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Hunger, Capitalism, and Modern Gothic Literature

Becky Tynan

Submitted in Partial Completion of the  
Requirements for Departmental Honors in English

Bridgewater State University

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## Hunger, Capitalism, and Modern Gothic Literature

### Introduction: Hunger and Consumption

In Ireland, the Great Famine of the 1840s caused not only hunger and starvation, but also diseases, emigration, and a rupture in the social framework. Many social critics of the time argued that a lack of food came from an imbalance in society between those who could afford to eat and those who could not. Hunger was described as a disease because British colonial society depended on feeding citizens from its economic and political menu. Irish people under British landlords lacked the ability to own land outright and this supported an inequality in land ownership that in turn affected government representation. Irish history shows how a society that keeps a nation hungry also controls what there is to consume. The State needs citizens to buy what it is selling, because economically that's how the cycle of consumption continues.

The Great Famine in Ireland lasted from 1845-1852. Ireland lost a quarter of its population to starvation, disease, and emigration. The Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland share the same island space that was devastated in the nineteenth century. Hunger in a post-famine Ireland is a cultural memory associated with a long history of exploitation from the British empire that began before an official time period. This dates back to the Protestant ascendancy and before. During the nineteenth century, the Irish Big House becomes a symbol of the land-owning class in Ireland. Those who owned the land in Ireland controlled the wealth disproportionate to those who had to tenant farm the land and rent their homes. The Big Houses of Ireland remain symbols of imperialistic decadence that literally fed on people, labor, and Ireland's food. "It seems to have an existence, a personality of its own, which is directed towards maintaining the status quo and keeping emotional exchange at the subdued level suitable to

polite society” (Laigle 70). The personification of the Big House and its significance of money and power allowed those who lived in said houses to control the wealth of the nation. “The powerful social weapon constituted by household routine acts as an extension of social convention and allows the house itself to play a considerable role in influencing the development of emotion and the course of events” (Laigle 70). The concept of home and the affairs inside the domestic space in Ireland are critical in understanding the culture of the Irish people and how that culture revolves around a metaphorical and sometimes literal hunger, present in the bodies of Irish people and the economic and cultural systems of Ireland.

The language of hunger is the language of capitalism. People, governments, and land consume to keep the economy alive, and people consume food to continue to exist and function. Moreover, the government consumes taxes, rent, and labor to continue its functioning. Starvation and the presence of hunger is a symptom of the cultural other in a society that is dominated by literal and figurative consumption. When a person starves themselves, they choose to not function within the expected norms of society. When a government chooses not to tax or demand labor of its people it starves itself of normal way of sustaining itself. If not succumbing to the norm is choosing to cease to exist, then how can anything exist outside the system of capitalism and the economy? The alternative to the system of capitalism is an “other” in society. That “other” therefore becomes represented through hunger because they do not feed into the norms of their society or nation. Consequently, hunger is a term used in the context of sickness in the discourse of nationalism. Connecting starvation and hunger as a metaphor for a sickness in society is a tool in literature that critiques that societies way of functioning. “food refusing behavior serves a rhetorically indirect way of communicating incest trauma...Silencing of sexual abuse in the novel stands as severe critique of how nineteenth century legal and clerical attitudes

towards sexual abuse of children have pervaded long into twentieth century Irish society” (Pettersson 4). The incest trauma faced in Emma Donoghue’s *The Wonder* connects the physical ailments of hunger and starvation, to the moral and social conditions, like the church and the family, that allow and make the incest possible. The incest is the cause of her starvation. That is because hunger implies a lack of something and that lack creates an inequality. When things are unequal, they are not balanced, and that imbalance is connected to sickness in a world where health is part of everyday consumerism. In reference to Irish history, Irish author Emma Donoghue claimed that “we’ve (Irish people) defined ourselves as a people intimate with hunger” (Yi-Peng Lai 64). When a national identity is inextricable from a sense of hunger and otherness, what dangers manifest in the nation? When hunger is described as a disease, the empire’s dependence on sickness and healing through consumption is exposed. Incest and the destruction of the family is the danger in Donoghue’s work that manifest in the nation of Ireland.

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century Irish writers have shown how Catholic religious practices are patriarchal, imitate economic structures of capitalism, and place hunger and consumption at the center of their ritualistic practice. Irish nationalism firmly attached itself to a Catholic patriarchal foundation that consumed the identity of the people, the government and hence the land: “In post-Famine Ireland, religious affiliation increasingly became a surrogate for national identity as the effective agent of communal solidarity. Linked to a shared experience of marginalization, this clerical-nationalist alliance could also transcend and neutralize class division as a basis of political action” (Whelan 140). The church binds the nation together in their beliefs and therefore this bind then controls the context in which most of the population thinks. This bind and the shared beliefs comprise nationalism, and they are rooted in Catholicism when in the discourse of Ireland.

Ireland's people were Catholic, yet the money was Protestant because of British colonialism and absentee Anglo-Irish landlords. Primarily in the nineteenth-century, British landlords fed off their Catholic tenants and their labor. Even before the Famine, this was the way of life for colonized, Catholic Ireland. The Famine's cultural impacts only emphasize the Irish hunger-based identity Emma Donoghue describes in her writing. The phenomenon of hunger as an identity trait when describing Irish people is a common theme. Kevin Whelan similarly uses the term "radical memory" to convey just how Irish identity "formed and changed in post famine world." He claims "The symbiosis of 'Irish' and 'Catholic' was strengthened, and religion articulated an artificial, symbolic language of identity to replace the one being swept away by famine, emigration, and jolting socio-cultural transformations" (Whelan 139). In this way, the memory of Ireland is hunger. The unnatural void hunger creates was filled with a created, found memory. The created memory is one that has patriarchal values because it represses female sexuality and prioritizes male status over the harm the cultural and economic systems cause women. Donoghue shows how patriarchal ties to a created identity generate problems for women of the nation. Post-famine Ireland rooted itself deeply in Catholic religion as a way to find national identity. This newfound identity conjured an even deeper divide in the nation and connected religion and economy even more. The Church becomes a type of economic and social membrane that filters what is allowed to be consumed. The Church's financial importance and societal significance serves as the liaison between these elements of Irish life. These financial and societal spaces overlap primarily on the bodies of women because Catholicism is a patriarchy that endorses reproduction at its core.

In this thesis I will use Irish literature to explore how women in modern Ireland become capital, both religiously and nationally, in the sense that women's bodies are used to reproduce

and are responsible for continuing Irish culture. Women are seen as a way to continue the creation of Ireland's population, and the state and church ensure their value as mothers, but simultaneously limit their value to only consist of the duties of that role. Margot Backus argues "Measures to control and 'stabilize' the landless and desperate subjects left wandering aimlessly in the wake of massive economic and social changes were, throughout Europe, directed especially at indignant women" (36). The "indignant" women Backus refers to are the ones fighting their oppressions from patriarchal forces like the Catholic church in their nation. The attempt to manage a social contract between landlord and renters in nineteenth-century Ireland kept one group hungry because they did not own nor have the standing to ever own something for themselves. This system is gendered and the role of women within the Irish renter relationship was one that perpetually forced women to be dependent on others and therefore have no autonomy themselves. Women are seen in this relationship as figures to be controlled.

Modern Irish fiction suggests that positioning Irish women as capital creates a national dependency on them as a source of life. The nation feeds on women who perform their prescribed roles. Women must nurse the future children of the nation and continue to create more Irish Catholic people so that the state can rely on them for the things it consumes like labor, taxes, and rent. Women's roles were "confined to 'immanence', close to nature, passive, responsible for the reproduction of people and culture... Perceived primarily as a woman, rather than as a person who happens to be female" (Nolan 2). The limitation placed on women in the nation creates harmful use of their bodies because women's bodies are then used only for their reproductive abilities, the ability to bring life into the world or into the nation. In the novels I will discuss, women's bodies nurse life into the world through the literal nursing of a child, but also, functionally, a nurse who cares for and maintains or helps to bring health back to hurt or sick

people. Nursing becomes associated with a feminine duty a a social and moral obligation placed on women by the same system that sees them as mothers first. This connects motherhood to a role of nursing and conveying nursing as a feminized action.

Ireland's nation and economy are dangerous spaces for women, yet they depend on them to "heal" the nation since they are a life source. Contemporary Irish fiction, written by authors like Donoghue, center on female characters who are sick or are nurses. While Donoghue argues that Ireland's nation needs a nurse, it needs to heal the violent acts against women the nation has allowed. She also suggests that women and their bodies have been victims of the patriarchal concept that is a nation. Capitalism, nationalism, and patriarchy connect through their language of hunger and a metaphorical ravenousness for control and power in Donoghue's fiction.

By comparing nineteenth century gothic novels, like *Dracula*, to contemporary Irish novels like *The Wonder* and *The Pull of the Stars*, and even American novels, like *Salem's Lot* by Stephen King, we can see that the concepts of hunger and nationalism are tied directly to how nurses or nursing becomes a feminized idea and are needed to fix the damage done by and to colonized nations. In *Dracula* and *The Wonder* women are commodified as a way to control their agency. Their involvement in economics becomes a way of controlling them and in turn harms them. Nursing and or being a nurse becomes a feminized role and those who take on the task of doing so experience a feminization that makes them vulnerable to violence. Nursing, while a profession to care and treat the sick, is also the vocabulary used for breastfeeding a baby. In the discussion that follows, I will show how caregiving and nourishment are linked to the role of the woman as a commodity and a reproductive necessity for the development of the nation.

### ***Dracula: Nationalism as a Vampire and the Duality of Irish Identity***

*Dracula*, a nineteenth-century Irish gothic novel from 1897, follows the discovery, hunt, and eventual extermination of the vampire, Count Dracula. The novel deals with power, sexuality, and economics. Power and the use of it becomes inherently masculine, but Bram Stoker's nineteenth-century *Dracula* blurs the lines of the gender binary and serves to further connect capitalist hunger to nationhood. Count Dracula as a vampire is eternally hungry, lusting after what he may never have: life. A worthy life is defined as one that "moves upward, onward, forward" (Lau 3). The vampire halts that idea because they are frozen in time, undead, never to move forward in age or appearance. As the undead, vampires challenge human norms of what life should be.

Count Dracula is Stoker's version of the threat or challenge to a conventional way of Victorian life. Vampirism is an infection that must be cured, and Stoker's gang of the Harkers, Van Helsing, Dr. Seward, and Quincey are feminized in their roles to "nurse" the disease that is the existence of the Count. What disease does the count bring and which part of their normal lives does it effect? Stoker illustrates how the nation is nursed from a vampiric threat to its empirical nature. Empire is not for everyone—it is built on the idea of inequality, the other or the vampire in this case is seen as unequal compared to the other characters. The sickness, the vampirism, needs to be tended to and continues to be a threat throughout contemporary Irish fiction like Donoghue's *The Wonder*.

Dracula's quest for economic and geographical mobility is him searching for access to human life. His quest for blood, for vitality, and his failure to survive the novel shows us he fails his quest to find those things. We know it fails because "blood is quite obviously casually connected to vitality" (Clasen 387) and Stoker writes "The blood is the life!" (Stoker 121), but Dracula dies at the end of the novel. Dracula's connection to search for life is connected to power

and masculinity. Stoker argues that these concepts are representative of what a nation should be. Dracula is a powerful being that, while mimicking powerful masculine traits, blurs the lines of feminine power. Vampires do this by “linking same sex desire, blood, contamination, and death but also by an unmooring of gender signifiers across a range of polymorphous desires” (Lau 4). The blur of traditional gender qualities in the novel conveys a complex power dynamic that represents the future of Irish identity through the Count’s character. This is one reason he does not survive the text. The society he wishes to feed on refuse his “otherness” and abnormal way of life.

Dracula is so captivating because of the many ways Stoker masters the convention of “emotional contagion” in the horror genre (Clasen 383). In horror, the use of emotional contagion is to create a protagonist that readers mirror the feelings of. This creates fear, and thus creates empathy. Jonathan Harker arrives in Transylvania to meet with the Count for his job. In the beginning of the novel, Jonathan Harker is the only source of information of readers. He is also the character mostly present when Dracula is, because in horror is the threat or scare lacks “screen time” or presence. In this case the actual vampire lacks being present in the novel, because the anxiety of when Dracula will pop is almost more unnerving than his actual presence. The novel only keeps The Count present through the journal entries of the characters. In the novel, the Count is actually absent a lot of the time. The anxiety of knowing a threat exists, but it is not present is effective because the unknown causes fear. Vampires themselves exist but cannot be seen in mirrors; they are simultaneously there and not. Count Dracula’s ability to shape shift again shows the elusiveness of a threat, the difficulty level to kill the threat, all effective reasons why the threat of a vampire is scary.

Jonathan and Dracula double each other as characters and share similar parts of their identities. Jonathan Harker is a solicitor, coming west to east, to make money to marry. His quest for money or capital is driven by his ability to be mobile and his desire to reproduce. His mobility in the text is motivated by capitalist heteronormative empirical goals like having a financially stable family. The future of his investments, family structure being one, is at stake and in the hands of a vampire. Count Dracula mimics this quality with his quest to come to England and western Europe and acquire land and spaces where he can feed and secure a stable income of food, i.e. places with people that he can suck on: "I long to go through the crowded streets of your mighty London, to be in the midst of the whirl and rush of humanity, to share its life, its change, its death, and all that makes it what it is" (Stoker 17). Here Dracula's expression of longing to belong and share in life shows how badly he wants, and is hungry for, that ability to blend in, so that he may continue to feed. The hunger is powerful enough to make the Count crave a form of assimilation. This assimilation wouldn't change Dracula's status as a vampire, but it would change a human's ability to see him as one.

Jonathan and his goals from the start of the novel become suppressed by Dracula's quest to feed on him. At the same time when Jonathan and his troop of vampire hunters embark on their journey to fight and slay Dracula that suppresses his quest to move to western Europe and England so that he has populations to feed from. The two's similar missions stand in the way of one another. This shows how the systems they both want to be a part of are both harmful to the "normal" masses represented by Jonathan and the cultural other, Dracula.

Dracula is present in the text as a repressor and the repressed. The state of being both repressed and a repressor mimics the Irish people of the nineteenth century because they are split between oppressed and poor Catholics and the Protestant Ascendancy. Having the two groups

share the same space and nationality is metaphorically the same as Dracula being repressed and the repressor in one body, this is simply stated as “Ireland’s otherness to itself” (Valente 51).

This links to how perceived masculine and feminine traits exist together in the space of most if not all characters in the novel. Binaries share the same space because one element of a binary cannot exist without the other. Just as poor and rich exists in Dracula so does masculine and feminine, alive but at the same time dead in another binary he represents.

Johnathan Harker is hungry for money and for the life it would bring to him. This hunger compared to Dracula’s hunger drive the point that economic and social life are connected in the novel. The empirical state of mind that has taught him Harker and Dracula that they must want to fit in with society is responsible for their hunger to do so. Harker’s hunger is met by the Count’s which does not differ greatly from Jonathan’s. Dracula too is hungry. He lusts for human blood but for the life of modernity in a city like London, in a house, with his riches. That’s the dream empire puts on the menu and both Dracula and Jonathan want to order it.

The wealthy part of the Count’s character is evident in Dracula’s attachment to his dirt, and his satiric trip on a coffin ship to England echoes the Protestant Ascendency and history of the Great Famine. Joseph Valente describes the coffin ships: “Coffin ship’ [is] the name given to dangerous and diseased vessels carrying the poorest Irish emigres to foreign shores and, needless to say, enjoying no Ascendency patronage whatsoever” (Valente 60). The connection between hunger and money through Dracula’s character shows how the systems the empire depends on are never satisfied. If Dracula’s unquenchable thirst were to go undefeated in England, then he proves that the cultural other could thrive and take over what is known as normal life. But when Jonathan is able to interrupt this take over, he proves the cultural other is doomed not only to not partake in the systems that normal life requires, like heteronormative relations that produce

children and constant economic acquisition, but also that the other cannot even threaten to exist or survive because it is forced to partake in said system.

What feeds Jonathan's hunger is ending the hunger or "life" of Dracula. The basis of capitalism is inequality. Both Jonathan and Dracula's hunger are for the same thing and they both cannot exist in a capitalist space because one must be lower than the other. Dracula dies so Jonathan may get all he desires or all he was destined to have anyway. Jonathan and Dracula blur the line for who is the oppressor and who is oppressed. They mirror one another and mimic the relationship that Irish people struggled with when it came to British subjectivity and how to rule themselves since both systems seemed to get in the way of the other.

The novel's men exemplify how the way to deal with the vampire as a threat is nursing the cultural other away. One way the men in the novel nurse is through Lucy Westenra's character. Lucy is a very desirable socialite and friend of Mina Harker, Jonathan's wife. Lucy is so desirable she even had three men propose to her on one day. First Dr. Seward, then the American Quincey Morris, until finally the proposal she accepts, that of Arthur Holmwood, another rich socialite. All three men respect one another and vow to stay lifelong friends with Lucy and if she ever needs anything they will help. But even though she makes a decision she still shows signs of why deciding between them was hard. "Why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?" (Stoker 50) The desirability of Lucy and her well-intentioned wishes to fulfill all these men actually goes against the values of a traditional marriage. Her sexuality is challenging the norms of what a woman should be in this time. The male attention she receives places these men in a venerable position where the power shifts to her because she is so desirable and now has the power to choose who to marry. This

challenging of a norm Lucy does gives her some form of masculine power and therefore it makes sense when the men in the novel need to nurse her, as nursing is feminized role.

Later in the novel when Lucy is being drained by Dracula, Dr. Seward helps her and calls his old friend and teacher Dr. Van Helsing. Van Helsing does not say what is wrong with her but concludes she needs blood transfusion. Arthur being her betrothed gets to give her his blood first. Subsequently as Lucy's condition and interactions with Dracula happen, she receives blood from Dr. Seward and eventually Quincey: "A brave man's blood is the best thing on this earth when a woman is in trouble. You're a man and no mistake" (Stoker 128). Van Helsing is describing Quincey here before he is to donate his blood to her. These blood donations from all these men in an attempt to save her from vampirism show how sexually motivated both the economic systems of the western world and the representative vampire of the east are. These men have their blood inside her, and this blood is a life-giving bodily fluid. The act of creating life and vitality, these men are pumping her full of their idea of life, which consists of heteronormative economic based motives. By nursing Lucy they slowly hold off the threat of her sexuality to their manhood's.

The act of giving blood, while masculine, in terms of vitality is also inherently feminine. Dracula is successful in sucking Lucy's blood and creating conditions where the men have to literally nurse Lucy and watch over her, and in a sense feed her their blood. They nurse like a mother would nurse a baby, by feeding her to sustain her life. But the men are unable to successfully nurse her back to life as she eventually is turned into a vampire. This is because as men they cannot successful, or truly nurse. While trying to fulfill a feminine role they fail and corrupt the practice of nursing a nation. This emphasizes the need for women to be a part in healing the nation.

Lucy's desirability to all men, human and vampire is no mistake. Her body is one that, once conquered by any of the men, can convey Stoker's message that the acquisition of capital is connected to reproduction. Lucy's loss of blood to Dracula and acquisition of it through her loyal admirers is a battle. Her body becomes a stronghold fought for by the cultural other of Dracula and the strong eventual vampire hunters. Dracula wins this battle, but not the war. His win of transforming Lucy into a vampire emphasizes the tangible threat that the vampire holds over the "normal" and assumed systems of humanity. If Lucy lives, she becomes a wife and probable mother, she continues, through reproduction, the economic success of the men in her life. When she is turned to a vampire, she becomes a dangerously perverted idea of what a woman should be in society. She is not the wife and mother tied to the family unit and home, she a mobile, deadly, and temptingly ravenous vampire. Once a vampire Lucy now empowered even more become more masculine as she can now feed on others to sustain herself. If she were to have become the traditional role as a woman, the opposite would have happened. The man in her life would be able to be sustained and reproduced through her. Becoming a vampire shifts her role further from the feminine norm and breaks traditional mold.

Lucy does not just become a vampire but becomes one who eats children, known as the "Bloofer Lady": "for some of the children, indeed all who have been missed at night, have been slightly torn or wounded in the throat" (Stoker 152). The two accounts of Lucy's feeding on children are from Newspaper articles in the text. The feeding on children by a woman who has never nursed one is an inversion as to what "normal" human functions would be. Instead of a child nursing from its mother, the vampire nurses itself on children. Lucy's transformation and threat to the role of mother in society shows that hunger that consumes you, much like being in the state of a vampire, is dangerous and destroys the possibility of a future. "vampire women

feed on children as opposed to feeding them, which is not only a direct inversion of one of femininities dominant tropes but also, obviously, an example of what it means to take up a position against the children” (Lau 8). The stance against children creates a version of sexuality that does not focus on the reproduction. If reproduction is how tradition and culture and norms are passed down, through mothers, then without that the nation would crumble. The threat to crumble “normal” life, that is to say a life that values economics and patriarchal power, is one that would topple both the British empire and the budding Irish Republic since they mirror one another in the aspects of economy and patriarchy.

In relation to subjectivity, Lucy’s actions layer motherhood in reverse alongside a harmful classist and nationalist metaphor:

“Lucy enacts the norms of motherhood in reverse, hunting working-class children rather than giving birth to her own bourgeoisie brood, and thus shaping children’s subjectivity through a process of covert depletion rather than charming supplementation. In effectively uniting the virgin and vampire in Lucy- in suggesting that the innocent victim and diabolical predator are aspects of a single subjectivity” (Backus 138).

The binary described by Backus suggested through Lucy’s female vampire is one that relates to how class and gender are deeply rooted in the societal norms that rule people. When the norms are not followed the threat is so great that the elimination of said threat upholds the systems of patriarchy and capitalism. The eventually killing of Lucy is what is perceived as a healing of the nation when it actually is perpetuating the systems that harmed her in the first place.

Van Helsing eventually shares with Dr. Seward, Arthur, and Quincey, all the men whose blood was inside Lucy, that she is a vampire and all of them once convinced go to the cemetery

to help kill her. The men are waiting outside her tomb for her to come back and when she does she is carrying child, who she quickly discards upon seeing the men. Lucy says “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!” (Stoker 181). Lucy’s now dangerous sex appeal has been shown to the men. This part of the novel is narrated by Dr. Seward who describes how after this he still asks Arthur for permission to kill Lucy, “Answer me, oh my friend! Am I to proceed with my work?” (182) to which Arthur gives his consent. This scene actually includes the physical vampire there whereas other times in the novel the vampire is only discussed. It also shows that even with such high stakes, the men are restricted because the societal code marks Lucy as promised to Arthur and this gives him ownership of her even in (un)death. Lucy is free from the societal norm of marriage and motherhood but it still subject to the ownership of a man. Not even her status as a child sucking vampire will free her from the gentlemanly code of the times.

In this way Lucy is like Dracula, powerful and disenfranchised. Her vampiric abilities to kill that also free her from becoming the expected wife and mother empower her and are immediately contrasted by Van Helsing’s permission asking. The group of men are powerful and disenfranchised as well, just as Jonathan was in the beginning of the novel. For example Dr Seward is an example of the middle class because he is in charge of the asylum, but he lives and works there. His middle-class status is empowering and also disenfranchising because he simultaneously is fortunate enough to have a stable income and home but also cannot separate the two since they exist in the same space, nor was he the man Lucy choose to marry. The power and disenfranchisement that exists in many characters is acknowledged and used to highlight the way power is gendered in the novel. In the novel the men are knowledgeable of Lucy’s condition and physically strong enough to fight her but are weak in their status as mortal and in that fact their

ability to bleed. Both men and women can be powerful and weak simultaneously, power in this text is not exclusive to either sex.

Power not being exclusive to either sex is part of the threat to the hunger created by a vampire. The vampire's focus as a sexual being not concerned with reproduction of children is powerful. It reclaims the heteronormative purpose of sex which is to make babies. Since Lucy is a non-reproductive threat, she must be eliminated, she cannot survive in a world dependent on the norms she challenges. Van Helsing encourages Arthur to drive the stake through Lucy's heart and in doing this the power dynamics shift. This penetration of Lucy by Arthur is sexually symbolic of him claiming masculine power back from her. The sexual killing of Lucy is the reclamation of the threat that Dracula created to the men in the novel. This act is carried out on the body of a woman because women's bodies are spaces for men to conquer in empirical spaces. Lucy's needs to be nursed as she slowly transformed into a vampire and her need to be cured as a disease in society once turned again required the men to be in a nursing type role.

The men must heal society one vampire killing at a time because in this way they gain back their masculine power. By killing the ever-alluring undead Lucy they kill the temptation of a woman who is mobile and free from the traditional roles under patriarchal and typical economic standards. They show that threat will not survive under their ability to control her body. They have won the final say on her body in the text but are still left with no woman to continue on their society with. Showing that both the vampirism that craves to be alive so much, and the living human destructive systems that trap women with the burden to reproduce, that neither are totally safe or sustainable for the body of a woman or for the continuation of a healthy nation.

It is important to note the absence of Mina and Jonathan, who are married in Romania after Jonathan's escape and are now wealthy and middle class, upon Jonathan's boss, Mr. Hawkins', death. Jonathan and Mina join the men after the killing of Lucy in the novel. Jonathan and Mina now married and financially secure are missing a key piece of the puzzle when considering the heteronormative formula of a family—a baby. As the only married couple and the only female character left in novel the future of the nation is dependent on Jonathan, but more so on Mina to reproduce a baby.

Dracula knows this and also goes after Mina because the men's strength lies with her. Mina is the only bourgeois English woman left in the text. If she cannot fulfill her role to reproduce then the way of life cannot be continued and the nation won't be carried on: "his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood , and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare breast" (Stoker 242) Dracula's nursing of Mina on his blood is him feeding her the ideas of a woman unbound by the burden to reproduce but the possibility to become more mobile not tied down to the social responsibility of motherhood. This is done though through a perverted moment of motherhood where Dracula feminizes himself to nurse Mina on his breast. To destroy the idea of mothering through a famine act of nursing is like the continuation of the nation. By believing in and perpetuating the harmful systems of nation you continue the nation but also make the acts of nationalism something that is harmful to do.

When it comes time for Dracula to face the nurses in the novel, in "Little England" (Valente *Dracula's Crypt* 52) or the group of vampire hunting men Dr. Seward, Van Helsing, Quincey, and Jonathan, they try to cure the illness that is the vampire from the world as they know it. Dracula again mimics the men in the text in his attempt to nurse Mina Harker. The men

“cure” society of the disease of vampirisms. The key elements gearing up towards the fight are how Mina’s body and mind have become a weapon based on how her a Dracula have a telepathic connection. Her body and mind are used as a way to track him. Meaning Mina is part vampire. Also to go fight Dracula the must leave England. The fight against the cultural other, not taking place on English soil is an analogy for how the British empire expands to other places, like Ireland to assimilate and subdue the populations there. Dracula’s imperialistic quest rooted in capitalistic ruled patriarchy turns him into a victim of the thing he strove to emulate. Even his return to Castle Dracula is reminiscent of an Irish landlord returning to his Big House. Again, he is powerful but suppressed, just like the men who kill him. They are powerful because they win, yet are seemingly repressed and live in fear of Dracula's presence and the threat he creates.

This bifurcation in gender connects to the rewriting of history and how the winner’s narrative is told. *Dracula* is written in an epistolary style, contributing to the realness and the pseudo-historical accuracy of the events. The men upholding and winning the competition of empire blur the gender lines and they are powerful and mighty, but do they cure the disease of vampirism? Who is the real vampire? Jonathan, Van Helsing, and Arthur, are all hungry and become satiated through exercising their power over the Count. Considering the way the lines that define good and bad are blurred between vampires and humans, we can say that neither side truly represents one or the other side of the moral debate. The novel’s ending symbolizes that. Jonathan and Mina Harker produce a son named after all the vampire hunters, but they choose to call him Quincey, since he is the only man who died. Quincey is also the only other “foreigner” other than Dracula in the text. Quincey is from Texas, even further west than any other character aspired to go, but the future seems headed that way, toward America. The child in the novel is symbolic of that future to look west, to modernize, and those things are equated with money. The

dream of attaining money and having a family to pass your DNA and money down to prevails.

This is a similar goal to what Dracula had: to create more vampires and get richer in London.

The similarities in the characters relate to the ways Ireland and England are both tied to capital as a form of nationbuilding. Economics is at the root of what motivates character's actions in the novel.

The way money is tied to the storyline of *Dracula* is echoed in how money is represented in Emma Donoghue's post-Celtic Tiger novels. As I will discuss in the next section, Donoghue's *The Wonder* shows how the financial gain of Anna O'Donnell's fast becomes motivation for the church to let Anna continue to starve. Similarly, in Donoghue's more recent novel, *The Pull of the Stars*, the system continues to allow women to reproduce even though they are dying more because of it. The patriarchal system, when benefitting from increased wealth, does not prevent the harm done to those within the system as long as the system benefits. In *Dracula* nobody stops trying to acquire money, even though, in his quest for financial honor, Jonathan is in harm's way, just as Dracula is by coming to England with vampire hunters following him. But the threat of either of those things does not stop anybody from still trying to make money. Money has control over the lives our characters lead.

### **Emma Donoghue's Vampiric Nursing**

Nurses traditionally care for their patients and keep them safe, yet in both *The Wonder* and *The Pull of the Stars*, Emma Donoghue shows how nursing in Ireland is a complicated relationship tied to the economy and the Church. The Church intervenes in nursing in both texts. In *The Wonder*, a novel about a young fasting girl in post famine nineteenth century Ireland, two nurses come to watch her to confirm the truth of her status as a miracle. One nurse is an Irish nun

and the other an English Nightingale. Also, in *The Wonder* the protagonist's mother surreptitiously nurses her with "manna from heaven" from her kisses. The food from heaven that sustains Anna O'Donnell is connected to the same Church and family system that represses her. Consumption and hunger for another place other than Ireland is also present as a theme in *The Wonder*, where Irish existence is told through a historically fictional lens, centered in the nineteenth century. Donoghue unpacks the trauma of Ireland's existence as a space where patriarchy and capitalism have been fed to its citizens for so long by colonization, that they now crave to eat something else, to be fed something else that is no longer their own.

Donoghue's *The Wonder* (2016) and *The Pull of the Stars* (2020) tell the stories of female nurses in Ireland. Both novels are historical fiction, with *The Wonder* set just after the Famine and *The Pull of the Stars* set in 1918. Donoghue uses the past to critique the religious and patriarchal history of Ireland while simultaneously critiquing the present challenges of gender roles and sexual identity. Throughout *The Pull of the Stars*, the protagonist nurse Julia Powers is obsessed with hunger and feeding. She cares for patients in the maternity fever ward during the 1918 influenza in Dublin, and she must carefully watch what the women eat and drink for it directly impacts their health and wellbeing. She feeds her patients typical Irish food medicines, like hot lemonades, hot whiskey, and Irish tea that seems to not compare to the tea they had before war (presumably British imported tea). This Irish medicine of food and drink is not what Julia herself would prefer to consume. The action takes place in Ireland during the first world war, a time when Irish revolutionaries used the war as an opportunity to make progress in gaining Irish independence while Britain fought abroad. The controlled war-time Irish substances that Julia feeds mothers-to-be are different from the food items she desires to eat that are explicitly not Irish. Donoghue suggests an irony in the fact that the nurse who is caring for the

patients would not prefer to be cared for that way, herself. If the care that's lacking is the care that is least influenced by the British as possible, why is the most Irish thing not good enough? Julia's critique of Irishness underscores the indoctrination of Britishness and colonialism that now is part of Irish nationalism.

The novel also takes place the day before and during Julia's thirtieth birthday. For her birthday her brother, who served in the British military and is now mute as a result of his service gives her food as a present, but it is food from European countries. He gives her Belgian chocolates, and an orange from Italy. She is so happy and loves the gift. "The fruit was easier to peel than I'd expected. Its perfume spritzed off under my thumbnail... I licked the trickles of juice off my hands in a way that would've caused the Matron to sack me on the spot" (Donoghue 245). This gift of food is from someone who's mute, a disability that revolves around the throat and mouth, the parts someone uses to eat or speak. This is a manifestation of hunger as intimately Irish, because hunger in Ireland has influenced the culture of how people live and die. Through the ways the church becomes involved in births and deaths, and through all milestones in between. The famine changed the culture of the Irish people and this change is still prevalent today. Her brother served in the British army and fought in World War I—his gift of global food is ironic not only because of his inability to use his oral functions but also because he and Julia represent Irish people who are very involved as global subjects of the British empire.

Julia critiques Ireland's advice to its people about what they should eat. This matters because in terms of culture and who creates that culture, Irish culture is ruled by the Church and the government which runs the economic systems that have traumatized the people since before the famine. This is the source feeding the information to the people about what they should and shouldn't eat. Julia's critique of this source is Donoghue's way of writing in the critique about

the systems in Ireland that hurt the people. Posters around Dublin in the novel say the saying an onion a day to keep the flu at bay, and a patient from the west, Honor White comes in with garlic in her pocket a way to ward off the flu. “The dry layers fragmented and shed in my hand. Is this...garlic? Mrs. White gasped out, very low: for warding off the grippe.... The new patient’s accent was from the far west,” (Donoghue 124) This instance in the novel speaks to vampiric lore. In vampiric lore garlic was used to repel vampires. For instance, in Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, garlic is used several times a medicinal aid to keep patients safe from Count Dracula. Patients ailing from vampire bites like Lucy Westenra are surrounded by bouquets of garlic. When Lucy questions Van Helsing’s plan to put garlic in her room, she thinks it’s a trick, to which he replies very seriously that the garlic represents obedience and is a necessity to save her from vampirism: “We must obey, and silence is a part of obedience: and obedience is to bring you strong and well into loving arms that wait for you” (Stoker 112). Van Helsing tries to protect Lucy by telling her not to question his care, or rather the way he tries to bring her back to health, because he is doing it so she may live to get married and presumably have babies. The connection between superstition, pregnancy, and national reproduction links vampiricism to Catholicism in Donoghue’s novel.

Garlic fails to save Lucy in *Dracula*, and it also fails to keep Honor White safe in *The Pull of the Stars*. Honor has ended up in the maternity ward with the flu, gets pregnant out of wedlock, and eventually dies after giving birth to a baby who is “Bearna ghiorria, murmured Doctor Lynn... she explained, it means hare’s gap.” (Donoghue 227) This odd failure of garlic in Donoghue’s text results in a baby born with a disfigurement of the mouth, a cleft pallet, the key area that is associated with the consumption of blood by vampires. This oral difference in Honor White’s baby does not prevent it from eating, but it eats differently than other babies. The baby,

soon to be known as Barnabas, needs a special bottle nipple and because his mother dies of the flu, he is only fed through the bottle and will not be breastfed. Barnabas becomes a metaphorical vampire baby and Donoghue suggests that he will always feed differently from other human babies. His vampiric status is not a good thing as it “others” him from what would be normal in society. But this is also the reason he is the future in this text: he does not drain the life from a maternal body for his own nourishment.

Barnabus is an “other” baby in most senses. He cannot breastfeed due to his cleft palate unlike babies born without the condition. He is born illegitimate so he has no father, and soon after birth loses his mother, which means he is an orphan as well, making him different in his family structure. Without parents, his creation imitates the formation of the vampire and his existence suggests a new form and way of consumption. He is adopted by Nurse Julia, who seems to be an “other” like him as she is 30 years old with no children or husband. Nurse Julia also has a brief relationship with a woman, making her an other in terms of the sexuality norms of 1918 Ireland. The parallel between homoeroticism and the heteronormative production of an infant that feeds differently, perhaps vampirically, suggests new ways of producing and consuming that could challenge the Catholic norms of reproduction that would later dominate Free-State Ireland for most of the twentieth century.

In *The Wonder* the nun who is put on watch with Lib, one of the main characters in the novel who is a British nurse, is similar to the dynamic of Sister Finnegan and Julia Powers from *The Pull of the Stars*. Lib has many harsh views about Catholicism because she is a protestant from England but the nun complicates Lib’s thoughts about what can truly save. Donoghue suggests that religion is all about saviorism, yet when it comes down to it there is the only one way to save Anna and that involves taking her from her family, just like Julia Powers who is able

to take Barnabus and create something for him other than “the pipeline.” The pipeline is the term Birdie uses for the systems that uphold the mistreatment of women and babies. “Birdie shrugged. Mother-and-baby homes, Magdalene laundries, orphanages, she listed under her breath, Industrial homes, reformatories, prisons... aren’t they all sections of the same pipe?” (Donoghue 230). These institutions become the source of perpetual mistreatment and Julia’s saving of Barnabus from these places creates a sense of hopefulness and reiterates the need for a nurse to care for those who are disadvantaged.

Nursing in both texts is synonymous with the acts of feeding and hunger. Lib watches over Anna and carefully documents what she consumes and excretes. As does Julia with all her patients in the ward. This record keeping of when patients are hungry and when they consume anything, even a glass of water is carefully noted and connects to the societal forces of the Church and the economic available means of the characters who are patients of the nurses in both texts. In *The Wonder*, Anna is able to survive so long before the watch of the nurses because her mother is feeding her “manna from heaven.” The food consumed is wrapped in messages of religion, the most powerful force in Anna’s mission to starve herself. The Church is directly tied to her hunger, if not the cause of it.

The Catholic Church is not the cause of hunger but is itself a form hunger. The Church wishes to consume and control those it needs to continue its ideals on. In nineteenth-century, post-Famine Ireland, the cultural power women held within the home was respected and significant. The Church recognized the influential power of women within the family unit and used that to their advantage by teaching shame and guilt to women, that then continued to be passed down to daughters. The Church’s hunger for power fed on the influence women have in

their family units. The influence of women in Irish life becomes central to the relationship between Catholicism and Irish nationalism.

*The Wonder* and *The Pull of the Stars* center mostly on female characters and two main antagonists who are nurses. The presence of a nurse in contemporary Irish novels shows the lasting effects of what a text like *Dracula* argued about consumption. The threat, the disease of what the Count Represents, never truly dies, but lives on through the way the nation of Ireland never heals the history of hunger and trauma within itself. Ireland's role as a nation requires a nurse to heal the past. Ireland must begin the process of learning about and accepting the violence against the nation and its women through the violent transformation that capitalism and patriarchy undergo during national development.

Donoghue's writing reflects hunger and nursing as metaphors for Ireland's economic system and gender intersects with the nation's economics as an integral part of Irish culture. Both novels set in important moments in the past reflects how badly Ireland needs a nurse that would provide and sustain the nation's development. When nursing fails, it is a reflection of how Ireland fails to treat its domestic sickness, an economic system whose appetite is never satisfied. Donoghue shows how nursing is the act of attending to a need. In these novels, nursing is about giving something to be received, like bringing patients their meals or blankets, and in motherhood, nursing is giving babies milk. The feeding a mother does is to sustain her baby is a kind of transaction of nursing that is based on an automatic biological response. Nursing then becomes a metaphor for how women are used to sustain the economic system as if they were nursing it.

### ***The Wonder: Force Fed Patriarchy***

Donoghue's *The Wonder* is set in post-Famine Ireland in the year of 1859. This is only seven years after the end of the Famine and the effects are not a distant memory for the nation. With the Famine's memory still fresh and its immediate impacts still reverberating through the nation, a miracle case of a fasting girl becomes an international headline. Anna O'Donnell is a wonder and people travel from all over just to see the girl who does not need to eat. Lib, a nurse from England, is sent to investigate this wonder and keep watch to make sure the girl is not secretly being sustained. The two nurses are Lib trained by Florence Nightingale, and an Irish Catholic nun, Sister Michael, who keep watch in shifts over Anna to validate her status as the girl who does not need to eat.

Anna's physical state in their presence declines rapidly as the nurses begin their watch because now Anna can no longer be secretly fed from her mother though this remains a secret most of the novel. Anna's survival during this time is being credited to the Church because the food that has sustained her is from heaven. This survival is also credited to the Church because Anna is their miracle. Since she is the Church's miracle people come from all over to witness her existence. "The visitors all slipped their tips into its slot on their way out" (Donoghue 31). People would come to the house to see Anna and they would leave money. There was not an admission to see her, but people left money anyway. Financial gain for the Church because of starving body of a young Irish girl prompts people to leave money without being asked. The act of tipping shows how powerfully people believe in their religion and how powerfully that religion is connected to their sense of Irish identity. They believe the Church needs the money more than they do. Contrasted with the historical setting this detail of the story highlights an intersection between the domestic private setting and a powerful public one. His intersection is

effectively conveying in Ireland how closely associated a patriarchal religious force is to the household.

These donations sharply contrast the economic hardship in post famine Ireland. Emigration is an assumed default for most because there is no work in Ireland during this time. In the novel *Lib*, the English nurse, assumes the Anna's brother Pat has left for America to work: "Gone where? America seemed most likely to Lib, or Britain, or the Colonies. Ireland an improvident mother, seemed to ship half her skinny brood abroad" (Donoghue 22). This is a significant moment in the text because instead of knowing Pat is dead, she assumes that he has emigrated to find work. While it is partly cultural bias, in Ireland this is the reality for many people. Unless people are in the city or in the hospitality industry, work is hard to find. The common solution to that problem is leaving. Emigration is associated with the survival of members of the nation of Ireland. That is normalized in the nation so much that foreigners even know it to be true. Donoghue critiques Ireland in this moment of the text because it cannot keep its own people in its nation, but also because it defines emigration as something that is socially acceptable.

Later, Lib discovers that Pat has died: "Is it long since you've heard from him?" ...Rosaleen O'Donnell stared at her. "He looks down on us." What, had Pat O'Donnell done in the New World, then?... "From heaven" (Donoghue 238). Lib's confusion about Pat's death and her misinterpretation of it as emigration highlights the two compared to one another in Donoghue's message in the novel. This novel's setting is meant to emphasize emigration as extremely common and seen as the only means of survival for many. Donoghue connects death and emigration in the novel through Pat's character. This connection argues that death and emigration are the only viable options for a life that would be worth living as an Irish person at

the time. But people come and willingly spend money they can't afford on a brief encounter with a miracle. This form of religious tourism helps bring income to the family and effectively the Church that takes care of them because they give back the money they earn to the Church. The church's involvement in the economic parts of society is plagued with the lie of a surviving starving girl because she was not starving the entire time.

The farce of Anna's starvation is also the farce that the Church really has miracles. The religious ideology that is built on lies is paralleled with Ireland's portrayal as a nation built on an unsustainable economic system. The female body and the Church in the novel are both businesses: "daughters found themselves trapped between affectively demanding and appropriative families and more potentially explicit and permanent forms of sexual exploitation within a market economy in which female sexuality was, like everything else, commodifying apace" (Backus 57). The economic position that Anna occupies is one that commodifies her body, and her refusal to sustain that body only increases her worth. Not only is her body a commodity, but it is also worth more when it is destroyed. This echoes classic supply and demand; as the demand to witness the miracle goes up, Anna's body wastes away increasingly.

Anna's economic success for the Church in her rural post-Famine Ireland setting echoes the success of the Celtic Tiger. The Celtic Tiger was a period of economic boom from 1994 to around 2007. It was Ireland's capitalistic miracle. During the 1990s Ireland achieved an exponential rate of economic growth. The nation's economy grew at an average rate of 5.14% per year:

"From 1996 through 2000 it increased at an average rate of 9.66%. By the end of the decade, unemployment went down to 4.5% and the nation's GDP per capita stood at \$25,500, higher than both the United Kingdom at \$22,300, and Europe's Powerhouse Germany at \$23,500.

During a little over a decade, Ireland was transformed from one of the poorest countries in Europe to one of the EU's richest countries" (Abelaira 1).

However, Ireland's economic miracle could only hold on so long. Crashing hard and fast, it left the country once again devastated, similar to the rise and fall of Donoghue's miracle girl, Anna. Anna's fame was short-lived before her "death," suggesting that what Anna's miracle status was built on was just as unstable as the Celtic Tiger. Donoghue connects the economic phenomenon of the Tiger to how religious patriarchal power in the nation uses and oppresses the female body. Her use of a starving female child's body shows brutally how the future of Ireland cannot sustain itself. Anna willingly will not eat, meaning that the future of Ireland does not even want to try and heal the negative social effects the Celtic Tiger left on the nation. By using a nineteenth-century setting, Donoghue critiques the modern-day nation and its foundations on religious and economic inequalities.

The Celtic Tiger is known as a time of great prosperity in Ireland, but what does the Tiger sit atop of? Maybe it's "the harsh reality of capitalist production, exclusionary nationalism and growing xeno-phobia, in relation to both the state and the general populace. Far from conforming to the Irish Tourist Board ideal of *céad míle fáilte* – one hundred thousand welcomes" (Loyal 74). The dependence of the Celtic Tiger's greatness on harmful and corrupt things mirrors how the Catholic Church, in Donoghue's novel, sits on top of the horrors and traumas of Anna's life. These are the underlying side effects behind the surface level success, as progress is not built without negative side effects in society. The false progress society makes is exposed in Donoghue's novel through her critique of the Church, as it is built on lies and ignorance, both from the Church and inside the domestic relationships of Anna's family. Anna's family members like her mother willingly accept the Church's justification of her sexual assault.

Mrs. O'Donnell, Anna's mother, refuses to hear or say anything negative about her son Pat. When Lib confronts her about Pat's incest with Anna, Mrs. O'Donnell responds angrily "That's the same filthy falsehood Anna came out with after Pat's funeral, Roseleen (Mrs. O'Donnell) went on, and I told her not to be slandering her poor brother" (Donoghue 259). The rejection of Anna's confession by her own mother is a dangerous side effect of the cultural ways of life in Ireland are set by the religious patriarchy. They support the reputation of males and discredit the words of females. Pat is dead, so his reputation is even less important than if he were alive. Instead, the reputation of a dead man is placed over the trauma of a living girl. The figures representative of traditional Ireland that surround Anna are unsupportive and do not believe Anna's claim. Incest manifests in the text as the physical way the nation's issues with economy and patriarchy harm women's bodies.

Mrs. O'Donnell's refusal to accept the social illness that affects her child causes her to be unable to aid in the recovery of the physical illness her child suffers from; that is an effect of the initial social issue. That initial cause is tied to how the Church in Ireland and the reinforced patriarchal norms have harmed her daughter. The societal norms of Ireland depend too much on the reputation and vindication of men. The illustration that even in death men can do no wrong represses the truth of the girl's experience.

Metaphorically the nation refuses to realize the social problems that are embedded within it, much like the negative effects of the Celtic Tiger, and therefore Ireland is not able to heal from the economic crash after the Tiger, since during that time the social problems it created were ignored. The result of this ignorance is that the future generations of Ireland are left with no way to resolve their relationship with the nation's religious and economical roots.

Mr. Thaddeus, the priest in the novel, is Lib's next choice, after the O'Donnell family, to try and help Anna, and even he knows about her confession but says "Such calamities should be kept in the family" (Donoghue 266). Meaning the mighty strength of religion that once used Anna as a commodity now fails her. The traditional cultural patriarchal ruler of religion in Ireland gives the advice to let domestic relationships handle such a problem. Yet the ways that the family handles such a problem are so strongly influenced by the Church's teachings, which are a public institution. Anna's social illness or issue is ignored and unwanted by those responsible for nurturing her and those who have influenced how she thinks. Her physical illness was profitable and allowed by these forces to feed off her. Her starvation is driven by attempting to find justice in the same system that led to her illness. The system cannot provide justice for her, as it is the root of what causes her trauma in the first place. Both the domestic private system and the public exterior system repress the truth of what happened to Anna. Yet Anna deals with this the way her systems had trained her to do so, and even in this way she tries to redeem the system that is killing her. The painful irony Donoghue uses here shows just how devout the nation is to a system so hypocritical.

Donoghue's writing of Anna's character cannot be considered without conscious acknowledgement of her identity as a young, poor, Catholic girl. Her religious salvation is based in her pursuit of forgiveness for her incestuous relationship with her brother, Pat. The incest between the two turns more traumatic when Donoghue reveals that Anna's mother and their priest knew of the incest between the siblings but covered it up. The lack of response or action from these two sources, the mother and the Church, cause the self-induced starvation of Anna's body. When she remains in the house before Lib gets there, Anna is mainly sustained because her mother is able to feed her "manna from heaven." The nursing Anna's mother provides is

connected too closely to the same system that set Anna up in her situation in the first place. The force feeding of Anna from her mother is representative of the patriarchal, heteronormative family and Church that allowed her brother to get away with sexual assault and rape. Her mother's nursing does not truly heal the wound, but prolongs her eventual "death."

Sister Michael, the other nurse, when confronted by Lib's realization that Anna has not eaten for five days and asked what they (the nurses) should do, says "What we were hired to do, Mrs. Wright. No more, no less. And with the nun opened her holy book like a barricade" (Donoghue 158). Sister Michael's refusal to acknowledge or give proper care reveals the Church's position of only doing "no more, no less," meaning the Church cares for people to a certain extent, but will not truly save those in need when it matters most to not undermine its own rules. Donoghue uses Sister Michael to show the limitation of the Church's performance in people's lives. Her critique of Catholicism's version of nursing is that it lacks the strength to heal.

It was through religion that Pat suggested he could be married to Anna. Anna was "married" to her brother, Pat, in secret: "I was his sister and his bride too. Double" (Donoghue 256). Anna reveals that she had a secret incestual marriage to her deceased brother. Marriage in the Catholic religion marks the moment when couples can have sex. Catholicism uses patriarchy to control sexuality, "The Roman Catholic church has traditionally been a prime example of classic patriarchy; the male-dominated hierarchical structure of the church is legitimated by sacred doctrine. The official teaching of the church is that Jesus Christ chose 12 men to be his anointed apostles, thereby establishing the priesthood as a male prerogative" (Ebaugh 401). This male-dominated religion becomes synonymous with what oppresses Anna into her physical

condition of starvation. The Catholic and patriarchal ideals trick the only child in the text into premature adulthood.

This premature adulthood is one way Anna's body is used by Donoghue to show the dominance that societal norms have over the Irish. The idea that marriage is the only way to justify sex leads to Anna's trauma: "The question of sexual maturity is situated at the heart of the matter, as though the acquisition of secondary sexual characteristics itself, for both male and female protagonists, inexorably provokes institutional bids to control and define their identities" (Backus 115). The Catholic Church is the system that defines Anna through her own eyes and all those around her, like her brother, her mother, and her priest. The act of defining her confines her to eventual "death." The system responsible for her way of thought results in her own loss of innocence. It is the same system that upholds her innocence to make money off her. The religious patriarchy also cannot help her because of the same ways it oppresses her. The system would contradict itself if it were to believe her. The system is too corrupt to bring any resolution to Anna's anguish, yet has no trouble profiting.

Anna's home, where most of the novel takes place, is burned down. Lib fakes Anna's death first to Anna and then to everybody else in the village. Lib says to Anna that if she drinks a cup of "divine milk" then "Anna will die tonight, and God will accept her sacrifice and welcome her and Pat into heaven...You'll be another little girl...a girl called Nan who's only eight years old" (Donoghue 274). Lib subtracts years from Anna's life to eight specifically because she confessed, she was "married" to Pat when she was nine. If she comes back as eight it is as if she gets a complete do-over of that time she was being assaulted as a child.

The loss of Anna as an Irish child in Ireland solidifies the message Donoghue sends about the future of the nation. Without children to stay in the nation there is no continuation of Ireland.

The nation has no new people, people either leave or die. There is no repopulating, only the recreation of an already existent thing that proves traumatic. Anna is reborn as Nan. She is reborn as a child. She is eleven in the beginning of the novel and following her rebirth she has gained time back and Nan is eight. This is because as Anna the beginning of her abuse is at age nine. Her childhood comes back to her through fire. The cleansing of fire destroys the symbolic Irish house but leaves nothing in its place. We do not see a rebuilt nation; instead we leave Ireland as different people. They change their names from Lib to Eliza, Anna to Nan, and William Byrnes to Wilkie Burns.

Anna's body is again used to evaluate the ways the national identity of Ireland is oppressing and ignoring the social problems it has created for its people when her reproductive ability as a woman becomes devalued: "The Anglo-Irish settler colonial epistemology appropriated children's minds and bodies through an elaborate extension of compulsory heterosexuality" (Backus 242). Anna's loss of childhood and forced adulthood through what Backus calls "compulsory heterosexuality" and this union of her and her brother perverts the idea of marriage and shows how the system has turned inward on itself through incest that Donoghue justifies through the Catholic Church. The loss of childhood and youth represent the loss that comes with new progress that could be made towards healing if people stayed in Ireland instead of emigrating from the nation. Since the only child in the text views themselves as an adult we lose the stage of life where growth and progress really happen: "Conformation is the *most* important day... Tis the end of being a child" (Donoghue 46). Religion falsifies a childhood stage for Anna, a state where creativity, problem solving, and ethics are developed. Translating to how the progress made by older generations in Ireland really created a society where younger people cannot grow and develop ways to continue or gain back any real stability or prosperity

that Ireland once had. Ireland has stunted its growth of any real progress to be made toward healing the nation because it has not acknowledged the negative affects the original progress it's economy and identity were made upon.

Anna's religious significance was counterfeited; this discredit the religious arguments for the ways of life imposed on society in Ireland. Her fasting is not real fasting; it was just made to look as if it was. Anna is a girl, and this is how Donoghue uses the female form as a metaphor for how the patriarchal religious system is built on the lies about women and their bodies. Anna being a girl drives the argument that the nation of Ireland does not value the ways that the female body can reproduce. Because the nation does not value her and highlights how dependent the nation has made itself on that fact. Anna's body is harmed from starvation and any possibility of her reproducing is impossible if she dies from starvation. Or reproducing is made significantly harder from the long-term effects starvation can have on a body. The reproductive capability of her body has the potential to produce literal future generations, or children. But in addition, Anna represents the new ways that future generations could change and heal the nation of Ireland into a more stable and prosperous place and not founded on ignorance and lies.

The female body of Anna in the text defines exactly how a religious patriarchy oppresses Ireland, keeping it from progressing into a more healed version of a nation. Anna starves her body, and this can be seen as a form of self-mutilation. Her deliberate destruction of herself reflects the state of society. The irony of the physical condition of Anna being self-inflicted lies in the fact that Ireland has done this to itself, but also that the future of Ireland does not understand that it is pain will not justify or save the nation that ignores its own oppression. If Anna is a product that represents Ireland and its traditional teachings of religion, then she reflects the sickness in the system. Her sickness stems from hunger. She links the ways religion and

capitalism and patriarchy in the economy and church are oppressing and driving away people from the nation. Her sickness cannot be fixed in Ireland because at the end of the novel Anna “dies” and is rebirthed because Donoghue gives her body a new name and setting.

The fire at the end of the novel is significant in how it connects to other texts. Fire’s cleansing effect on the character’s identities creates a hopeful ending. But conversely now there remains an Irish family with no more children and no home to live in. The Irish people have lost their domestic space and their cultural future. The ending shows what is left behind in the societal illness of hunger. In the Epilogue, Donoghue describes the new family as “hungry for the future” (290). They have joined together while on the boat to Australia. This hunger they have is what drives them to continue to move forward, making it different from the hunger earlier in the novel. It is the hunger to continue and to create something new. But the family they have created mimics the same one is they have left behind.

The action of the novel results in Anna becoming an emigrant. Her status as an emigrant shows the economy and the social condition of Ireland are linked. The link is the patriarchal religious systems that regulate economic policies that result in things like the Celtic Tiger and in things like the oppression of women. Women, even young girls who are supposed miracles, are silenced to protect the reputations of men. Ireland is not close to reconciling the oppression that is built into its society. Donoghue shows how far from healing Ireland is.

Donoghue suggests that the future for the nation is lost until the ignorance of the social condition is rectified. The future in the text for the nation of Ireland is lost because there are no children in Ireland who would continue on the nation or that there are any children who want to. There is also the threat that any children in the nation are starving themselves to death and will be ignored and damaged so severely that they must emigrate to survive. This threat of emigration

is the threat of new generations starving themselves out of Ireland, looking for a way that their trauma of oppression will be acknowledged. Ireland will suffer and continue to lose its people to emigration until it deals with the trauma that successful economic events have caused or come from.

Donoghue's novel sheds light on the self-inflicted illness in Ireland. There will be no future until the nation can find a way to come to terms with the oppression that it inflicts on itself. Donoghue's choice to "kill" Anna shows that the Irish child is gone. Burnt up in a house that would not come to terms with the past. Donoghue's argument offers no solution because there can be no solution if there is no acknowledged problem. To heal and get better, there must be a diagnosis and there must be truth. There must be an acceptance of a problem or illness before one can get treatment or effective nursing of a problem or illness.

Anna's mother was able to care for her before the nurse's watch began. Her feeding of Anna from mouth-to-mouth is a form of nursing itself. Her mother's Irish Catholic status and failure to continue sustaining her can be seen as a failure in Ireland to nurse itself with just the catholic church as the main source of guidance and control. There is opposition to the nursing Anna gets from Lib in the text. There is a variation between Mrs. O'Donnell's version of nursing compared to Lib's style of nursing and even the catholic nun nurse. Lib is British and when she brings Anna out of the home for walks this is where we see her real deterioration. Donoghue's explicit connecting of church, patriarchy, and capital work its way onto the representations of England and Ireland in the text. The nation not even a decade out from the Famine, where people who wanted to eat and could not, still suffers from stable access to food. The contradiction of the setting of the novel connects how the past setting and present time period of when the novel was published are connected. The past and present while seemingly contradict they connect. They

both still suffer from the same oppressive systems, one of which Donoghue argues is the Catholic Church.

*The Wonder* leaves us without a reconciled nation. Instead, we are left with a broken and ignorant nation, built on lies and oppression. Donoghue argues this lack of acknowledgement of oppression and repression of real truths are the cause for Ireland's greatest threat, emigration. By setting her contemporary novel in a time when Ireland's population was so vulnerable to the ways of a system that oppresses it, she uses the past to challenge the present and imparts how they are the same. She uses the female body to show the ways women are oppressed by a religious patriarchy. The female body becomes an economic powerhouse commodified by the religious and patriarchal forces in society; Donoghue does this by comparing Anna's body to an economic miracle that makes money for the church while it simultaneously oppresses her and conceals her truth. She reveals the underlying trauma that causes Anna's body to become commodified, that too stems from the religious and patriarchal foundation of this society. She then provides how a lack of acknowledgement of that trauma kills off a future for the nation.

The body of a child in this text symbolizes the hope and future for a nation to continue on. Anna ends the text as a child again, Nan. This transformation and presence of a child in the narrative now parented by an English woman and Irish man joins the two nations. "It is through the production of children as tangible proof of the colonizer's indigenous status, and through the exploitation of the child's innocence- the child's ability to absorb and accept as absolute fact an internally contradictory narrative" (Backus 141). Children become tools for showing how nationhood is complicated with those who were there first and the colonizers who have left systems that harm those born under it. Anna's innocence exploited through the Church that colonizes the people of Ireland to believe in its doctrine. Her belief in that religion leads her to

the loss of childhood. When it is regained another form of colonization of her body is the transformation into an emigrant. Nan and Anna are both innocent and with that trait are moldable. Nan becomes symbolic of how colonialism prevails in Donoghue's work through the adoption and marriage of new family structure. Colonialism can prevail in the text because patriarchy within the church's exploitation of Anna wins.

Ireland lives with trauma wrought through its generations that should be making Ireland great again. But Ireland is the reason that Ireland cannot confront its own self-inflicted trauma. Ireland's economy and its traditional religious, patriarchal past are linked by their oppression of women and therefore the ability to try and create something new, a new solution to heal its past traumas, its unstable economy, or its oppressed populations. If in *The Wonder* Anna's hunger were to spread, what would that mean for the Church? The Catholic Church in Ireland, a notoriously patriarchal and oppressive force on women's bodies and traumas, would possibly have to deal with the effects it has on society by handling hunger: "Women are expected to uphold traditions and pass them on to the next generation; in short to keep the authentic national culture alive" (Merivirta 245). Starvation and hunger are Anna's ways of stopping being fed patriarchal norms, it is her refusal to carry on a tradition that have harmed and robbed her of the ability to be a child. Her hunger is rooted in patriarchal conditioning and *The Wonder's* theme of hunger is rooted in disease. Hunger and starvation cause a sickness that can kill Anna, and the sickness that hunger creates forms a new child in the novel, one that is an Irish emigrant rather than one who is an Irish resident. Hunger as a form of disease is a concept that relates closely to the phenomenon of a vampire. Vampires and vampirism are represented as contagious and as a disease in many contemporary works that diagnose late capitalism in Ireland and abroad.

### **Epilogue: *Salem's Lot*, Vampires, Children, and Unchanged Global Expectations**

Stephen King's 1975 horror novel *Salem's Lot* parodies Stoker's *Dracula*. The novel is set in a small town, Jerusalem's Lot in rural Maine. Told similarly through different main character's perspectives through like Stoker's *Dracula*, King also uses the third person narrator in sections of the novel titled "The Lot" to explain and show readers the things that our protagonists don't know. Hometown hero and fancy writer, Ben Mears, comes home for some creative inspiration, but he's not the only one coming to the Lot for help. The creepy old house, the Marsten House, is a character in the novel. It lives atop a hill overlooking the whole town, much like castle Dracula and the Big Houses of the Irish Protestant Ascendency. The house is haunted and is bought by the vampire coming to America, Kurt Barlow. Children are a defining factor in this novel. King uses the bodies of children to show hope and to also show the unchanging norms of society by turning them into vampires. The vampiric turn is representative of how the battle between the two sides of a monster rages on.

King's web of the small town has many supporting characters who are children. King uses children and reproduction to argue that the production of money is a part of what is so unchanging about the normal global expectations of the times. In the section titled "Lot I," King introduces Sandy McDougall, a seventeen-year-old wife and mother to a ten-month-old son who live in a trailer while her husband "worked all day and... went off drinking or playing poker...at night" (King 72). When her son wakes her up crying, she proceeds to get his a bottle from the fridge, which she leaves cold because she decides it's not worth heating up and hearing the baby cry longer. When she enters the room, she sees the baby has poop all over his hands, body, and crib. She throws the cold bottle at him and it hits Randy in-between the eyes and knocks him back in his crib. She "plucked him out of the crib like a rag doll" (King 72) and continued to

punch him twice while “she felt a horrid surge of gratification, pity, and hate” (King 72). Sandy's child abuse and status as basically a child raising a baby, suggests questions about the exploitation of motherhood and children.

Sandy's attempt to care for her child is violent and centers around food. We know that the baby is most likely crying because of hunger and when Sandy sees him covered in the waste products from his last meal, her violence is triggered. When children are not cared for, they cannot grow and develop. If they don't grow, they don't become adults. If child never become adults, they never play the role or do the things that adults do in society, like get jobs, get married, and have more babies to continue on the species the seemingly natural progression of human life is halted, and the future becomes just a continuous version of the past. King writes, “He was ten months old. But sickly and puling for his age. He had only just started crawling last month” (71). Randy's delayed development can obviously be seen in correlation to his mother's treatment. The abuse of the baby in this text shows how the American dream and family are broken.

Children and especially babies are used as symbols of the future in literature. When babies are abused their symbolism for a future is being attacked. Sandy McDougall's child abuse and loss of her own childhood attack the future that the family would have. The American dream of a nuclear family where Sandy McDougall stays home with the baby and her husband provides is broken by her treatment of the child. The presence of the McDougall family in King's book is to convey the broken family and provide why the broken family is symbolic of a failure of what we would expect the natural and normal American dream family to be. That family and dream are not present, that is shown through the child's abuse.

Sandy wakes up one morning to silence. She runs to Randy's room to find his crib empty and the window next to it open, even though she knows it was shut the night before. The she sees Randy's body "flung into the corner like a piece of garbage" (King 328). The description of his body when she's holding him, "All the bruises were gone...leaving the small face and form flawless. His color was good. For the only time since his coming she found him beautiful." Sandy continues to try and wake Randy up, and places him in his highchair and force feeds him chocolate custard:" Now he would know she still loved him, and he would stop this cruel trickery" (King 330). After force feeding her dead son Sandy insisted that that would've shown Randy she loves him.

Different from earlier where food is a weapon, now food is the medicine. When feeding her child Sandy understands this as a way to show love. But the love for her child only occurs after he is dead. This moment of feeding a child after death shows the way we use consuming as a form of healing. The chocolate custard forcing in Randy McDougall's mouth is not mother's love or medicine, it's the necessity that was denied him in life. There should be balance in what we consume, not too much or too little. Randy and Sandy as mother and son parallel one another both are lacking what they need in life. Sandy lacks the freedom, the ability to still be a child. She has been confined to a role as mother and wife and pays for her inability to do the job expected and placed on her. Through the invasion of vampires in her small town her farce of an American family implodes. The pretend homemaker's tragic anecdote in the novel represents how people fail to live up to the American aspirations of becoming and doing whatever you want or can. Financial stability is linked to this because the McDougall's are young broke parents who bring a child into the world. Their ineffective parenting and death of their child is the inevitable misery of those who don't have the means to succeed in a society that demands and

forces a heteronormative family unit that is a vital aspect of said society's economy and future. The Mc Dougall's become vampires. When financial security and the ability to raise a family are linked the creation of families is dangerous and more susceptible to the threat of unchanging unnatural life, like that of a vampire.

Stephen King's novel *Salem's Lot* parallels Stoker's *Dracula* in many ways, but it differentiates itself in an interesting way. In *Dracula*, the spread of vampirism starts from the Count to the women of the text, first we see his three brides, next we witness Lucy who then feeds on babies. Even Mina Harker is under Dracula's spell. However, in *Salem's Lot*, the vampire Barlow spreads his vampirism through children, who then turn their mothers and fathers into vampires. The first new vampire created in King's novel is a young boy named Danny Glick, who comes at night to feed off his mother. Marjorie Glick talks about her dreams she's been breastfeeding Danny: "He says... that he's my baby again. My son at my breast again." (King 335). She says this to her husband Tony as she is laying on their coach after fainting from weakness and being burned by the sun coming through the window. Tony Glick is even sexual aroused to look at her as she tells this story because she appears to be getting fangs:

The muffled hardness of her teeth beneath them (her lips) was amazingly sensual.

He was getting an erection.

"I wish I could have it again tonight." (Marjorie Glick talking about her breastfeeding dream)

"Maybe you will," he said, stroking her hair. (King 335)

Marjorie Glick's dream is real, and she continues to feed her vampire son, Danny, similar to nursing him as a baby but instead of milk, he now drinks her blood. This passage compares the vitality blood has to a mother's milk. As a vampire Danny is frozen, this pervert's the idea of

what a nursing a baby typically means. When one nurses, or eats, it is with the intention of sustaining life, but Danny is not growing or sustaining, no matter how much blood he drinks. His unchanging, yet unquenchable thirst suggests that when hunger cannot be satisfied, it is dangerous. Danny's feeding on his mother not only perverts their relationship, it parodies the overall concept of nursing, and eventually harms his mother, by transforming her into a vampire like him.

Tony Glick is sexually aroused at his wife's transition into a vampire and his erection and words of reassurance that Marjorie will get it again tonight shows that sexual desire is at the heart of consumption. Although he does not know it, the dangerous sexuality about her coupled with her physical weakness is empowering to his sense of his own manliness. This is similar to how Stoker's vampire hunting gang is attracted and loyal to Lucy, donating their blood, and to Seward's oxymoronic descriptions of her terrible beauty once he sees her as a vampire. The sexual attraction to women vampires doesn't stop at Marjorie Glick, as Ben Mears, leader of King's gang of vampire hunters, is also sexually attracted to his newly turned girlfriend Susan. Comparable to Lucy, Susan is killed by all the men in King's vampire hunter gang.

Susan Norton and Ben Mears are the Jonathan and Mina Harker that never get to be. They don't get married and have babies in King's world. Susan Norton is turned by Barlow, just as Lucy was turned by Dracula. This differentiation in King and Stoker's novels matter because it shows the vampire winning. There is no return to what is perceived as natural again in King's book. The family unit never reclaims the space of 'Salem's lot. Ben and Susan never get to participate in the already established broken American dream of marriage and children. Without that union there is a lack of a symbolic future. Without a future, without the creation of new life, the vampire is able to take over the life already there and freeze it, so it stays the same forever.

That concept goes against the expectations of humans, where birth of new life and death of old life is natural. So without the union of Ben and Susan there is not future hope for new life nor future in the novel for 'Salem's Lot.

Susan tries to turn Danny Glick's best friend, Mark Petrie. Mark is King's wonder-kid who stands up to his bully, and is well versed in monster lore. That's why when Danny, and then Susan come and knock on his window he is able to deny them an invitation. Since vampire's may not come inside unless invited. Susan says to Mark "Let me in I'll show you. I'll kiss you, Mark. I'll kiss you like your mother never did." (King 450). Susan uses Mark's mother in her attempt to be let in. The use of mother contrasted with sexual female vampires is intriguing because it implies that Mark's mother is lacking in some way in what Mark needs that she cannot give. This temptation to get what his mother never gave him does not work. The sexual temptation of female vampires like Susan is denied by Mark. This sets him apart because his immunity to fall for vampirism's tricks shows he as a child the only hope for the future in the book. It shows how the heteronormative assumption and power that the culture of vampirism can be while simultaneously it is very queer, does not affect Mark. Once the assumption is denied it saves the child and therefore creates hope for the toppling of systems that perpetuate those norms.

Children make the difference for a hopeful future in King's novel, Mark is the child in the novel that can resist vampires and fight back. Mark is a different kind of kid because he likes to read and likes monster movies, and his differences are what equips him to be a survivor of the text. Unlike Stoker's Harker baby and Anna's transformation to Nan, in American vampire fiction through the great horror mind of King children become a true symbol of hope. Both Mark and Anna end their texts as emigres, Anna (Nan) to Australia and Mark to Mexico and various

other parts of the U.S. Mark Petrie, an orphan as well as Anna by the end of the text, is able to survive. Him and Ben Mear's reject the small town and cleanse their past with fire. The two parallel one another in the text, as men who are knowledgeable and can see through the same town American façade. Ben's status as a writer and Mark as an avid monster movie watcher and comic reader highlight that King's path to hope is through literacy. It's reading and writing and literacy; the ability to interpret and act on the information you know. The ability for Ben and Mark to consume media and create it and use those skills to guide them, to make more of their life than getting a stable paying job and working or going to school, that is the move away from the vacuum of unchanging expectations in society. The expectations that would seek to control.

King's novel is not overly hopeful, as the entire town is overrun with vampires. The majority cannot survive the cultural vampirism that is suburbia. The few who choose to deviate from the norm become those who can fight the moral darkness and unimaginative lifestyle.

'*Salem's Lot* is only King's second novel published in 1975, just a year after his first novel, *Carrie*. The decision to parody an iconic horror original is not coincidental. King is retelling a story that already exists to show the ways that, like a vampire, society still has not changed: "the vampire is forever defined by an open secret, by the genre's characteristic disjuncture between what the audience always already knows and what the characters fail to see" (Lau 4).

The undying hunger plaguing the world through financial and heteronormative expectations is unchanging like a vampire. It's what most of the world chooses not to see in their everyday lives, through like King shows us, everyone around you is a vampire and it's hard to avoid. But the characters that do not "fail to see" can survive the text. They can survive the vampire that's come to America. King's retelling of Stoker's *Dracula* links the 19<sup>th</sup> century text

to modern day America. It emphasizes how unchanging the salient issues of money, heteronormativity, and unsatisfiable greed are in humankind.

### **Postscript: Hunger Forever**

The three texts, *The Wonder*, *Dracula*, and *Salem's Lot*, collectively show how societal norms enforced through things like the Catholic Church, patriarchy, and economic systems effect larger domineering expectations of heteronormativity, inequality, and greed. The insatiable language of hunger that vampires and starving girls have is one that represents the fault of unchanging societal values. Humankind lacks the ability to progress, the threat of vampirism is exactly that. Vampires embody the threat of no progression because they are perpetually frozen in time.

The metaphor of hunger contradicts itself as a powerful refusal of norms and also the blind acceptance of them. Capitalist economics hypocritically promise everything and rely on those who have less continue itself. Economic practices linked to patriarchic ideals of women as lesser become the vehicle for the argument that uses the female body's ability to feed and be fed from as a way of commenting on economic and sexual/gender values. These texts show how binaries of sexuality, gender, and socioeconomic status create geographical and economic spaces that reflect on the issues that transcend the past three centuries.

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