracula has with his victims. Although Laura is unaware of the dangers of Carmilla's vampirism, she embraces the possibility of an affectionate relationship with her mysterious guest. Laura details the exhilarating yet confusing nature of romance the following manner:

> (…) in all lives there are certain emotional scenes, those in which our passions have been most wildly and terribly roused, that are of all others the most vaguely and dimly remembered.
>
> Sometimes after an hour of apathy, my strange and beautiful companion would take my hand and hold it with a fond pressure, renewed again and again; blushing softly, gazing in my face with languid and burning eyes, and breathing so fast that her dress rose and fell with the tumultuous respiration. It was like the ardor of a lover; it embarrassed me; it was hateful and yet overpowering; and with gloating eyes she drew me to her, and her hot lips

> traveled along my cheeks in kisses; and she would whisper, almost in sobs, "You are mine, you *shall* be mine, you and I are one for ever." (Le Fanu 31)

The emergence of lesbianism between two young women indulges in the fervor of newfound love, and the narrator Laura reveals how her attraction to Carmilla brings her joy, confusion, and companionship. Laura recounts "I experienced a strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasure, ever and anon, mingled with a vague sense of fear and disgust" (Le Fanu 30). Laura craves intimacy, as do many isolated queer folks. Yet, her emotions contradict each other once the opportunity for companionship arises. Nevertheless, an odd romance blossoms between the human and the vampire. Laura's isolation permits her to be a malleable person and commit acts that are inappropriate for a woman of Le Fanu's *Carmilla*—despite the innocence she possesses as a human woman. Due to her weakness, she engages in correctable acts.

The narrator's correction lies in her lesbianism. Laura exemplifies many of the tropes in queer fiction, especially those that mirror LGBTQ+ realities still relevant today. The one that particularly afflicts her is the phenomenon known as queer loneliness. A timeless affliction, Laura's lonesomeness haunts her to the point that she mentions her strain a total of eighteen times throughout the short novella. I datamined the novella for the following words*: loneliness*, *lone*, *alone*, *lonely*, *solitary*, and *solitude*. The majority of my findings related to her physical and emotional state. Laura is surrounded by caregivers such as her two governesses and her father, yet, she insists on clinging to the abyss of alienation. Bertha's death worsens this alienation—as grief intensifies the melancholy that solitude conjures. Feeling isolated in the "lonely and primitive place" (Le Fanu 4) Laura has come to know as her home, the Gothic environment exasperates livelihood without the camaraderie of a like-minded, non-governing contemporary.

A moving article by Michael Hobbes in *Huffington Post* explores the fatigue the protagonist endures, since her experiences are resonant to the concerns young queer folk face in terms of isolation and relatability. Hobbes states the following concerning the phenomenon of queer loneliness:

> The term researchers use to explain this phenomenon is "minority stress." In its most direct form, it's pretty simple: Being a member of a marginalized group requires extra effort. When you're the only woman at a business meeting, or the only black guy in your college dorm, you have to think on a level that members of the majority don't. If you stand up to your boss, or fail to, are you playing into stereotypes of women in the workplace? If you don't ace a test, will people think it's because of your race? Even if you don't experience overt stigma, considering these possibilities takes its toll over time.
>
> For gay people, the effect is magnified by the fact that our minority status is hidden. Not only do we have to do all this extra work and answer all these internal questions when we're *12*, but we also have to do it without being able to talk to our friends or parents about it. (Hobbes)

While Laura is in the fragile state Hobbes describes, Le Fanu explores her eagerness by ridding her of malice. This complements the notion of human women inherently being innocent. Although the mysterious circumstances of Carmilla's appearance would be a cause of concern for any of the caregivers in the novella, Laura's priorities lie in finding a companion rather than preserving her safety. Her desperate plea to have Carmilla's company is reflected quite literally in the text: "I plucked my father by the coat, and whispered earnestly in his ear: 'Oh! Papa, pray ask her to let her stay with us—it would be so delightful. Do, pray'" (16). If Laura is not

careless, the novella at least regards her as naïve. This naïveté is one that Le Fanu considers rectifiable.

The text's treatment of those who possess remediable traits upholds misogynistic tones, especially since these traits solely affect women. Much as with the threat of corruption women face in *Dracula*, women's innocence in *Carmilla* goes beyond the naïveté they employ in the text. An example of the ruin women might bring if not looked after by men is the mention of Carmilla's bloodline, intrinsically tied to Laura's mother. Laura's father states, "'The house of Karnstein,' he said, 'has been long extinct: a hundred years at least. My dear wife was maternally descended from the Karnsteins'" (Le Fanu 72). Carmilla, abandoned by her mother figure at the beginning of the novella, is suddenly traceable to Laura via a matrilineal link. Through matrilineal heritage, a great danger arrives at Styrna bearing the masqueraded face of innocence. It is difficult to ignore the implications of women being the source of ruin in the novel—especially since this ruin conflicts with the image of purity the novella claims for womanhood. *Carmilla* is a novella that contradicts itself: both the source of ruin and purity, the text exalts women as beings that lack judgment and agency. Their remediable flaws plague the narrative with misogyny because their only aid rests on the charity of men, such as Laura's father. Regardless of whether these women are the predators (such as Carmilla) or the prey (Bertha and Laura), their endeavors can be mended to prevent further harm as long as they are mediated by men. This reconciliation usually retreats to normativity: Laura returns to her father's company and leaves for Italy, while men kill Carmilla. Both vampirism and lesbianism cease with masculine intervention.

The novella views vampirism and lesbianism as comparable but unequal. Vampirism *allows* for sexual liberation and the corruption of women, while lesbianism *can* lead to these

results. The intimacy Laura and Carmilla share subverts the expectations set for them in terms of performative heterosexuality. Attitudes of the time towards lesbianism suggest how the relationship between the two women went uninterrupted until suspicions about Carmilla's identity arose. Perceptions of Carmilla are overwhelmingly positive at the beginning of the novella. Upon her arrival, one of the governesses says, "I like [Carmilla] extremely … she is, I almost think, the prettiest creature I ever saw; about your age, and so gentle and nice" (Le Fanu 21). The nature of the vampire inherently contradicts the nature of womanhood in the text. Carmilla's ability to masquerade in order to threaten others haunts the narrative's conscience.

It is the label of the vampire, rather than the lesbian, that is perceived as offensive. While the narrative views both conditions as correctable, vampirism threatens more than lesbianism because it jeopardizes femininity, sexual chastity, and life. The lesbian is not as transgressive as the vampire in the novella. The human sapphic is quite lame—perceived as a melancholy girl who regardless of her sexual and romantic inclinations, complies with the patriarchal and the heteronormative. Chaste, Laura is courted by no one; the novella denies her suitors. Yet, the vampiric sapphic enables the human to indulge in her private desires. In *Carmilla,* vampirism enables lesbianism, and both, while not perceived as equal threats, *can* conspire and imperil the status quo. Critic Richard Dryer expands on the relationship between the villainized concepts. Dryer states:

> The notion of 'lesbianism,' seen as a sickness, was used to discredit both romantic friendship between women and the growth of women's political and educational independence. Thus there is a fit between the general associations of the vampire tale and the way in which friendships between women were being pathologized in the period (74).

Dryer's analysis complements conversations on lesbianism and vampirism because both can be interpreted as debilitating states, especially when tied to womanhood in a text like *Carmilla*. Laura voices this belief by the novella's conclusion: "The vampire is prone to be fascinated with an engrossing vehemence, resembling the passion of love, by particular persons" (103). Though explaining vampiric nature to readers, Laura connotes vampiric obsession and passion as a cause of Carmilla's downfall. Although Laura implies this, queerness grants vampirism an advantage in this novella—especially since the vampire proves herself to be efficient in manifesting queerness to benefit her predatory interests.

Le Fanu's *Carmilla* represents vampirism as a highly suggestive concept. Although the average literary or filmic vampire is sexualized, Carmilla's sexual power and allure subvert the traditional role of a Victorian woman. Instead of enacting the role of a quiet girl who suppresses her desires, like Laura, Carmilla aggressively claims them. When the vampire is observed feeding, it is in a highly sexualized light as Laura states: "I was wakened by a sensation as if two needles ran into my breast very deep at the same moment, and I cried loudly" (Le Fanu 7). The need to sexualize the vampire is an inherent villainization. The sexualization of lesbians also villainizes lovers and their sexual identity. This antagonistic approach is possible due to the expectation of women's purity. The claiming of one's sexuality defeats the purpose of womanhood in the novella—being the façade of perfection before which a man stands in awe.

Le Fanu's tale evokes horror because of its subversion of female sexuality. Le Fanu overturns the stereotypical womanly role in Victorian literature through Carmilla's character. A young vampiric woman is given the sexual power of a man and uses that advantage for self-gain. As a vampire, Carmilla is given the power to penetrate, both figuratively and literally, to evoke pleasure and fulfillment. Le Fanu suggests that this power is brought on specifically by

vampirism, since Laura states "(The vampire) will never desist until it has satiated its passion, and drained the very life of its coveted victim" (104). Le Fanu indicates that the vampire is a creature of passion rather than bloodlust, therefore creating a hierarchy of needs for the vampire. Passion and sexual impulses fulfill and inspire the need for feeding, and if bestowed on a person whose sex is not socially believed to desire sexual pleasure, these qualities make the vampire disruptive. This insurgence warrants suppression, especially when the vampire engages in queer sexual power as Carmilla does.

Carmilla presents readers tropes that clash and complicate storylines. Laura's aforementioned loneliness and Carmilla's impulse for pleasure inevitability lead to companionship between the two. Their relationship, formed under false pretenses, employs a hierarchy in which the vampire is the predatory, unhinged lover, and Laura is the victim of predation. Somewhat imitating a heteronormative structure, the novella substitutes the need for a male suitor with this scandalous relationship. Laura's longing for companionship aids the false pretense on which the relationship thrives, and she reports that the presence of someone new arms her with valor. The first-person narration gives readers insight into how the relationship fuels Laura's needs. She believes that this companionship benefits her social and emotional state. Laura reveals that even the promise of companionship is enough to embolden her: "I took her hand as I spoke. I was a little shy, as lonely people are, but the situation made me eloquent, and even bold" (25). Her judgment fails because of her boldness—enabling the possibility of homoerotic pleasure with Carmilla. This temptation is a danger that, quite appropriate to vampiric lore, Laura's home momentarily entertains. Nina Auerbach explores the allure of the vampire in *Carmilla*, examining how the female vampire caters to Laura's desires. She states:

> When Carmilla penetrates her household—through dreams and tricks as well as bites—she presents herself as Laura's only available source of intimacy. Everything male vampires seemed to promise, Carmilla performs: she arouses, she pervades, she offers a sharing self. This female vampire is licensed to realize the erotic, interpenetrative friendship male vampires aroused and denied. (38-39)

Auerbach's analysis explains why the bond between the protagonist and antagonist succeeds. Carmilla offers Laura what, perhaps, a male character (paranormal or human) cannot. Laura yearns for an interpersonal relationship apart from the one she has with her father and her two governesses—a relationship with someone who does not govern her. In her tight social circle, she admits "My life was, notwithstanding, rather a solitary one …" (Le Fanu 6). The connection Laura seeks must penetrate the social environment in which she exists. Inviting someone, who through mysterious and seemingly unfortunate circumstances arrives at her abode, quenches her need for someone new. A friendship as intimate as the one Carmilla and Laura share would have stirred suspicion had one of the participants been male. Laura's need for companionship ignores the standards of heteronormative, Victorian society. The void of queer loneliness overrides careful thought.

Naïveté characterizes the average vampire's victim. The text allows Laura leverage because of her womanhood, yet, also raises the possibility that she is partially at fault because of her queer indiscretions. Much like *Dracula*'s Jonathan Harker, the imperfect human endangers the survival of humankind through silence and absence of malice. Although the temptation of indiscretion haunts the human, texts like *Carmilla* place the weight of chastity and righteousness on women. While Le Fanu's writings on the frailty and social malleability of women in *Carmilla* are intriguing, the ideas he penned emerge as common tropes in vampiric fiction. The usage of

this recognizable element even predates the twentieth century. Most notoriously, *Dracula*'s Lucy Westenra displays attitudes and frivolousness that connote the frailty of womanhood. *Dracula* specifically exalts how that fragility threatens society as a whole if it is not addressed. Lucy exhibits traits in her character that threaten the mold of Victorian femininity—whether she is affected by vampirism or not. What endangers humanity in *Dracula* is not that the vampire is depraved, but that the vampire sees value in a woman who claims agency.

Lucy expresses desire in excess early in the novel. A hint at her moral failings becomes evident once she vociferates interest in being a greedy bachelorette, confiding in Mina when she states, "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?" (Stoker 81). Through such scandalous reasoning, *Dracula* establishes the image of a gaudy woman, one meant to be shamed—especially since this statement is a mirror to the moment where Jonathan Harker rejects Count Dracula's three vampiric brides. Although Jonathan Harker recognizes the allure of sexual attraction, confiding in his diary, "I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips" (53), he retracts his statements because "… nothing can be more dreadful than those awful women, who were – who *are* – waiting to suck my blood" (57). Jonathan's circumstances affirm that despite any initial impulse, Jonathan still possesses a moral compass that recognizes overwhelming sexual desire as impure. Whereas Jonathan rejects three mates, Lucy would accept them if she could. The morality (and ability to engage in abstinence) that Bram Stoker imposes on Jonathan is a quality Lucy Westenra lacks in a plot where the sanctity of Victorian womanhood is held in the highest regard.

Although Lucy's audacious sexual interests contrast with Jonathan's abstinence, there exists an even more obvious antithesis to Lucy's behavior: Mina. While the possibility of

vampirism threatens them both, the plot considers one woman to be worthy of defense, and the other a lost cause. In defense of Mina Harker and a possible nuanced reading of her character, Charles Prescott and Grace Giorgio examine her role in the novel. They state:

> Because her own self-representation is often annoyingly self-effacing, it is not surprising that Mina's multifaceted agency is frequently downplayed in the criticism of the novel. She frequently casts herself as the assistant schoolmistress of etiquette, the devoted helpmate of Jonathan Harker, and the compassionate, maternal shoulder that "manly" men turn to when overcome by emotion. (488)

Prescott and Giorgio argue for a nuanced reading of Mina Harker that opposes much of the scholarship concerning her character. Often, when critics and scholars analyze Mina's character, they offer polarizing opinions concerning her role as a woman in *Dracula*. Prescott and Giorgio argue for a flattering light on Mina's character, and I agree with them that Mina is a versatile character who fulfills many roles at once. For a female character in a Victorian novel that focuses on men, she benefits from Stoker's generous depiction. However, this nuanced, versatile character can coexist with the meek, submissive reading that many scholars ascribe to Mina. While a capable woman, Mina nevertheless remains a mold for the supportive role to which Victorian women aspire. Whether critics view her as a progressive woman or a compliant one, Mina Harker is a product of the heteronormative hegemony. She lacks the ability to define the events in *Dracula* through methods of her own.

Dracula represents womanhood as offensive. The aforementioned occurs not because of what womanhood performatively encompasses, but rather because of what it threatens. Unlike the symbolic threat Count Dracula poses to men, the women's peril in *Dracula* is literal. Therefore, the women in Bram Stoker's novel are the only ones "infected" by vampirism, rather

than any particular male. Although the threat of vampirism exists for men too, the most cohesive danger among men is women, for Dracula preys on them most. Count Dracula makes his preference clear when he states, “Your girls that you all love are mine already; and through them you and others shall yet me mine …” (Stoker 394). His dominance implies that women are at a disadvantage when it comes to vampiric usurpers—unable to ignore the lure of the vampire, unable to flee the grasp of the undead.

Despite their disadvantage, *Dracula* anchors the idea of a hierarchy of women within the text. This hierarchy concerns the probability of a woman being “saved” from the grasp of vampirism. Leila S. May explains what may constitute the criteria for such a hierarchical idea:

> This fine and fragile line between pristine, vestal decorum and unadulterated, vicious depravity is continually being brought to the fore in *Dracula*, underscoring the Victorian male's dread that his own wife, mother, sister, daughter, might be constitutionally similar to those who had already slipped over the line. Mina herself, in fact, encompasses all of these familial functions… thereby making it all the more imperative that she be rapidly delivered from the physical ruin and moral iniquity that is entailed by succumbing to the vampire’s allure. (May 19)

Upon reading this, I ask myself: why Mina, and not Lucy? *Dracula* imposes the idea that Mina is an idyllic woman throughout the plot, and especially through the attitudes that Stoker ascribes through his characters. In Jonathan Harker’s journal, the first anecdote of *Dracula*, readers learn of the affection he has for his fiancée, Mina—a woman who contrasts with Dracula’s brides. Harker writes, “I am alone in the castle with those awful women. Faugh! Mina is a woman, and there is nought in common. They are devils of the Pit!” (73). The comparison inherently praises Mina and divorces her from any traits the brides possess. By establishing this hierarchy early in

the narrative, Jonathan places Mina at the highest standard of nineteenth-century womanhood; because of this standard, she is considered a redeemable woman once bitten by Count Dracula, whose fate must not be tarnished by vampiric influence. This is untrue for Lucy. Destined to become "The Bloofer Lady" (230), Lucy exhibits early sexual agency that determines how she prioritizes self-gain over etiquette. She weaponizes self-interest and beauty to obtain men—both in life and in death.

As mentioned previously, there are comparisons to be made between Lucy and Dracula's brides, yet, the trope subverts itself in the narrative. Instead of three vampires preying on a man, one human woman fawns over three men. Since she appears to be gluttonous, the narrative sheds a negative light on the womanhood Lucy embodies. While as strong-willed as Mina, she rejects the meekness and caution her friend demonstrates and instead outwardly parades her love for excess.

This love for excess translates into her vampirism. Her embodiment as a vampire is gruesome, yet, inscribed with allusions to the human woman she was not. Dr. Seward, a male observer previously in love with Lucy and rejected, notes the following of her vampiric persona:

> Lucy Westenra, but yet how changed. The sweetness was turned to adamantine, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness. … Lucy's eyes in form and colour; but Lucy's eyes unclean and full of hell-fire, instead of the pure, gentle orbs we knew. At that moment the remnant of my love passed into hate and loathing; had she then to be killed, I could have done it with delight. (Stoker 271)

Dr. Seward's diary recounts the encounter with a vampirized Lucy, which he considers to be a shadow of the woman he knew. This Lucy Westenra is not the docile bachelorette to be married

to Arthur Holmwood, but rather a beast who preys on children and indulges on impulse—much like Dracula's brides. Stoker suggests that Lucy's fate is inevitable, and that this depraved nature haunts women of Victorian society. Especially since Lucy, once found, is seen holding a child to her breast (271). This image inverts that of the Madonna; instead of having a child feed on a maternal figure to substantiate life, the maternal figure deprives a child of life by feeding on it. A worrisome image in Stoker's narrative, "This perversion of the nuptial and maternal roles is fully played out in Stoker's text, where the paradigmatically pure Victorian female is metamorphosed into a child-eating, man-devouring monster" (May 19). The subversion of the maternal role embodies Lucy's true desires. Free of the bonds of womanhood, she claims expressions acceptable only in a male body—thereby crossing over into the androgyne.

As a vampire, Lucy embodies the androgyne, and for this reason I refer to her vampirization as the "queering" of Lucy Westenra. Her vampirization upsets the balance the novel attempts to preserve—a "devilish mockery of Lucy's sweet purity" (Stoker 275). The only way to restore this balance is through the destruction of the vampire, particularly, the female vampire who operates through sexual allure. Van Helsing instructs Arthur Holmwood, "strike in God's name, that so all may be well with the dead that we love, and that the Un-Dead pass away" (277). Although Lucy is perceived as a monster who needs to be destroyed to enjoy salvation, the tragedy is that vampirism offers a new outlook for her character. The gaudy bachelorette denies chaste womanhood and emerges as what the book considers to be a depraved creature. Yet, the book denies her the indulgence of "voluptuousness" and sexual fluidity Stoker emphasizes. Lucy's transgression serves her memory better than her death at the hands of her human betrothed.

Ultimately, patriarchy presents similar constraints and victories in *Carmilla* and *Dracula*. Nina Auerbach states:

> The women Stoker retained—Dracula's three lascivious sister-brides; the vampirized Lucy and Mina—may writhe and threaten, but all are finally animated and destroyed by masterful men. A ruling woman has no place in the patriarchal hierarchy *Dracula* affirms, a hierarchy that earlier, more playful and sinuous vampires subverted. (66)

The "playful" and "sinuous" vampire describes the Victorian female vampire wonderfully. Both Carmilla and Lucy gain agency through vampirism, and they use the allure denied to them in life as a method of hunting. Through predation, they become unhinged women, bound to pose a threat to the women who aid patriarchy.

The vampire, as a fetishized monster, embodies unhinged womanhood appropriately. When the performative aspects of a woman's femininity fall short of what is expected, a monstrous persona with the physical characteristics of a woman but the sexual power of a man becomes an adequate substitution to authors such as Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and Bram Stoker. Nina Auerbach proposes a feminist view of female vampires instead of the tragic figures as which they often are perceived. She states, "Vampires were supposed to menace women, but to me at least, they promised protection against a destiny of girdles, spike heels, and approval. I am writing in part to reclaim them for a female tradition, one that has not always known its allies" (4). The female vampire finds it appropriate to weaponize her beauty, to parody the image of the Madonna, and to defy the restraints of their gender and expected sexuality. The female vampire resorts to these transgressions because she was deprived of agency in her mortal life. Through vampirism and the violence vampirism implies, vampirized women enact a performative and efficient vengeance on the entities that neglected them as humans. Although Le Fanu's and

Stoker's texts are not allied with the female tradition Auerbach mentions, their vampires unmistakably are. Their legacy as dead women reflect the repressed ambitions of their mortal lives. If vampirism offers freedom from gendered constraints, then, one cannot blame a woman for seeking life as an undead subject.

Chapter Three

Domesticating the Vampire: *Interview with the Vampire* and the Subversion of the Nuclear Family

"Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay
To mould me Man, did I solicit thee
From darkness to promote me?"
-John Milton, *Paradise Lost*

Although narratives perceive vampiric antagonists as singular manifestations of evil, such as Carmilla or Count Dracula, the vampire's motives are usually far from individualistic. The cruel villains of the discussed narratives view vampirism as a means to achieve multiplicity—a way to convert others to the evil that frees them from the bounds of humanity. Vampires have a generative goal. Unable to reproduce through conventional means, the vampire desires to create undead companions through conversion. Thus far, the vampiric beings analyzed in this thesis have had their plans thwarted by humans who interrupt their reproductive goals.

Vampiric narratives that predate the twenty-first century rarely focus on clusters of individuals affected by vampirism. When texts offer multiple individuals affected by vampirism, such as *Dracula*, the antagonist of the text overwhelms the plot's focal point and forces the other monsters mirror the antagonist. This mirroring causes secondary vampiric characters to lack

whims of their own. This uniform take on vampirism makes vampirized beings into simple characters. Although the vampiric allegory is multifaceted, vampiric characters are not necessarily as varied.

Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* challenges the vampiric canon. Rice's novel not only bestows the vampiric narrative on a cluster of individuals with unique motives, but challenges the canon by contributing significantly to the concept of vampiric masquerade. The vampiric masquerade of Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* embodies the domestic—interloping human society through the façade of familial unity for about sixty years. Because the vampire is a subversive creature, however, Rice's vampires usurp the traditional notion of the familial unit: queer parents, destructive lovers, abuse, incest, apparent pedophilia, and the Electra complex characterize the relationships between vampiric characters. Rice's vampires almost perfect the masquerade. Although posing as a normative family to human eyes, the vampires hide sinister secrets behind closed doors. *Interview with the Vampire* achieves the offensive vampirism *Dracula* and *Carmilla* dared not explore.

Although a novel with controversial relationships, *Interview with the Vampire* offers perhaps one of the first literary examples of nuanced vampirism. Vampirism is a source of evil in the text, yet, the vampire plagues its existence by questioning the creature it has become. *Interview with the Vampire* is considered to be a staple in vampiric literature because it redefines the horror genre. It achieved this reputation by giving its protagonists a complicated relationship to their monstrosity, and expressing queerness openly at the forefront instead of allegorically as its predecessors did. However, scholars debate the impact of *Interview with the Vampire* as a queer and vampiric text. Xavier Aldana Reyes' essay, "Dracula Queered," declares the scholar's struggles with the politics of Anne Rice's magnum opus. While the essay does not entirely focus

on *Interview with the Vampire,* Aldana Reyes sheds an accusatory light on Rice's work and questions the novel's success as a monumental piece of queer, vampiric fiction. When I read the proposal, Aldana Reyes' opinion challenged my own. Aldana Reyes states:

> Yet recent developments in vampiric representation also suggest a need to be aware of the role of the queer vampire within a neoliberal context that has, to some extent, co-opted and turned formerly oppositional identities into marketable lifestyles. Anne Rice's vampires, after all, cannot have sex and their sexual politics are confused and conservative. They force us, among other things, to begin asking of vampires (and perhaps the Gothic in general) what exactly makes them queer at a time 'where same-sex desire is increasingly viewed as "normal" and even sanctioned by the institution of marriage.' (7)

Is it possible to view *Interview with the Vampire*'s protagonists as "confused and conservative?" (7). The vampire adopts attitudes and manners in hopes of remaining anonymous in human society. Is not the mere existence of vampires an inherent contradiction to these labels?

I pondered the labels of neoliberal, confused, and conservative, and their relationship to *Interview with the Vampire*. I wanted to examine whether these labels could coexist with a work that focuses on vampiric nature. While Aldana Reyes' labels are not entirely inaccurate, these labels do not allow the novel nuance. Because these labels do not capture the successes of the vampires in this tale, or take into account the reason why these characters adopt specific attitudes, Aldana Reyes' descriptions lack depth. While the failure of the vampire is inevitable for all the works discussed in this thesis, Rice's vampires survive longer (in a narrative sense) than the villains in *Carmilla* and *Dracula*. While emulating what humans consider normative, *Interview with the Vampire* offers readers the spiritually humanoid vampire—one concerned

with morality, empathy, grief, and the weight of evil. Through this complexity, Rice's vampires establish a domestic environment in which vampires mimic humanity. Although unhappy in their dysfunctional domesticity, these vampires transgress society from within, imitating the structure of the nuclear family while queering it to be menacing. Furthermore, the domesticity with which the vampires struggle might be interpreted as an inherent critique of the very thing they imitate—thus suggesting that the domestic is unattainable. This attempted mimicry makes *Interview with the Vampire* unique. Even if the vampires fail in preserving their coven and stability, they emerge from the shadows of the masses almost inoffensively—so inoffensively, they go unperceived.

Interview with the Vampire relates the tale of Louis de Pointe du Lac, a young aristocrat in Louisiana who falls into a devastating state of depression after his younger brother, Paul, dies in an accident. What drives Louis towards his depression is the fact that his brother's death occurs after an argument concerning Paul's interest in the priesthood. The subject of priesthood marks the first instance in the novel in which Louis departs from religiosity. Although Louis acts as the patriarch of the de Pointe du Lac family, he cannot fulfill this role efficiently without significant strains in interpersonal relationships or major tragedy. Louis goes so far as to purposely push away his brother—building him an oratory "removed from the house" (Rice 5) and admitting that he "was wrong about … not denying [Paul] anything" (Rice 6).

While Paul's physical presence in the novel is short-lived, his obsessive Catholicism suggests why *Interview with the Vampire* functions within constraints of conservatism. The New Orleans of Anne Rice's writing functions much like our own environments: it is reactionary, and common fears are expressed through the (often religious) sentiments of its minor characters, who later pose a threat for the paranormal protagonists. According to Louis, Paul denotes

progressiveness as devilry. “The entire country of France was under the influence of the devil,” Louis claims about Paul’s beliefs, “and the Revolution had been its greatest triumph” (Rice 10). As a character, Paul haunts Louis, yet, the haunting goes beyond any guilt Louis feels for his brother’s death. Hauntings are appropriate for a gothic, vampiric novel, and even more so for a queer one. Paul not only exists to worsen Louis’ depressive state, but Paul also connotes what, in a narrative sense, is morally incorrect. Progressiveness and a deviation from the status quo are the work of the unholy. Since Louis rejects his brother’s aid, he strays from the path of righteousness.

Louis’ depression becomes progressively worse because of his guilt. He claims, “I felt that I’d kill [Paul]. I sat in the parlor beside his coffin for two days thinking, I have killed him” (Rice 8). Soon afterward when Louis participates in reckless behavior (Rice 9), the vampire Lestat de Lioncourt takes an interest in Louis and his property. The encounter between Louis and Lestat shifts Louis into a state of narrative sin. Lestat’s heavily feminine presence, “a tall fair-skinned man with a mass of blond hair and a graceful, almost feline quality to his movements…” (Rice 11) signals a change for Louis, an opportunity to abandon the grief with which he cannot cope to possess immortality and a new companion. Paul’s death allows Louis to have a new, more dangerous companion.

Anne Rice writes Louis as a character who does not have much to lose, yet only wishes to rid himself of the guilt which has brought suffering. The decision to become a vampire falls on the account of sin, since Lestat’s influence allows Louis to indulge in the homoerotic and the earthly. Louis fawns over his vampiric companion, stating “the moment I saw him, saw his extraordinary aura and knew him to be no creature I’d ever known, I was reduced to nothing” (Rice 11), clearly establishing comfort in his queer relationship with a stranger. The taboo of this

relationship falls beyond the same-gender attraction that the companions feel for each other, since it also occurs because Lestat's presence and promises draw Louis away from his Catholic background. Louis rejects his religious upbringing by stating the following:

> I saw my life as if I stood apart from it, the vanity, the self-serving, the constant fleeing from one petty annoyance after another, the lip service to God and the Virgin and a host of saints whose names filled my prayer books, none of whom made the slightest difference in a narrow, materialistic, and selfish existence. I saw my real gods… the gods of most men. Food, drink, and security in conformity. Cinders. (Rice 12)

Louis' detachment from the narrative morality evolves into apathy towards the religious endeavors he once enjoyed. The promise of vampirism is a motivator to focus on mortal pleasures—implying that non-religious pleasures are comparable to the worship of the paranormal. Although Louis is enthusiastic about pursuing his new life as a vampire, he grows fearful about his paranormal transformation and the vampiric queerness that ensues. *Interview with the Vampire* makes allegories that are blunt, obvious, and almost campy concerning Louis' first night as a vampire. Louis states, "I begged Lestat to let me stay in the closet, but he laughed, astonished. 'Don't you know what you are?'" (20). With a gesture that mocks his trapped companion, Lestat hints at the point of no return—once tempted, one must embrace the consequences.

The aforementioned argument between the vampires is one of Rice's strongest metaphors—as simplistic as it may initially seem. The metaphor of the closet was already in use at the time *Interview with the Vampire* was published in 1976[3]—at least according to *Time*'s

[3] See George Chauncey's *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* for the history behind the metaphor of "the closet."

piece on the phrase “coming out of the closet.” The article “The History Behind Why We Say a Person 'Came Out of the Closet'” states the following, “[I]t’s not clear exactly when the ‘closet’ metaphor came to be associated with the phrase ‘coming out,’ though it appears not to have been widely used before the 1960s” (Waxman). What makes Rice’s usage of the term so monumental for us as readers is that Louis sees the enclosed space as one of repression. Prior to his vampiric awakening, the closet (and any space inducing claustrophobia) proved to be a space of fear and repression. Now, with Lestat’s aid, Louis recognizes it as a space not to be feared that can induce “freedom” (20). Louis offers the interviewer (known as “the boy” throughout the narrative) insight on what the closet meant to him as a human, and what it means to him after his vampiric awakening. He describes it as such:

> All my life I had feared closed spaces… I felt uncomfortable even in the confessional in church. It was a normal enough fear… And now I realized as I protested to Lestat, I did not actually feel this anymore. I was simply remembering it. Hanging on to it from habit, from a deficiency of ability to recognize my present and exhilarating freedom. (20)

This passage is the novel’s admission: vampirism equals sexual and gendered fluidity, and Louis accepts the vampiric invitation to begin his life as a queered individual because his ideals about confinement and freedom are changed. Lestat, much akin to vampiric tradition, needed invitation into Louis’ life in order for this understanding to occur. Much as with ulterior motives depicted in *Dracula* and *Carmilla*, however, the vampire Lestat introduces Louis to a fraudulent freedom—much like the exiting of the closet. As a vampire, Louis must adopt the role of a societal usurper. The usurper conceals their identity. The freedom Louis gains is symbolic, because after becoming a vampire, he cannot embrace any of his identities publicly due to the

burden of vampiric masquerade. Although he has exited a closet, he has entered a coffin—another concealed, private place.

Lestat and Louis prove to be a disastrous match almost immediately after Louis' vampirization. The vampiric couple's power struggle is evident soon after Lestat arrives at the Pointe du Lac plantation, and Louis is quick to notice how his tolerance of Lestat dwindles after immortality. Although Lestat and Louis cling to each other, the relationship displays a dysfunctional hierarchy. Louis is accustomed to hierarchical relationships in his life, yet, is not comfortable with the idea of being a fledgling—a subordinate. From being the powerful, rich bachelor and head of the Pointe du Lac family to being Lestat's apprentice, the imbalance suggests the fragility of the relationship. Louis notes:

> The first thing which became apparent to me, … was that I did not like Lestat at all. I was far from being his equal yet, but I was infinitely closer to him than I had been before the death of my body. … But before I died, Lestat was absolutely the most overwhelming *experience* I'd ever had. (Rice 21)

While detailing the crumbling relationship, the novel employs and explores what makes its vampires and its portrayal of vampiric queerness unique. Rice's vampire couple is quite peculiar: they function within a heteronormative manner, therefore "stabilizing" apparent aspects of queerness (Lestat often being described in feminine terms/Louis having financial power over Lestat). These vampires are challenged by a domestic space, regardless of their paranormal or unholy abilities and their queerness. Yet, the novel does not contrast their heteronormativity with a prominent human heterosexual couple in the narrative. Lestat and Louis both transgress heteronormativity, and astonishingly define it in the novel. The domesticity in which they

partake is self-constructed and assumed. *Interview with the Vampire* exploits Lestat and Louis' growing discomfort with one another to explore the unattainability of queer domesticity.

Although domesticity is not directly referenced in the novel, it provides an undercurrent that characterizes the interpersonal relationships and failings of the protagonist vampiric family. The boy (later known as "Daniel" in subsequent books of Rice's *The Vampire Chronicles*) poses a question for Louis that encapsulates societal threads concerning marriage. He states, "You mean that when the gap was closed between you, he lost his… spell?" (21). As simplistic a question as this could be, it expresses common sentiments in its sincerity.

Earlier in this chapter, I noted Xavier Aldana Reyes' confusion with the politics of *Interview with the Vampire*. While Rice's novel depicts vampirism, Aldana Reyes' question of how Rice's vampires challenge (or contribute to) notions of queerness in gothic fiction is valid. Aldana Reyes struggles against *Interview with the Vampire*'s attachment to portraying its vampires as beings that want to, despite their paranormal nature, mimic familial stability and emotional aspects of humanity. While I initially struggled with Aldana Reyes' challenge and labels for the novel, his approach is understandable. For vampires seen as interlopers, Rice's monsters attempt to impose themselves on the human world through uncanny means—such as seizing capitalist gain, finding romantic companions, and forming families of complex interpersonal relationships rather than covens of masters and fledglings. Unlike Dracula's brides, the fledglings in *Interview with the Vampire* are not cast aside as human bait. Instead, they actively participate in the attempt towards the vampiric masquerade.

Rice's characters cling to humanity because as protagonists, they question their nature and acknowledge the ethics of their existence. As a vampire, Louis portrays one of the first literary instances, if not the first, of a morally conflicted vampire—one who questions the ethics

of his vampirism and examines the consequences of his nature. Though Louis embraces a queer vampiric identity (or rather, the promise of it), the vampiric masquerade that he and Lestat endure is not one that he enjoys. Unlike Lestat, who mockingly calls Louis "Merciful Death" (83) due to his reluctance to take human life. Only when Lestat indulges in his cruelty towards his victims does Louis become resolute on abandoning him. Louis rejects echoing the previous sentiments that attached him to his union to Lestat, such as when he believed that, "I must tolerate in him a frame of mind which was blasphemous to life itself" (26) and Lestat's thoughts such as "I'm your teacher and you need me, and there isn't much you can do about it either way. And we both have people to provide for" (27). These priorities, however, are ignored once the plantation de Pointe du Lac burns down, and the vampires relocate to the masses of New Orleans.

Lestat's cruelty is an excuse for Louis to seek independence—especially since Louis regards his humanity as being in conflict with his vampirism. He refrains from drinking human blood for years and is disgusted at Lestat's disregard for his victims. Lestat's cruelty is heightened at the sight of Louis' rejection of his vampiric nature. He stages gruesome and torturous slaughters of women in their New Orleans suite in which Louis begs for mercy on behalf of his partner's victims. The purpose of exposing Louis to this violence is to normalize it, a futile attempt on Lestat's behalf. This theory stems from Lestat's accusation during the disturbing scene: "You are in love with your mortal nature! You chase after the phantoms of your former self… And in your romance with mortal life, you're dead to your vampire nature" (Rice 65). This exchange reaches an impasse. Louis dreads Lestat, and Lestat's annoyance grows. Both are paranoid about the implications of leaving one another; Louis loses a mentor, and Lestat loses economic wealth and stability in Louisiana. Yet, the couple is so explosive that

they fail to communicate the stakes of their companionship. Joseph Crawford's *The Twilight of the Gothic?: Vampire Fiction and the Rise of the Paranormal Romance* explores how Rice's vampires do not follow common romantic tropes—especially in comparison to the desirable vampiric fiction of the new millennia (such as Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight*). In his chapter "Romancing the Paranormal," Crawford states, "Rice's male vampires were highly eroticized, romanticized, sympathetically depicted figures; but, for all this, they were hardly traditional romance material. They were rich, powerful and attractive, as romance heroes should be, but they were also disturbingly violent and amoral" (62).

Crawford's analysis of the romanceable vampire answers the question upon which classic vampiric fiction rarely touches: What if the antagonistic vampire succeeds in seducing their victim? What happens if the vampire reproduces successfully and does not meet death? In previous chapters, I have discussed monumental pieces of gothic and vampiric fiction. Yet, these texts do not explore generative possibilities because the vampiric purpose and messages end with the death of the vampire: evil is defeated. Those allured by the vampire receive the pardon of those who can overcome methods of seduction as employed by the vampiric fiend—and those such as *Dracula*'s Lucy, who are successfully abducted into the paranormal, face death. However, Louis is not a threatening vampire. His affection towards humanity makes him a weak vampire. Louis is a human-vampire, a hybrid of sorts. His depressive state reflects alienation from humanity rather than paranormal otherness. His maker succeeds in depraving him yet struggles to retain his loyalty. The humanity of one fledgling and the affection shared with his inhumane master leads to an unprecedented domestic plot in Anne Rice's vampiric lore. Lestat, in a strange turn of events, appeals to the human desires of his fledgling in order to preserve his loyalty. This is what makes *Interview with the Vampire* so fascinating: it recounts the tale of a

vampire so enamored of humanity that his evil maker produces the grounds for a domestic tale. Although Lestat demonstrates his own humanity through desiring Louis' loyalty, the novel does not entirely deceive classic narrative tropes. Tragedy is still guaranteed to the wicked. Rice offers vampiric tradition an alternate, self-reflective viewpoint. When the vampiric plot and the domestic plot conjoin, these cannot prevail in harmony—regardless of their attempt at mimicking the heteronormative.

The aforementioned heteronormativity is achieved in *Interview with the Vampire* through domestic means. Sorcha Ni Fhlainn's "Contemporary Vampires" comments on some of the humanistic ideals of the novel and reaches conclusions on how the text and its vampiric characters interact with humanity. As Ni Fhlainn observes, "As vampires move ever closer to the human world, they increasingly replicate (or perhaps develop) human emotions and familial bonds, and seek out human culture and human familiars" (107). Familial bonds are explored in Rice's work through Lestat's conclusions on how to preserve Louis' loyalty, especially after moving to New Orleans.

Louis can no longer ignore his hunger after four years of abstaining from human blood. He feeds off an orphaned child weeping over her deceased mother. Horrified by what he has done, Louis flees the abandoned house as Lestat pursues him, asking, "Shall I go back and make her a vampire? We could use her, Louis, and think of all the pretty dresses we could buy for her. Louis, wait, Louis! I'll go back for her if you say!" (Rice 60). Lestat, upon realizing Louis spared the girl's life out of mercy, lures Louis into an impasse. Recognizing the effects the girl had on his partner, Lestat weaponizes her—utilizing her as a bargaining prop to make Louis stay.

Louis' sympathy for this initially nameless girl deceives the reader's expectations. His attachment to his humanity acts as a red herring, leading readers to believe he will not harm the

child or dare to feed off her. Much like the reader, Lestat believes this, too. The aggression towards the child aligns with Crawford's analysis on violence as Louis states:

> Am I damned? If so, why do I feel such pity for her, for her gaunt face? Why do I wish to touch her tiny, soft arms, hold her now on my knee as I am doing, feel her bend her head to my chest as I gently touch the satin hair? Why do I do this? If I am damned I must want to kill her, I must want to make her nothing but food for a cursed existence, because being damned I must hate her. (Rice 59)

Though an existentialistic approach to the situation before him, Louis' lets his predatory drive defeat his humanity. In an animalistic manner, Louis feeds on the child. This scene, where Louis struggles against his conscience and his bloodlust, establishes that vampiric instinct overrules any empathy towards human suffering—thus, furthering the gap between vampirism and humanity. Once queered and vampirized, Louis becomes inhumane against his will.

The child is found by Lestat, who leads Louis towards her. After returning to their suite, Lestat offers her enough of his vampiric blood in order to turn her into a vampire. Despite Louis' protests against converting the girl, Lestat is earnest about his intentions. Uncannily, Lestat is the vampire who tries to bridge the gap between humanity and monstrosity. Although the following events seem cruel, Louis recognizes that his introspective nature influenced Lestat's decisions—"But I think, in retrospect, that he himself wanted to know his own reasons for killing, wanted to examine his own life" (Rice 76). Although vampiric, these characters mimic the emotional processes of humans; they are influenced by each other's personae, and they seek methods to persuade others to stay by their side. What distinguishes Lestat from another vampiric villain,

such as Dracula, is that he appeals to his victims[4] on a deeply personal, individualistic level. Lestat, unlike Dracula or Carmilla, seizes the chance to recuperate the loyalty of those he oppresses. He utilizes these opportunities by offering his victims impasses that rely on emotional or sensual manipulation. These methods are human-like; coldly calculated as vampiric actions should be, but not unheard of in the human world. By offering a vampire child to Louis, Lestat minimizes the chances of having his fledgling abandon him. Thus, he shines a domestic light on the coven he created for self-benefit.

Lestat baptizes the child with the name of Claudia and states, "'Now, Louis was going to leave us… He was going to go away. But now he's not. Because he wants to stay and take care of you and make you happy… You're not going away, are you, Louis?'" (75). By projecting his insecurities about Louis' leaving onto Claudia, Lestat secures his stability in New Orleans. Louis interprets this creation as an act of revenge. He explains this to Daniel, the interviewer, though he does not ponder the possible readings of this revenge:

> "When we stood alone in that dark street, I felt in him a communion with another I hadn't felt since I died. I rather think that he ushered Claudia into vampirism for revenge."
>
> "Revenge, not only on you but on the world," suggested the boy. (Rice 77)

Letting revenge rule his motivations humanizes Lestat. While it does not provide justification or a sympathetic motive, revenge is a strikingly human characteristic. Instead of letting the human child die, Lestat ensures that Louis shares guilt in the genesis of their vampire child. Allowing the child a vampiric rebirth is both merciful and depraved, and Louis struggles with this idea.

[4] I am ascribing the word "victim" in reference to Lestat onto any individual he has fed on—including his fledglings. This is because Lestat is a diegetic villain.

This scenario lends itself to other possible readings that can also be interpreted as a sort of punishment Lestat casts upon Louis for considering leaving him.

Regardless of possible motives, an uncanny family is born—a vampire child with two vampire fathers who hone complex interpersonal relationships with one another. Challenging the heterosexual nuclear family, the vampiric fathers explore queer alternatives by making vampiric multiplicity an almost literal endeavor. With a child in their care, the fathers deprave childhood innocence through the vampirization of someone who must, regardless of her age and perceived untainted nature, participate in the vampiric masquerade to survive. Although Lestat's and Louis' admiration for one another disappears almost entirely through Claudia's vampirization, overwhelming attention must be given to their child—an endeavor in which both fathers take joy. Louis recounts his anxious attention to Claudia as follows: "At first, I thought only of protecting her from Lestat. I gathered her into my coffin every morning and would not let her out of my sight with him if possible" (Rice 77). This fear towards a fellow parent mimics the language of those afraid to leave nuclear families due to abusive spouses, and Louis acknowledges the fear he feels for his child. He states, "Afraid of feeling alone, I would not conceive of risking it with Claudia. She was a child. She needed care" (78). Although Louis is cruel in his methods, his account of Lestat's parenting retells the following: "And though Lestat threatened me with danger to her, he did not threaten her at all but was loving to her, proud of her beauty, anxious to teach her we must kill to live and that we ourselves could never die" (78). Lestat's choices in this passage connote a new alliance; though he wishes to harm Louis and keep him submissive, he does not enact cruelty towards his child. Therefore, he hopes that she embraces her vampiric nature when she is still impressionable and not fall into the existential stupor of her other maker. This desire to mold Claudia offers an alternative take on the

generative purposes of the vampire. Like humans mold human children, Rice's vampires mold theirs.

While the relationship between the vampiric parents is remarkably abusive, the nuclear family emulates a normative one—two individuals produce an offspring and care for it under the bounds of emulating normativity. The conservative politics Dr. Aldana Reyes mentions stem from this domestic plot of *Interview with the Vampire*. While they are transgressive because they pose a queer alternative to parent figures, the family Louis and Lestat create is not forthcoming in their vampiric or unholy nature, and rather focus on masquerade for survival. The family blend almost seamlessly into the crowds of New Orleans without being perceived as offensive or suspicious—unlike other literary vampiric fiends, who arouse suspicions early in their respective narratives. Once those fiends are discovered, they purposely offend. Yet, the Pointe du Lac-de Lioncourt family remain anonymous and wish not to be seen. A vampiric masquerade consists of mimicking the norm, and Rice's vampires adjust to the human world marvelously. Even if they mimic a conservative entity such as a nuclear family or marriage, they do so in the name of survival. While Aldana Reyes' observations and labels are correct, these observations do not constitute major stakes in a narrative sense. Rice's vampires mimic for survival. Their politics are confused, neoliberal, or outwardly conservative because the politics of domesticity bear these labels, as well. Their transgressions against the heteronormative lies in imitation. Much as a drag queen mimics constructed womanhood, Rice's vampires mimic the nuclear family. Yet, the text remarks on how the institution of the family is weak enough to cause *Interview with the Vampire*'s vampiric downfall. While *Dracula* and *Carmilla*'s downfall relied on the vampires' rejection of righteousness, *Interview with the Vampire* places partial blame on the vampire's

inability to embody the heteronormative. Had the vampires seriously embodied Aldana Reyes' labels, perhaps they would have succeeded.

The domesticity of Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* is, as previously mentioned, outwardly conservative because it intends to mimic the normative—if not the functionally heteronormative.[5] Despite their attempts, however, an examination of this family could trigger concern to mortals. While this family has parents with an abusive relationship, the vampire child Claudia still equally concerns the reader. Part of the reason her character offends others is her ruthlessness towards her victims, since she has taken to heart Lestat's teachings. Louis describes her hunting with Lestat in a haunting manner: "They found death fast in those first years, before she learned to play with them, to lead them to the doll shop or the café where they gave her steaming cups of chocolate or tea to ruddy her pale cheeks, cups she pushed away, waiting, waiting, as if feasting silently on their terrible kindness" (Rice 80). "The infant death" (83) uses the angelic façade of her youth to entrap her victims and execute them with impunity. Lisa Nevárez's "What to Expect When You Are Expecting (a Vampire): Reading the Vampire Child" examines why vampiric children unsettle readers more than their adult counterparts, and also offers a masterful take on horror and nursing. Nevárez claims the following:

> One can argue that the very presence of vampire children in [*Interview with the Vampire* and *Breaking Dawn*] offers even more chills down the spine than their adult counterparts evince. Children are supposed to be innocent and of unblemished character, so to see

[5] I utilize the word "heteronormative" due to the fact that Lestat and Louis function within the family in ways that may digress from their sex/gender. Louis is a financial provider for both Lestat and Claudia, but the burden of teaching Claudia how to survive as a vampire falls on Lestat—for example. These roles are gendered. Since vampirism allows them to indulge in sexual and gendered fluidity, it is not unheard of that Rice's vampires may participate in or enact roles that do not align with vampiric characters' genders. For the purposes of the nuclear family, Lestat and Louis occasionally function heteronormatively.

> them as violent, blood-sucking creatures runs counter to the construction of the carefree, natural child. (93)

Interview with the Vampire's transgression against childhood embodies one of the ways the vampiric domestic space transgresses normativity. Ironically, a family that survives societally and economically on the premise of being close to humankind actively transgresses against its foundations in private—the true spirit of vampirism.

True imposters among humanity, the de Pointe du Lac-de Lioncourt coven are an arguably normative family but act in depraved manners that stem from their interpersonal relationships and spread into their bloodlust. They mimic the system of a two-parent household and offspring, so on a structural basis, they achieve normalcy. Yet, many aspects of this reproduced system diverge from the norm. The most obvious diegetic depravity this family commits is the absence of a biological mother. Louis even briefly hints at the absence of a birth mother in the family causing a disconnect between Claudia and her fathers: "'What's the matter with her!' he flared at me, as though I'd given birth to her and must know" (Rice 84). Although Lestat's and Louis' roles in the family fluctuate, the stark absence of a maternal figure stereotypically poses a disadvantage for Claudia's growth—especially since Claudia is perceived as a girl (not a vampire child), and has no one on whom to model her expected womanhood. Queer fathers not only fail to fulfill the role of a mother but also threaten the so-called "sanctity" of the very thing they imitate: marriage.

Claudia's tarnished nature worsens because of the absence of a maternal figure. Vampirism is only the source of the issue. Claudia, upon recognizing that she will be trapped in the body of a five-year-old girl forever, rebels against her father Lestat. Although this revolt can

be traced to a reasonable personal crisis, the horrific events that lead to Lestat's murder[6] cement the consequences of having Claudia indulge in grotesque killings from a young age. Louis recalls her apathy towards the situation, where she shows no remorse over her actions: "Claudia had wrapped Lestat's body in a sheet before I would even touch it, and then, to my horror, she had sprinkled it over with the long-stemmed chrysanthemums" (Rice 110). This sarcastic gesture shows disrespect for her father's body; she offers him chrysanthemums, but denotes that the cruel Lestat is unworthy of a proper burial or remembrance by offering a sheet as a final resting place. This eventual disregard for one parent transforms into the disregard for both fathers later in the novel. In a scene where Claudia recounts how she convinced an artisan to make her a doll of a woman, Louis grows uncomfortable with her presence. She questions Louis, "'Why do you look away, why don't you look at me?' she asked, her voice very smooth, very like a silver bell. But then she laughed softly, a woman's laugh, and said, 'Did you think I'd be your daughter forever? Are you the father of fools, the fool of fathers?'" (167). When this artisan, Madeleine, proves herself to be a motherly companion to Claudia, an eternal doll, Claudia persuades Louis to make the woman a vampire—especially since Louis considers leaving her for a new vampire companion, Armand. It is of no consequence whether Claudia fills the void of motherhood in her life; the narrative considers her to be too marked by her tarnished upbringing. As an emotional and spiritual woman, Claudia finds that she cannot amend the time lost. When she is killed by her deeds, she dies in a failed maternal embrace, "And the blackened, burnt, and drawn thing that was Madeleine still bore the stamp of her living face, and the hand that clutched at the child was

[6] Though Claudia poisons Lestat, Lestat makes several comebacks throughout the novel. In fact, Lestat ultimately survives any attempt against him. He recounts his tribulations, and his upbringing as a young vampire, in *Interview with the Vampire*'s successor; *The Vampire Lestat*. For the purposes of *Interview with the Vampire*, I am coining Claudia's first attempt at murder a successful one because Lestat's revival only presents itself as a minor inconvenience, and has no influence on Louis and Claudia's travels afterwards.

whole like a mummy's hand. But the child, the ancient one, my Claudia, was ashes" (243). The alternate portrait of the Madonna could not protect Claudia from death.

Another prominent reason the domestic space of *Interview with the Vampire* parodies the nuclear family rests on Claudia's relationship with Louis. This family is no stranger to complicated interpersonal relationships, but these relationships only become more complex and offensive once Claudia joins the coven. Claudia possesses two doting adoptive fathers; however, due to their vampiric nature, they condemn Claudia into what fate vampirism entails, including what the narrative would perceive as depraved, or unnatural, attraction. While mimicking a nuclear family, the interpersonal relationships between father and daughter become startling once Claudia emotionally matures. The domestic space of *Interview with the Vampire* becomes one of romantic and incestuous tension—one that would alarm humans due to its discomforting nature. Louis describes the fine line between parenthood and courtship in the following manner to Daniel: "But she lived, she lived to put her arms around my neck and press her tiny Cupid's bow to my lips and put her gleaming eye to my eye until our lashes touched and, laughing, we reeled about the room as if to the wildest waltz. Father and Daughter. Lover and Lover" (Rice 81). Although seemingly normal for a father and daughter to show affection, Louis' comments disrupt a tender scene. Describing the child as his "lover" is knowledge only he and his confessional interview possesses. Yet, to the eyes of mortals, outward displays of affection are nothing more than paternal care. Candace R. Benefiel's essay on the subversive nature of the novel's family, "Blood Relations: The Gothic Perversion of the Nuclear Family in Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*," examines how vampiric families engage in incestuous relationships and trespass normative notions of family. She states:

> Even the establishment of a vampire family is a subversive twist on the more normal biological reproduction of children. As the vampire turns its lover into its child, the relationship is oddly incestuous, a configuration that carries over into the portrayal of the vampire family. In the bulk of vampire fiction, a master vampire functions as father, mother, and husband, with other younger vampires as children/lovers. No biological mother is necessary, and the vampire ‘‘family,’’ isolated from human society by its extreme longevity and its essential otherness, becomes an intensely inwardly directed unit, and the blurring of normal familial relationships creates unnatural tensions. The vampire family, incestuous and blurred as it is, presents a subversive alternative model to the nuclear family. (263)

The blurring of boundaries that Benefiel describes makes *Interview with the Vampire*'s family perverse. Though aesthetically disturbing, vampiric nature allows for the vampires to interpret these boundaries as superficial. This is, yet again, another indulgence that strikes an abysmal difference between vampirism and humanity.

Interview with the Vampire is a novel concerned with mimicry. Arguably even more so than any of the vampiric novels discussed in this thesis. Yet, minimal attention is given to how the failure of mimicry foreshadows the downfall of the vampiric family. The family portrayed in the novel attempt to achieve stability within the odd sixty years they were in each other's company. Though they undertook a seemingly successful masquerade, what made them a divergent family marks them as too dangerous, too avant-garde, and too offensive. The vampiric project of *Interview with the Vampire* is shunned—Louis loses his daughter-lover and wallows in

his melancholy, and Lestat lives in the shadow of the vampire he once was.[7] These vampires are punished. Though they are not killed like their fellow vampiric villains, the implications of their failure are as dire as death. In a social death where they can no longer pursue a domestic life, they live with the knowledge that they cannot achieve what humans can. Rice's characters were close to victory. Yet their humanity and their introspective natures allowed them to be rightfully labeled as confused. The vampires' monstrosity attempted to be human, despite their failure to follow their desires to completion. Humanity cannot coexist with vampirism; one must prevail over the other.

Interview with the Vampire implies that the human world follows a moral code divorced from the ethics of the vampire. The human code is inevitably too familiar to our vampiric protagonists—since they, too, were once human. They are not mystic or eerily horrific creatures as seen in other gothic fiction. They are husks of humanity that, to the moral code of humans, fell to the allure of vampirism. Enabling them to create a subversive domestic space as an alternative to solitary and emotionally void vampirism transgresses against humanity because monsters are not meant to mimic human ties. The assumption that humans can see themselves in the queer alternative viewpoint of the vampires offends the heteronormative. The family in *Interview with the Vampire* was othered because of their queerness and because of their private depravity, but most of all, they are monstrous outcasts because their monstrosity was eerily human.

[7] See *The Vampire Lestat*—Lestat's account of the events of the first novel denote that Louis might be an unreliable narrator, therefore, purposely portraying Lestat in a weaker light by the end of the events of *Interview with the Vampire*. My research on who the most reliable narrator of this time period is—Louis or Lestat—is inconclusive since there is no overwhelming evidence for either case in *The Vampire Chronicles*. This is a nod towards their tumultuous domestic life, even if in later novels Lestat and Louis mend their relationship (albeit several times) after the 1990's.

Conclusion

Queer Fear: What Now?

"Evil is always possible.

Goodness is eternally difficult."

-Anne Rice, *Interview with the Vampire*

Fiction has allowed the vampire to live many lives. As one of the most recognizable monsters of all time, the vampire has left a legacy that is truly, like itself, immortal. Since the vampire's hold on culture proves the vampire's immortality, the following question stands: Are the messages interwoven with monumental texts equally longstanding? The vampiric texts I have examined defied the presence of those with dissenting attitudes, portraying these individuals as monstrous outsiders who must, by impulse, usurp humanity's claim to righteousness. The vampire is both a monster and a tragic figure—unable to control its desire for blood, and yet forced to endure centuries of alienation.

Queer readings of the texts I have analyzed in this project prove themselves quite disturbing to the progressive reader. The elimination of queer-coded individuals who are characterized as predatory, conniving, and abusive generalizes the behaviors and motives of all queer-identifying people. Paranoia about these individuals characterizes the three examined texts, but this paranoia mimics real-world homophobia and generalizations. This is not to say that queer-coded or queer characters with negative traits cannot exist in fiction—yet, when this type

of negative representation is the *only* representation of queer folk in vampiric lore, these characterizations become offensive.

Yet from the discussed canon, a warmly-received vampiric tradition emerged. Although homophobic readings of key texts are possible, these texts inspired the resurgence of vampiric media. What was once a horrific monster eventually became a desirable, othered being. Queer readings of texts may merit interpretations of transgression—readings where queerness and the underrepresented present themselves as imminent realities of the times, therefore warranting suppression because of irrational fears. The defeated vampire is just a martyr for those who follow.

The idea of martyrdom may explain why the fascination with vampiric fiction has captured audiences worldwide. The defeated vampires in this thesis provide the mold for other authors to fuel their own vampiric stories, and this theory has proven to be correct due to the recent popularity of vampires in media. Richard Dryer states, "… vampirism can be taken to evoke the thrill of a forbidden sexuality, but whereas earlier examples also express horror and revulsion at it, later examples turn this on its head and celebrate it" (Dryer 83). As an object of desire, the vampire abandoned the gruesome imagery of Stoker's time and adopted the façade of immortal beauty instead. Making peace with and understanding the vampire's nature, rather than destroying it, has become a priority.

The vampire has become a celebrated creature with an enormous hold on today's media. The record-crushing *Twilight* series captured the attention of female adolescent audiences in the late 2000s and brought attention to feminine desire in fandom culture. Following *Twilight*'s example, both HBO's *True Blood* and CW's *The Vampire Diaries* profited from the vampiric craze of the late 2000s and produced successful television dramas directed at the fanatics

enamored by Stephanie Meyer's work. Vampire enthusiasts are also witnessing the vampiric domination of another popular form of media: video games. Popular titles such as *Vampire: The Masquerade* and the *Castlevania* series have warranted cult-like followings. *Vampire: The Masquerade* inspired the *World of Darkness* tabletop role-playing series and the much-anticipated sequel *Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines 2* which has faced delays because of Covid-19. *Castlevania* became the muse of Netflix's acclaimed anime series of the same name. Most recently, the *Resident Evil* series departed from their zombie-focused storylines and introduced vampires as their newest antagonists. The anticipated *Resident Evil Village*'s towering vampiric lead, Lady Dimitrescu, went viral on social media websites and spawned a plethora of discussions over her allure. A non-gaming source like *The Guardian* speculates that Lady Dimitrescu's appeal rests on the contradictory emotions her male admirers feel for her. Keith Stuart suggests the following:

> We see giant female monsters, oozing blood and slime… Capcom's giantess is part of that cycle, eliciting both sexual appeal and mordant dread. So maybe we're obsessed with Lady Dimitrescu because … she represents primal fears; she is a mother and a seducer, towering over us with immense castrating power.

Instead of rejecting the vampire's allure, new media profits by highlighting the vampire's relatability and beauty. Once a cautionary tale and now an unattainable partner, the vampire has outlived its once didactic purpose.

The richness of the vampire allowed the creature to morph into the demands of the audience. Truly, the creature embodies manifestations of human desires and fears, and what was previously incomprehensible evil is now exciting. Clive Bloom comments on the sympathetic

appeal of the modern vampire, and reaches conclusions as to how the vampire morphed to what it is today. He states:

> Vampires seem to have a versatility other monsters do not have and their protean nature allows them to appear in bars and nightclubs as well as high schools. No longer is the vampire confined to novels as a character, rather now they act as a type of narrative trope, differing as to the fictional context within which that trope is used. (187)

The emerging relatability of the vampire allows it to be a malleable creature. Now, the vampire can inhabit the realms of feminine and queer desire by simply placing the creature in any imaginable scenario. The power rests at the limits of an author's imagination. Yet, the malleability of the monster merits a look backwards. This project has highlighted the injustices and crude imagery that defined the queer monster—proving that cautionary tales can have disturbing and regressive messages. Just because the monster evolved into a beloved figure of fiction does not mean that the Western history of the vampire merits erasure. To comprehend the significance of the vampire's emergence, one must look at the vampire as the once-rejected figure of inhumane cruelty. The vampiric canon condoned queer fear, and we must engage media critically enough to guarantee that the villainization of queer folk in media remains an issue of the past.

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