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Not Just Dead, But Gay!
Queerness and the Vampire

William A. Tringali

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Dr. Heidi Bean, Thesis Director
Dr. Ellen Scheible, Committee Member
Dr. Elizabeth Veisz, Committee Member

NOT JUST DEAD, BUT GAY!

The Vampire as a Conduit of Cultural Anxieties Concerning Queerness

BY WILLIAM A. TRINGALI
Mentor: Heidi Bean

The vampire is the queerest of monsters. Its terror does not emerge because it is an ungodly creation of science, or a mindless killing machine. It does not rise from the deep, scaled and covered in algae to steal unwary beachgoers. It is not a mishmash of various corpses, sewn together by a mad scientist. It does not howl at the moon, or remain a mild-mannered Jekyll in its waking hours, only to transform when it lies down to bed.

No, the horror of the vampire is sexual. Worse, it is sexual in all the wrong ways. It is beautiful, charming, even occasionally funny and likeable, but definitively abnormal. This allows the vampire to become a conduit for cultural anxieties concerning queerness within society. As a creature that straddles the binaries of life and death, drawing attraction and repulsion, the vampire queers both gender and sexuality. Stories about vampires can reflect and dramatize cultural anxieties surrounding queerness across both time periods and mediums.

The Victorian vampires of the novels *Dracula* and *Carmilla* are physically constructed in queer ways within their texts. The vampire's existence is tied deeply to its alluring abilities. Its horror is based not only on its bloodthirsty characteristics, but the meshing of its cannibalistic nature with a charm and allure that fascinates both its audiences and its victims. The vampire is both beautiful and terrifying; bridging this queer boundary of definition allows it to express a more complex version of non-binarized sexuality. The very nature of the vampire's 'attack', its bite, is queer, queerness in this case pertaining to anything regarding gender and sexuality that is non-normative. The vampire's bite is its means of both feeding and reproduction; making elongation, penetration, and fluid exchange commonplace within the novels it occupies, allowing a metaphoric discussion of sex without mentioning it. Combine this with its defining characteristic of being beautiful yet dangerous, being queer becomes an integral part of constructing the vampire.

The very physicality of the modern vampire makes it queer. The mouth becomes a sex organ, engaging in not only penetration but the birthing process by which new vampires are sired. Vampiric penetration occurs orally, via the vampire's fangs. The very nature of this action is erotic. There is a receptive zone, a penetration, and a fluid exchange, but not one that aligns with normative, heterosexual sex. The vampire is simultaneously the penetrator and the receiver of fluids, of life-blood. If that were not queer enough, the victim's emotional state is always a mixture of horror and arousal, engaging in the pleasures of sex while simultaneously feeling the horrors of being attacked. The victim is not only a sexual partner but also prey. To literally survive, the modern vampire must constantly engage in remarkably sexual activities. Because there is no discernable normative male or female sexual organ to these feedings, the vampire can engage in these feedings with anyone of any gender, queering the vampire sexually. Further, because there is no gendered sexual organ present within the pseudo-sexual acts of the vampire, the vampire becomes an agender or transgender individual, while still possessing the appearance of a man or a woman. The very action necessary for the modern vampire's survival is one of many things that makes it ideal for dramatizing fears of queerness.

Commonly referred to as "siring", the method by which the vampire procreates makes it ideal for dramatizing queer anxieties. "Sire" can signal not only the act of transformation itself, but also refer to the vampire who has performed the action, they themselves becoming the "Sire" for the newly turned human. The newly turned human is referred to as said vampire's progeny. The act of birthing a new vampire, excluding literal vampire and vampire mating, which does not exist in most vampiric works and always spells death for the vampiric mother, involves the taking of life. This is the most obvious uncanny attribute of any vampiric siring, an immediate alignment of new life with death, a transgression of these binaries, but in terms of gender and

sexuality the process is even more transgressive. The definition of uncanny used aligns with Freud's use of the word, defining the uncanny as the opposite of the familiar.

In order to sire a new vampire, or for a vampire to become a Sire, the vampire must drink the blood of a human and in turn the human must drink the blood of the vampire. This blurs the strict idea of family established by heteronormativity. The vampire itself becomes the parent, with their sire becoming their child, but because the penetration and fluid exchange of this birthing sexualizes the act, the relationship is given an incestuous aspect. And because these relationships are between a living and dead individual before the sire is entirely turned, such relationships are incestuous and necrophilic. Even more so, because these births do not require two heteronormative sex organs, men and women can procreate entirely free of one another, rendering the vampire as both father and mother to their new child/lover. Siring often takes place between individuals of the same gender, as in the cases of Louis and Lestat from Anne Rice's 1973 novel *Interview with a Vampire* or Miriam and Dr. Roberts in the 1983 film *The Hunger*, making such relationships incestuous, necrophilic, and gay.

The modern vampire, like its Victorian cousins, has a charm, an allure, which not only separates it from other monsters but makes it queer by strange attraction. Not only are the processes by which the vampire feeds and creates more of its kind inherently queer, but its very nature as a monster elicits queer responses. The zombies of the 1970's and 80's are rotting, shambling monsters that only want to consume living flesh, at the great expense of that flesh's owner, or brains, like the corpses of *Return of the Living Dead*. The 80's werewolf's human body stretches, breaks, and sprouts hair before he murders his victims in a frenzied rage in films like *American Werewolf in London*. The reaction to both of these monsters is uncanny because they are humanoid but obviously not human, rendering disgusted fascination within horror

audiences. The vampire, however, inspires a different response. The vampire is alluring. It is beautiful, even charming, entralling victims like moths to a flame. This attraction is quintessential to the vampire, because without the allure the vampire becomes just another ghoul.

What makes this charm queer, and therefore dangerous, is the vampire's ability to use it on anyone. In *The Hunger*, predatory vampire Miriam is so charming during her incredibly brief conversation with human scientist Dr. Sarah Roberts that she is able to seduce and feed off her within five minutes of the human entering her house. In Anne Rice's 1973 classic vampire novel *Interview with a Vampire*, Southern aristocrat Louis is unable to even look at the vampire Lestat, lest he become "spellbound by the sheer beauty of his appearance" (Rice 17). And vampire Jerry Dandrige of Director Tom Holland's 1985 *Fright Night* entralls a number of men while attempting to defeat neighbor-boy Charley. The presence of the vampire pushes otherwise heterosexual characters into queer situations, often throwing into relief cultural anxieties surrounding gender and sexuality.

This paper will argue that the vampire is a conduit for the gendered and sexual anxieties of the time period in which it is written through two case studies. The first will be an analysis of the Victorian novels *Dracula* and *Carmilla*, focusing on Victorian anxieties of shifting societal gender roles. The second will be an analysis of the 1983 film *The Hunger* focusing on fears of 1970s and 80s cultural fears of lesbian feminism. Finally, this paper will end with a brief, modern examination of the vampire through *True Blood*, and possibly a shifting dynamic in how the vampire and queerness are integrated into mainstream society. The goal of this paper is to discuss how the horrific queerness of the vampire dramatizes and reflects cultural anxieties of queerness. By examining vampiric texts through a cultural lens, the vampire can be used to help understand what societies were afraid of in terms of gender and sexuality.

Part 1: I'm in Love with a Monster, The Victorian Vampire

The Victorian Gothic is a genre meant to unnerve. Its plethora of monsters and mayhem embody the cultural anxieties of this era, specifically anxieties surrounding non-normative gender performances, gender identities, and sexual orientations and actions. Among the slew of creatures reimagined by Gothic minds, the vampire stands as the most important. A being whose core trait is a horrifically attractive otherness, the vampire becomes a representative of queerness in the texts based around it. The quintessential vampire novel, *Dracula* by Bram Stoker, and its almost as prevalent predecessor, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, both use the queer figure of the vampire to dramatize the anxieties surrounding gender and sexuality of the Victorian era.

The Gothic is a genre comprised of explorations of the subconscious, the hidden, and the non-binary, making it a near-perfect area of fiction through which to explore notions of gender and sexuality. In Freud's original discussions of the uncanny, a signature piece of the Gothic genre, he describes the notion of the "unheimlich". Freud's notion of the Heimlich denotes concepts, environments, and emotions one can find "homely" and "familiar" (Freud, 126). The "unheimlich" makes uncanny all these aforementioned topics, twisting them into something recognizable, but incorrect, similar to a funhouse mirror. Within Gothic texts the unheimlich forces us to feel both repulsed and attracted to a subject who paradoxically feels both familiar and yet hopelessly other; which in turn fuels fascination. In the same way a vampire enthralls his victim, the unheimlich nature of Gothic texts' characters mesmerize their audiences. In her book on the intersection of queerness and the Gothic genre, Paulina Palmer notes that early theories on the uncanny relate to queerness. In her discussion of Freud's writings on the unheimlich, Palmer comments, "the idea that uncanny sensations, and the disturbing transformation of the familiar into the unfamiliar that they generate, reflect the projection of unconscious fears and desires

originating in ‘something repressed that recurs’” (Palmer 2). The movement between the binaries: life and death, the present and the past, logic and intuition, is essential in all Gothic texts. And in binaries what is repressed, death or the past or the mythical, returns to haunt other side of that binary.

Freud’s and Palmer’s discussions of repression and recurrence are important in understanding characters’ reactions to their own queer actions and behaviors within these Gothic novels. The burying of actions under falsely logical explanations leads to repression, but not negation. What is repressed, in these novels, is queerness. In the same way the denial of the vampire’s existence does not cause it to vanish, the protagonists’ denial of the queerness of their actions and behaviors do not negate them. Rebellions against normative culture are essential for the figure of the vampire. Unlike theory, which might openly state and analyze the more hidden side of culture, fiction “frequently avoids defining its ideological perspective explicitly. It tends toward the dialogic, displaying tensions and ambiguities” (Palmer 4). When the characters of these novels engage in culturally unsuitable actions within these novels, their response is to try to make these queer feelings go away, and for authors to wrap their true discussions of these queer anxieties in patchworks of teeth and blood. This means that within the Gothic the dramatized aspects making monsters monstrous, and making protagonists the heroes, must not be taken at face value, or expected to be explicitly stated, as the characters of these novels are designed to behave by Victorian cultural codes surrounding gender and sexuality.

The Victorian era was a time of great cultural change surrounding gender, and also a time in which gender and sex were being binarized and classified. Lectures by John Ruskin in 1865 denote the differences between Victorian men and women, and the power they wielded. “The man's power” he states, “is active, progressive, defensive,” with man being “eminently the doer,

the creator, the discoverer, the defender” (Ruskin *Kindle Locations* 823-825). By Victorian standards, men are meant to control their destinies. Masculinity is existential power. It is the autonomy to do what one wishes when one wishes it. To be masculine is to take charge, to dominate. This aligned all notions of maleness culturally, in terms of gender identity, performance, and sexuality, with power. Ruskin also commented that a woman’s greatest value was “modesty of service” (Ruskin *Kindle Location* 844). The ideal Victorian woman was subservient, her very existence devoted to her husband, her life having no control. The culture was changing by the time *Carmilla* and *Dracula* were written in 1872 and 1897, respectively, but these ideals of Victorian femininity and masculinity were still deeply entrenched. When faced with cultural changes, such as the rise in women’s education, subservience was still forced upon women. Ruskin argued that it was worthless for a woman to be “acquainted with this science or that,” unless knowing them somehow increased her ability to aid her husband (Ruskin, *Kindle Location* 875). Women could indeed seek education, but it was not meant to better themselves, only to help them be of more use to their husband, meaning that while education gave women more opportunities, it in no way “challenged the legal or economic subordination of women in marriage” (Walkowitz 64). This is even acknowledged within *Dracula*. Protagonist Jonathan Harker’s fiancé states that she learns stenography and how to use a typewriter so that she “shall be able to be useful to Jonathan” (Stoker 31).

Women’s entrance into public spaces leads to similar problems. The sudden rise of window shopping gave women a chance to more easily enter the public space, but “reinforced a public role traditionally performed by ladies as decorous indicators of social distance,” or forwarded the idea that women were the accessories of their husbands (Walkowitz 47). The better she looked while out in public, the better he was doing at his job. Ruskin even states that

one of the duties of a husband was to “perfect her beauty, I say, and increase its power” as a good looking wife would benefit him in terms of showing wealth (Ruskin *Kindle Locations* 850-851). Upper-class women flocked to the open streets of London, but this in turn caused police to misidentify many of them as the prostitutes that previously frequented this space (Walkowitz 50). This was an age in which Upper-class women and prostitutes could not be distinguished, in which ideal Victorian women could no longer be easily identified. Great shifts were occurring in the realm of women’s autonomy, and these translated into a number of cultural fears.

The fears of this era are reflected and dramatized within the two most important vampiric novels of this era, *Carmilla* and *Dracula*. The vampires of these texts embody cultural fears ranging from homosexuality to women’s autonomy. *Carmilla* is sweet and passive, but also a lesbian murderer. *Dracula*’s Brides, while pale, blonde, and beautiful, are literally baby eating monsters. In addition, the effects these vampires have on the protagonists that interact with them further dramatize these anxieties concerning women’s sexual power. These vampires are the incarnation and exaggeration of the terror and confusion surrounding the shifting form of the ideal Victorian woman. Fiction contributed to a broader cultural understanding of queerness through the dramatization of these anxieties, anxieties that the authors of *Dracula* and *Carmilla* expressed through the queer figure of the vampire.

Queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick discusses the notion of penetration as it relates to masculinity and femininity. Relationships are meant to be defined by one notably more masculine, or “insertive,” partner and one feminine, submissive, “receptive,” partner (Kosofsky Sedgwick 7). In the case of a heteronormative relationship, a heterosexual man is insertive partner, and a heterosexual woman the receptive partner. Regardless of gender performance or identity, the vampire is always the insertive partner. This establishes all vampires as being in the

active, dominant, “masculine role” of the relationship, even if the vampire appears to be a woman. Moreover, it places the vampire’s partner into the passive, submissive, or “feminine” role of the relationship. This upset heteronormative sexual standards. Women, as vampiric predators, can become a dominant partner in a sexual encounter, which potentially forces men into submissive, receptive roles. Within a culture that aligns power and dominance with the ability to penetrate, the vampire has the potential to cause major disruption.

A woman who is dominant and sexually insertive is “queer”, such as Carmilla of the *Brides of Dracula*, and a man who is passive and sexually receptive is also “queer”, such as *Dracula*’s Jonathan Harker. And this queerness plays with sexual as well as social power. And placing this insertive piece in the mouth further queers the vampire’s form. Not only does such an incorrectly sexual penetrative force exist openly, but it exists in the wrong place. The vampire’s method of reproduction is a very sexualized, non-sexual act, and its character design is one of extreme attraction/repulsion, making it not only the epitome of a Gothic monster, but a living, or at least undead, representation of queerness.

Queerness, by its broadest definition, is anything non-normative. This definition, however, has been often reworked and simplified to only include issues of sexuality. It is commonly associated with the term “heteronormative” which defines a cultural system that establishes heterosexuality as the preferred and default sexual orientation. Sedgwick establishes queerness as a defiance stance, one that rebels against normativity without setting itself up as an opposition to it. By this definition, queerness establishes a separate, non-reactionary system that aims to break binaries established culturally in human relationships. For example, a heteronormative system would argue that being gay is the opposite of being straight, or being a woman is the opposite of being a man. Queerness instead undermines the very stability of the

norm by finding the instabilities that it harbors within itself. Queerness argues that genders, sexual and romantic orientations, and social systems contain no opposites, only different parts of a broad spectrum of equally valid existences.

Sedgwick argues what makes queer different as an identity and identifier is its lack of evidence. This may sound absurd, as if one hunts for evidence of others' sexual encounters when meeting them, but the terms used to describe sexual orientation conjure up specific values within our minds. 'Straight' as a defining characteristic implies not only the speaker's preferred partners, but many other things about themselves (Kosofsky Sedgwick 8-9). Judith Butler notes that the most important aspect of queerness is its inability to be pinned down, its ability to "resist calculation" (Butler 28). It is very easy to align queerness strictly with notions of sexuality, but any discussion of sexuality is in and of itself also a discussion of gender. Heteronormativity, through its enforcement of "correct" sexual practices also establishes rigid guidelines that create ideal models of gender identity, presentation, and attraction. Heteronormative culture expects that one of the biggest aspects of being "woman" is to experience sexual attraction towards men, but "if to identify as a woman is not necessarily to desire a man; and if to desire a woman does not necessarily signal the constituting presence of a masculine identification, whatever that is, then the heterosexual matrix proves to be an imaginary logic that insistently issues forth its own unmanageability" (Butler 28). Heteronormativity, when brought into question via a queer disruptive force of disobedience, finds itself unable to continue logically. If the power of queerness lies in its inability to be defined, then the weakness of heteronormativity lies in its necessary definitions. Queerness gains power in its lack of definition, not allowing itself to be fully nailed down or categorized. Not aligning itself as specifically anti-normative, queerness

instead questions what we consider to be normal, such as heterosexuality being a default sexual orientation, or male being a default gender, and why it is considered to be so.

Carmilla dramatizes not only fears of lesbianism but the female power that was associated with it, then further terrifying its audiences by placing these dangerous sexual attitudes within the perfect, delicate beauty of a teenage girl. *Carmilla* is not only the first widely successful vampire novel, but a “metaphor for a host of perceived late Victorian social threats and ills – first among which was concerned with female sexuality and power” (Costello-Sullivan xx). The text follows the life of the now-dead Laura, the daughter of a very wealthy English man living in a castle in Styria, or modern Germany, through the essays of Doctor Hesselius, a researcher of the arcane that interviewed Laura because of her interaction with a vampire, which have been published by an unnamed Narrator (Le Fanu 4). While it might seem that this leads to the possibility of an unreliable narrator, or second-hand information that might have been warped, Le Fanu has the Narrator state, just lines after referring to Laura as a “person so clever and careful”, that she “could have added little to the Narrative which she communicates in the following pages, with, so far as I can pronounce, such a conscientious particularity” (Le Fanu 4). We are meant to see the work that follows as the unadulterated writings of Laura, altered only by her own perception of the events and her presentation of them to the interviewer.

Laura begins with her first description of her home, a bastion of normative, Victorian culture in an otherwise queer setting. Laura comments on her “English name” and an English father, making them an unusual figure in their castle in Styria, and also the identifiable person for Victorian audiences, at whom the text was aimed. Laura and her father also speak English every day in the castle with their French and German governesses, Madame Perrodon and Mademoiselle LaFontaine, to not only “preserve” their English language skills, but also for

“patriotic motives” (Le Fanu 3). In this sea of non-English languages, where English is not of practical use, Laura’s father is insistent that Laura speak English. Through this, Le Fanu clearly communicates the presence of Victorian socio-cultural standards by which all the characters will judge their interactions with one another, as it is not only the language of the household, but the language through which Laura chooses to narrate her tale.

Carmilla’s entrance into the novel dramatizes a slew of queer anxieties, specifically a fear of dangerous female sexuality. Fears of lesbianism were notably discussed within the field of psychiatry in 1869, only three years before *Carmilla*’s publication. When lesbianism actually was acknowledged in the cultural mind of Victorian society, which was still rare, it was thought of as such; “lesbians seem sexually to desire women rather less ardently than they desire men’s social and cultural privileges” (Ledger 130). This comes from psychiatrist Richard von Kafft-Ebing, who also described four specific types of lesbians, each one becoming more outwardly masculine (Ledger 130). Lesbianism, by these analyses, was not a valid sexual orientation, but a psychological disorder defining women’s desire to be with other women as a desire to be men. Women did not possess any trace of sexuality within them, ideally, and yet Carmilla’s very introduction to the novel is her intensely sexual encounter with a child, Laura. Moreover, Carmilla lacks traditionally masculine signifiers in her gender performance, with her own masculine trait being her intense sexuality.

Carmilla’s first appearance opens up the book’s exaggeration of anxieties by sexualizing two female characters’ interaction, dramatizing the Victorian fear of women not being asexual. In her introduction to the text, Kathleen Costello-Sullivan writes that while “some dismiss the homosexual nature of Laura and Carmilla’s attraction in favor of a mother/daughter trope, most scholars recognize the undeniable sexual overtones of their interactions” (Costello-Sullivan xxi).

I could not agree with this notion more. We are introduced to Carmilla, at this point unnamed, when she appears to Laura at the age of six. Laura, a child, looks over to the side of her bed and finds, “a pretty young lady who was kneeling” with, quite notably, “her hands under the coverlet” (Le Fanu 7). It is important to discuss the placement of Carmilla’s hands. They are already in the bed, uninvited and searching, but by Victorian standards not necessarily taboo. Victorian women were expected to be “sexually dormant” (Ledger 125). Sex was to be used for reproduction only, and even then only when the man in the married and monogamous relationship initiated, the woman doing her duty to her husband and future child only, with no thought of pleasure involved. This meant that “sexual relationships between women were unthinkable,” with even early American feminist Margaret Fuller stating that “same-sex love between women” would be too elevated in the purity of intellectual and emotional bonding to ever include physical relations (Ledger 126). Paulina Palmer also comments that “whereas male gay sexuality has been suppressed by society instituting laws and devising brutal or humiliating penalties for their infringement, lesbianism in many periods and cultures has been rendered well-nigh invisible” (Palmer 17). This would mean that, unless explicitly made to be physical, intense emotional relationships between women would be interpreted as strong friendships. Le Fanu’s descriptions of Carmilla and Laura’s relationship, from their beginning, are explicitly physical. I believe that Le Fanu’s descriptions of the scene are meant to rebel against normative Victorian values through the not motherly, but sexual interactions of Laura and Carmilla in their opening scene, setting a precedence for all their future interactions. Laura looks upon Carmilla with “a kind of pleased wonder,” then stating that Carmilla “caressed me with her hands and lay down beside me on the bed, and drew me towards her, smiling” (Le Fanu 7). These are not motherly or friend-like interactions, specifically because of Le Fanu’s description of their touching. Carmilla

“caresses” Laura, her touch loving and gentle, but its location is not defined. Le Fanu easily could have stated the caress was to her head or arm, but he purposefully leaves the description of the touch vague. His vagueness adds a sexual tone to the situation, with Carmilla’s drawing Laura close, her hands already in Laura’s bed before the girl was even aware, makes the scene a definitively predatory interaction. Carmilla’s hands already being in Laura’s bed imply she was going to reach out and wrap her arms about Laura whether she consented or not. None of these actions imply a mother-daughter relationship, or a friendship, with the only possible evidence of a warped, motherly moment appearing when Carmilla pieces Laura’s chest with her teeth to drink the blood from her heart. As Laura recounts: “I was wakened by a sensation as if two needles ran into my breast very deep at the same moment, and I cried loudly” (Le Fanu 7). The scene might mimic breastfeeding in that sentence alone, but combined with the descriptions of Carmilla’s beauty, her sexualized touching of Laura, and her entrance into Laura’s bed before she wakes up make the scene much more predatory and sexual in nature. This is even truer when combined with the reactions of those around Laura, and the comments Le Fanu has them make once they enter. Laura cries out in terror, and watches Carmilla slip out of the bed and under it. By the time Laura’s nursemaids arrive and search the place, Carmilla seems to have vanished. They examine the bed, whispering to one another that “someone *did* lie there” but upon finding no one and no puncture marks on Laura’s chest they insist it was a dream (Le Fanu 7). The first thing able to be noted about this series of actions is the literal repression that occurs. Carmilla slips off the bed and beneath, settling herself below Laura and metaphorically into her subconscious, vanishing before her presence can be proven physically to others. Even when the evidence is there, such as the warm outline left by Carmilla’s body, Laura’s father insists that what actually happened was nothing but a dream, leading to Laura’s over-rationalization of her

future interactions with Carmilla in an attempt to wipe away not only her clearly vampiric traits, but her queerness as well. Moreover, the audience is once again presented with the fact that Carmilla crawled into bed with Laura, giving the sucking of Laura's breast a much more sexual and much less motherly connotation.

Our next meeting of Carmilla is actually our first official one, and dramatizes interpretations of queerness in society through the embodiment of everything 'other' and terrifying in the black woman, when the real danger is elsewhere. Carmilla is brought to Laura and her father's castle after they witness a carriage overturn before a bridge near their home. A woman "tall, but not thin, and dressed in black velvet" manipulates Laura and her father into extending their hospitality to her "daughter," Carmilla (Le Fanu 16). Carmilla herself is described as the "prettiest creature I ever saw; about [Laura's] age, and so gentle and nice" (Le Fanu 21). Compared to the beauty of the woman in velvet and Carmilla, the discussion of the third woman present gives a deep feeling of horror. It is Mademoiselle Lafontaine that notes the "woman in the carriage, after it was set up again, who did not get out," and goes on to describe a "hideous black woman, with a sort of colored turban on her head, who was gazing all the time from the carriage window, nodding and grinning derisively towards the ladies, with gleaming eyes and large white eye-balls, and her teeth set as if in fury" (Le Fanu 21). This woman in the carriage is a literal incarnation of Victorian anxieties surrounding otherness. The first is her apparent ugliness, and the darkness of her skin. She is black, the symbolic color of darkness and evil, and societally the incorrect shade for a properly pale Victorian lady. The "turban" atop her head lends to ideas of the 'uncivilized' Eastern world outside of London, but also covers her hair, masculinizing her. This notion of the "manly woman" was frowned upon, the covering of the hair an important piece in this as doctors of the time gathered "case histories of 'mental and

physical hermaphrodites' who eschewed feminine identity" (Walkowitz 62). The black woman comes to represent all that is feared by queerness' transgression of norms involving gender presentation, with the thought that such a thing ties directly to identity, especially with Le Fanu having Mademoiselle Lafontaine note the way the black woman stares at them. She gazes "derisively," eyeing the proper ladies just beyond her reach outside the carriage. This, in fact, also codes the black woman as male, therefore transgressing gender boundaries and making her terrifying. Women in public found themselves constantly victim to the "intrusive gaze of men" (Walkowitz 50). Such pests were the near-constant perpetrators of vicious street harassment. The threatening gaze of the black woman, along with her physical description and manner of dress, align her with a horrific queerness. Here is a woman that not only looks and dresses like a man, but gazes at women in the same way a man would, the terror obvious in descriptions of her rage and glare. She is, as German psychiatrist Carl von Westphal described, "a social threat" (Ledger 129). Yet she is separated from all the characters. The black woman never leaves the carriage, a pane of glass and a door keeping her and the women she so aggressively leers at separate. This was the thought on queerness that Le Fanu is dramatizing. The fear of queerness exists in the minds of the Victorian public, yes, but to them it is a danger obvious and separate, something that can be easily spotted and shoved away. But Le Fanu does not make the danger of the novel this blatant display of everything non-normative. The danger is Carmilla. The danger is the sweet, delicate, passive young girl who blends into society so seamlessly that her murderous actions have never been attributed to her. Through his presentation of the black woman during the audience's first official meeting of Carmilla, Le Fanu critiques views on Victorian ideas of queerness. He uses the queer figure of the vampire to dramatize the anxiety of no longer being able to identify the "ideal women." Gender portrayal and sexual orientation are not aligned in

such an easily spotted way, and one cannot immediately assume that a masculine woman is a danger, or that a feminine woman is a safe haven. What is other, what is queer, is not a reactionary force, one that embodies everything opposite of normal, like the black woman. Queerness gains its power from its lack of definition, its ability to align but not align with societal norms, making it unable to be pinned down, and that is the anxiety dramatized here, the fear that Victorian society really doesn't know what queerness truly looks like.

A scene in which Le Fanu highlights Carmilla's danger before explicitly stating her vampirism comes in the description of Carmilla's bedchamber, dramatizing Victorian ideals of femininity and the horror surrounding the dangers of female sexuality. Queer and gothic analyst Ardel Haefele-Thomas, in their work *Queer Other in Victorian Gothic* discusses the "curious detail" of the tapestry at the foot of Carmilla's bed, which features Cleopatra with the asps on her breasts (Haefele-Thomas 102). Thomas argues that this scene argues Carmilla "becoming the Egyptian queen" arguing that Carmilla is representative of fears within the British empire of Eastern invasion, due to her supposed Eastern origins and possible relation to the black woman within the carriage (Haefele-Thomas 102). While I would agree with some dramatizations of racial horror within the text, especially with the black woman embodying a sense of non-Western evil, I would disagree with this analysis, with Haefele-Thomas themselves arguing that the asps represent a "vampirism yet to come" and that Carmilla is both "Cleopatra and the asps" (Haefele-Thomas 103). While it is true the tapestry mirrors Carmilla's preferred method of drinking blood, the biting of the breast, the scene is not a representation of what is to come, but is a direct call back to Carmilla's entrance to the novel with the added horror of Laura's own homosexual desire. Firstly, the discussion of this tapestry aligns with Laura's own remembrance of the beautiful woman that sucked her breast when she was a child, and how much this woman

looks like Carmilla. These two descriptions are literally twelve lines apart. With the image of a fanged creature biting a breast presented a dozen lines from remembrances of the horror of female sexuality, Le Fanu is clearly aligning Laura with Cleopatra, and Carmilla with the asp.

The serpent is a classic depiction of evil, aligning with Carmilla's naturally occurring evil as a vampire, but what's more interesting is the alignment of Laura with Cleopatra. In the instance of the tapestry, Cleopatra is initiating her suicide, attaching the asp willingly to her breast, desiring it to bite her and end her life. This is an attempt by Le Fanu to dramatize fears of female sexuality. In the same way Cleopatra wants to attach this asp to her bosom, Laura's homosexual desire for Carmilla is metaphorically and literally a desire for Carmilla to bite her breast. She is initially struck with "horror" upon realizing that this "pretty, even beautiful" face is the same that she saw those twelve years ago (Le Fanu 23). This is the classic combination of uncanny beauty/fear that is present within the vampire, but Le Fanu's use of this queer figure goes deeper by having Laura initiate this same-sex encounter. Carmilla, when approached by Laura, is lying in bed, with Laura going on about her "pretty" figure, dressed only in "soft silk dressing gown, embroidered with flowers", the flowers an overt reminder of Carmilla's virginal beauty, with Laura being the initiating party (Le Fanu 23). Laura's fear is dissipated by Carmilla's attractiveness, with Laura growing "bold" in her speech, Carmilla "pressing" her hand into Laura's, gazing upon Laura and blushing. It is then that Carmilla recounts the night she spent with Laura twelve years ago, though she claims it was a dream, stating that Laura's "looks won [her]" and that was why she slipped into bed and put "[her] arms around" Laura (Le Fanu 24). The scene these girls describe is in fact the reverse of their conversation, with Laura having climbed into bed with Carmilla. In the same way it was Laura's beauty that led to Carmilla's invasion of her bedchamber, it is Carmilla's beauty that overcomes the "repulsion" she is also

feeling, stating that her attraction to Carmilla “immensely prevailed” and stating Carmilla’s attractiveness five times in the five lines Le Fanu uses to describe this uncanny feeling of desire and horror (Le Fanu 24). Le Fanu mirrors the opening scene of fear and attraction used to introduce Carmilla at the start of the novel, not only flipping the bedded positions of Laura and Carmilla to make their homosexual attraction mutual, but also aligning it with the metaphor of Cleopatra and the asps, dramatizing women’s sexual, and homosexual, desire as something so terrible it might as well be a desire for death.

Le Fanu uses Carmilla’s attraction to Laura to dramatize fears of female power, and also to make the audience sympathize with Carmilla over this. Carmilla refuses to give any information about herself to Laura, and when this upsets her, Carmilla uses it as a chance to apologize, not only for her inability to tell Laura who she is, but for her nature. Carmilla would

place her pretty arms about [Laura’s] neck, draw me to her, and laying her cheek to mine, murmur with her lips near my ear, “Dearest, your little heart is wounded; think me not cruel because I obey the irresistible law of my strength and weakness if your dear heart is wounded, my wild heart bleeds with yours...and when she spoke such a rhapsody, she would press me more closely in her trembling embrace, and her lips in soft kisses gently glow upon my cheeks. (Le Fanu 29)

I include the entire quote to show just how tenderly and sorrowfully Carmilla speaks to Laura. She truly cares for her, their relationship beyond that of simple lovers, and much more of partners who care for one another deeply. Carmilla apologizes not only for her inability to tell Laura anything, both as a vampire and as a woman. As a vampire, Carmilla will eventually kill Laura, draining her of blood. As a woman, Carmilla will be unable to stop herself from doing this. Carmilla is an exaggerated tool of fears surrounding queerness. She has power, as a vampire

the ability to kill, like the budding power of Victorian women to pursue education and more freely enter the public sector, but also lacks the ability to control herself, as the ideal Victorian woman must be controlled by a husband. She is the dramatized incarnation of Victorian anxieties surrounding female autonomy. If women were given power, with their inability to make decisions, people would die, because women were considered to be biologically a passive and receptive sex. Moreover, this tender apology Carmilla gives Laura makes the audience sympathize with her.

Laura's response to Carmilla's affections is a dramatization of confusion surrounding queerness, not, as Thomas argues, an ambivalence towards the queerness in his text. Carmilla wishes she could be in a relationship with Laura that did not end with Laura's death, holding onto her and kissing her while she can, trembling with emotion. Haefele-Thomas cites this as Le Fanu being "ambivalent" about the text, arguing that Laura's response to this is meant to show his "uncertainty toward the homoeroticism at the heart of his tale" (Haefele-Thomas 105). I would disagree, but not in the way that Thomas might think. Laura's response to Carmilla's affections notes her getting a bit defensive, claiming that these events in which Carmilla would drape herself upon Laura, kissing her and whispering "rhapsodies" to her, were "not of very frequent occurrence" and that she "used to wish to extricate [herself]" but was unable to for some reason, Carmilla "sooth[ing] [her] resistance into a trance" (Le Fanu 29). Laura's inability to escape Carmilla's grasp is meant to address the dangers of powerful, female sexuality. After this staunch declaration of wished freedom and return to heteronormativity, Laura goes on to describe "with a trembling hand" her "confused and horrible recollection" of her "strange and beautiful companion" holding Laura's hand, blushing, and breathing so hard, Le Fanu makes a point of Laura describing, that Carmilla's dress "rose and fell with the tumultuous respiration"

(Le Fanu 29). The imagery is clearly erotic, emboldening a sexual connotation to Carmilla and Laura's touching, the vivid descriptions of their heated kisses and Carmilla's breathing thinly veiled attributes of a sexual climax. Laura's reaction to this is noteworthy. Even among all of Laura's descriptions of Carmilla's charm and beauty, Le Fanu has her state that she was embarrassed, feeling "hateful" as Carmilla harassed her with the "ardor of a lover", with Laura asking if they were "related", "what can you mean by all this?" (Le Fanu 29). Laura even goes so far, as Thomas also notes, to wonder if Carmilla is a man in disguise. Thomas and I both agree that there is no possible way that Laura can be so ignorant to Carmilla's advances, or her own feelings toward the vampire, but she forces these thoughts away, repressing the queerness present within her. This is merely another use of the uncanny nature of the vampire. Laura both loves and hates Carmilla, attracted to her and simultaneously repulsed by her own reactions. Le Fanu is not ambivalent, as he is not seeking a solution to the cultural shifts surrounding gender and sexuality. He is only dramatizing them. In fact, his dramatization of the possible true love between Laura and Carmilla, his addressing of the more beautiful and sympathetic side of the monster, should not be read as a sort of 'uncertainty' on the part of Le Fanu, but a true addressing of all sides of this issue, presenting the possibly beautiful relationships that can emerge between people of the same-sex while still highlighting the cultural fears present through the figure of the vampire. It is possibly why, as Haefele-Thomas mentioned so confusedly, "the iconic stature of *Carmilla* within lesbian culture persists" (Haefele-Thomas 107). Le Fanu is aware of the queerness within this piece, and in fact presents it sympathetically, but he does not seek a solution to the fears he's dramatizing.

From the same cultural climate of Le Fanu's *Carmilla* emerges Bram Stoker's 1897 novel *Dracula*, and while both have arguments concerning gender portrayal and sexuality, Le

Fanu dramatizes queer women's relationships, while more of Stoker's dramatizations focus on masculinity and power. There is a notable, opening scene of queerness in *Dracula* which can help shed light onto the anxieties surrounding men's feared loss of masculinity in the Victorian era: the entrapment of Jonathan Harker. Jonathan Harker is sent by his company in London to discuss a business proceeding with Count Dracula, traveling east to the country of Romania, keeping a diary of his trip, which becomes Stoker's method of storytelling for the opening of the novel. It is important to note that Jonathan is, in fact, traveling on business, as it aligns him with a "bourgeois masculinity" that denotes "industry" as a masculine quality (Ledger 108). Such "robust British masculinity" was "crucial", lest it be undermined by the "decadent and the dandy", which Jonathan might have been labelled if this trip was solely for pleasure (Ledger, 94). Before even our first real introduction to Jonathan, Stoker establishes him as a proper, masculine Victorian man. Stoker discusses the queerness of non-Western space of Transylvania Jonathan has entered through his comments on the uncanny aspects of its people. The "women" of the villages he goes through, are "pretty, except when you got near them" while the men are "picturesque" but not "prepossessing" (Stoker 33). The people and scenery around Jonathan is attractive, but not quite right, establishing the space as non-normative and also foreshadowing Jonathan Harker's views on women.

The first page of the novel, in fact, aggressively denotes Jonathan's supposed heterosexuality, and his place within his household as the dominant, Victorian man. On the first page of his journal, Stoker has Jonathan state his desire to get a recipe for his fiancé, "(Mem., get recipe for Mina.)" (Stoker 31). He does this again just two pages later "(Mem., get recipe for this also)" (Stoker 33). This is Stoker's introduction of our hero, and his establishment of Jonathan as one that is meant to represent proper, Victorian gender roles. Jonathan Harker has a fiancée,

one that he expects to sit in the position of a good and pure housewife, his only thought of her within his early journal entries concerning how she can make his life better by providing services for him, as previously discussed through Ruskin's arguments for women's subservience (Ruskin *Kindle Locations* 823-825).

After his arrival at Dracula's castle, Jonathan finds his autonomy limited, placing him in the position of a woman, dramatizing cultural fears of men's feminization. The Count establishes rules on where Jonathan should or should not go, warning him not to enter rooms that are locked, and to never fall asleep anywhere in the castle but his own, assigned bedroom. Jonathan, his power never having been limited in such a way, goes out of his way to break these rules. In fact, Stoker has Jonathan comment that he takes "a pleasure in disobeying" the few rules Dracula has set (Stoker 68). Without his sense of autonomy, Jonathan's first instinct is to feminize himself, comparing himself to love-struck woman. "Here I am, sitting at a little oak table where in old times possibly some fair lady sat to pen, with much thought and many blushes, her ill-spelt love-letter, and writing in my diary in short-hand all that has happened since I closed it last"(Stoker 67). The gender fluctuation Stoker has Jonathan align himself with is a discussion of anxieties surrounding gender and power. If a man does not have power, is unable to have autonomy, is he truly a man? Just two chapters before this, audiences see Jonathan as a masculine hero, only thinking of his fiancé when he imagines her cooking and serving him, and now he is a love-struck lady? The dramatization here is clear. Without the ability to make decisions, Jonathan Harker is without his masculinity. He is without that which makes him male. The New Woman, in her masculine autonomy, was feared as a force that would strip away male autonomy. This fear is especially dramatized when the audience learns the reason that Dracula warns Jonathan against falling asleep in other parts of the castle: *The Brides*.

The Brides are the first vampires in Stoker's novel to bring in the concept of sexual power, an attribute that was associated only with Victorian men. Once again following the rules of societally acceptable "insertive" partners described by Eve Sedgwick and Victorian sexual decorum, sex would only ever be initiated by dominant, male partners (Ledger 126). The Brides, as vampires, have the ability to "insert," and Jonathan, in his already non-autonomous, feminized position, becomes the "receptive" partner, flipping notions of Victorian power, and dramatizing anxieties of the autonomous New Woman. The Brides are Dracula's three 'wives', "hellish" women that skulk the halls of the castle at night, seemingly searching for a feminized Jonathan. The moment Jonathan is feminized, is compared openly to a woman, the threat of penetration enters. Suddenly visible in "the moonlight opposing me were three young women, ladies by their dress and manner" (Stoker 69). I think it very important to note Jonathan's distinction here. He describes the Brides as women and ladies, implying that there is a definitive difference between the two. In earlier descriptions of women in the text, Jonathan describes the ugliness of the Romanian peasant women when viewed up close, even when he acknowledges their clumsy attempts at prettiness. Jonathan is, therefore, not attracted to women, but to ladies, opening the scene with not only gender confusion on the part of the feminized Jonathan Harker, but homosexual undertones in his distinction in attraction to ladies and women. The middle Bride, who is "fair as fair can be, with great, wavy masses of golden hair and eyes like pale sapphires" Jonathan feels a "connection" to, a "dreamy fear" that becomes obvious when he comments on the mixture of horror and attraction he has to her, "some longing and at the same time some deadly fear" (Stoker 69). The blonde Bride is the very depiction of the ideal Victorian lady. Her skin is pale, eyes blue, and hair yellow, but her aggressive nature makes her a reversal of these tropes. A literal 'vamp', the blonde Bride's femininity is not aligned with submissiveness and

subservience as is expected on a proper Victorian lady, but aligned with masculinity, her sharp teeth bearing the threat of penetration and her literal baby eating making her the antithesis of a mother. Stoker makes a heavy effort to align her attractiveness with her evil nature. Her movements “thrilling and repulsive,” her breath sweet as honey but reeking of blood, and even getting down “on her knees,” a dramatically sexual and subservient move, still edged with the fact that it is she, not Jonathan, who will be the penetrator (Stoker 70). This is the dramatized fear of women’s sexual power. Jonathan’s “male desire” is able to be openly “admitted”, as is acceptable by Victorian sexual norms, but the Blonde bride is “indecently sexualized” and, even more terrifying, in control of the encounter (Ledger 102). Such fears of aggressively sexual women did not only exist under patriarchal power structures, but were supported by many of the era’s feminists. This “social purity doctrine of female passionlessness and male self-control” was set up and enforced by these feminists in order to “name incest and rape as crimes against their persons” as opposed to such attacks being offense to the men who ‘owned’ them (Walkowirz 132-133). The desexualization of women was an attempt to convince society that women were worth much more than their ability to produce children. In this way, the horrors of female sexual power would have been horrifying to *Dracula’s* Victorian audiences, both those that supported patriarchal or feminist schools of thought. Even while instilled by such terror, Jonathan describes his submissive position as ecstasy and with penetration looming he simply waited for it occur. One of the most important parts of this scene is Jonathan’s intense arousal. In this queer relationship Jonathan, the proper Victorian heterosexual man, has been placed into a distinctly non-normative relationship and gains pleasure from it. Stoker addresses the terror of experiencing a loss of power and the possible attractiveness of this prospect. In this way Jonathan engages in the nonnormative sex practice of sadomasochism, finding pleasure in

defying cultural norms by embracing of female sexual power. Interwoven with this desire, however, is danger, highlighting cultural fears of the danger that would arise from women gaining sexual power.

Stoker uses the other two vampires in the room to queer gender performance, and therefore sexuality, dramatizing the cultural fears surrounding gender and power by highlighting the way Jonathan's loss of masculinity forces him into queerer and queerer relationships, each one becoming more horrifying. Jonathan notes that he is attracted to the other two 'ladies' in the room, stating that when approached by the blonde Bride he has a "wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips" (Stoker 69). He wants to be kissed not just by the fairest of the ladies, but all of them, even commenting that while it might cause his fiancée pain, the truth is his desire to engage in a polyamorous relationship with all three of these women. While this might seem entirely heterosexual, if not queer in the sense that Jonathan is not obeying societal conventions concerning the number of partners one is supposed to have, the scene opens with very homoerotic undertones and evolves from there. The other attractive ladies in the room are described by Stoker, through the voice of Jonathan Harker, as having faces like the Count. Stoker describes their "high aquiline noses" and "piercing red eyes"; he could have easily described them as looking similar to the women of the many villages Jonathan passed through, but distinctly compares them to the very man that put Jonathan in such a submissive position (Stoker 69). There is a notable homosexual undertone to these proceedings. Jonathan's lack of attraction to "women", his mirrored description of these women with Dracula's, and his intense desire to be penetrated, but this issue of sexuality deals much more with gender. Jonathan is only ever subject to these sexually queer proceedings when he is put into a feminized position,

reflecting masculine fears that the “New Woman” would undermine what it meant to be male, stripping men of their autonomy in the same way that women were supposed to be.

The dramatized fear of the scene evolves, becoming an exaggerated fear of the societal chaos Victorian culture assumed would result from the shifting of gendered norms, and also fears of homosexuality. This dramatization of chaos emerges when the hero of the scene actually becomes Dracula, who asserts his male dominance over his Brides in order to save a submissive Jonathan. Dracula bursts in, shouting, “How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me!” (Stoker 70). Dracula is protecting Jonathan, but more than that he is claiming him. The feminized Jonathan is very much a fourth bride to Dracula, a passive force, unable to defend himself that must be protected by his man. In response to Dracula’s furious actions, his protection of what belong to him, the blonde Bride says, “You yourself never loved; you never love!” with Dracula responding by staring at Jonathan’s “face attentively” and in a “soft whisper” saying “Yes, I too can love;” (Stoker 70). This is a blatant homosexual response, but also a reversal of common romantic tropes in the literature of the time. Jonathan is the “Mills and Boon or Harlequin heroine” as opposed to the man destined to become an “adventure-hero” (Ledger 102). Dracula stares at Jonathan, declaring his love for the man that belongs to him. And that adds another layer of horror to the scene, making it queerer and queerer in its exaggeration from one feminized man to polyamorous and homosexual relationships. Some of the largest “cultural phenomena of the 1880s and 1890s” were “emergent homosexual identities” (Ledger 104). But even members of “The Men and Women’s Club”, a group of “middle-class, radical-liberals, socialists, and feminists” that gathered together from 1885 to 1889, less than a decade before Dracula’s publishing, to discuss “the organization and regulation of sexuality” did not openly

discuss homosexuality (Walkowitz 135). The only “overt reference to homosexuality” in the club’s writings is a historical one, an “eloquent defense of ‘boy love’ among the Athenians”, responded to with “shock” by other members (Walkowitz 154). In a group completely dedicated to discussing sexuality, same-sex attraction is only once brought up over the course of four years. Even in discussions of sexuality, which were already taboo, homosexuality is a repressed anxiety, meaning that broader cultural fears of this sexual orientation would be incredible. Fears that are dramatized through the queer figure of Dracula. After claiming that Jonathan belongs to him, Dracula expresses heavily homoerotic feelings openly, throwing out Victorian heterosexual standards of romantic and sexual attraction and thrusting the scene deeper into queer space.

The Brides are masculinized women asserting their dominance over a feminized man, only able to be defeated by a fully masculine man that also exhibits feminine properties in his attraction to another man. With all of these queerer and queerer responses, Stoker is addressing the cultural fear of the chaos that might erupt from women gaining the masculine trait of autonomy. Jonathan ebbs back and forth between ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ responses to the women, to Dracula. Even amidst all this supposed horror, it can be argued that Jonathan is never truly horrified, as he is more aroused than scared, until a literal baby is tossed to the Brides for him to feed on, causing him to sink into unconsciousness. The baby-eating aspect of the Brides can be attributed not only to the reverse-motherhood of the act, women consuming instead of producing children, but also a societal fear of women abandoning their societally normal role of motherhood in exchange for the independence of spinsterhood. While the proportion of unmarried, independent women “increased slightly” in the Victorian era, within the “educated” classes the proportion was much higher” (Walkowitz 64). The horror of the scene is not only in the Brides’ breaking of gendered norms of sexual advances, becoming not just the masculine but

the penetrating force. It is not only Jonathan's feminization and homosexual thought processes during the scene. It is that Jonathan likes it. This is a possible dramatization of the "New Man", male writers of the 1880s and often members of "The Men's and Women's Club", such as Karl Pearson, who "championed the sexual choices of the advanced 'New Woman' in the abstract" yet was "terrified and disoriented by any signs of female sexual agency in the flesh" (Walkowitz 139). The uncanny nature of the scene brings out both the terror and arousal Jonathan feels. He likes being in a submissive position, enjoys the queerness that is being Dracula's pseudo lover. To escape his attraction to the penetrating powers of the Brides, Jonathan denies their 'lady-ness', forcing them into some other category of hellish monster. But in doing so he shuns his own heterosexuality, introducing a 'loving' Dracula to the fold. If upper-class women going shopping was enough for society to arrest them as prostitutes, how would Victorian London react to women becoming the dominant sexual partner? The chaos and horror presented with this scene is Stoker's way of dramatizing these fears.

Stoker seems to follow this trend of attempted normalization by the scene's characters leading to queerer and queerer situations, dramatizing the societal chaos Victorian culture assumed would result from the shifting of gendered norms. One scene I find very important in regard to gender is the bizarre interactions between characters at the funeral of Lucy Westenra. It is important to note that Lucy's death was brought on by Dracula, and the relationships between all the men in the novel are intertwined in their attempts to defeat Dracula. So while Dracula may not be present within these scenes, they are important as dramatized microcosms of societal reactions to the disruptions caused by queerness. From both a cultural and historical standpoint, the Victorian era saw the entrance of women into a number of occupational fields that were previously occupied or expected to be occupied by men. This led to the expectation

that women would adopt more masculine qualities, or a “working womanhood”, which gained some popularity with middle-class women “bent on freeing themselves from the constraints of their own sex” (Walkowitz 62). But if these women dressed as men, and adopted male qualities, how could they still be women? Stoker dramatizes this anxiety of cultural chaos through the funeral parlor worker being a woman. The first is an opening line spoken by a “woman” working for the undertaker, who says “She makes a very beautiful corpse, sir. It’s quite a privilege to attend on her. It’s not too much to say that she will do credit to our establishment” in “brother-professional way” (Stoker 200). The first thing that can be noted is Stoker’s inclusion of the line under Dr. Seward’s diary. One of several narrators, Dr. Seward is the beacon of science and therefore reason for the novel. This beacon of reason not only thinks it important to mention the staff of the funeral parlor, but include that the woman speaks to him in a “brother-professional way.” Perhaps this is due to the nature of the comment that literally discusses her body. She is not called beautiful in some broad sense, but commented on as both a literal body and a monetary signifier, stating that her intense beauty will actually make their establishment look better in the eyes of customers, covering the “professional” aspect of the “brother-professional” descriptor. The “brother” aspect not only brings about a strange familiar sense, as Dr. Seward is one of Lucy’s former potential suitors, and one of the men whose fluids penetrated her body, but reimagines the “woman” as male. This newfound maleness not only allows her to speak on the business aspects previously mentioned, but not makes her notably sexual comment of Lucy’s “beautiful corpse” heterosexual. This does not, however, remove the necrophilic aspect of the “beautiful corpse”. Necrophilia remains necrophilia, regardless of gender, and transgresses a very notable societal convention surrounding correct sexual actions. The switching of genders to make the woman a “brother-professional” in an attempt to de-queer the situation does nothing to

normalize it, dramatizing fears of shifting gender roles in Victorian London. Dr. Seward's interactions with Lucy's fiancé during her funeral leads to a queerer and queerer scene. Arthur Holmewood, Lucy's fiancé, insists that she and Dr. Seward go upstairs to be with Lucy's corpse;

He took my arm and led me in, saying huskily- "You loved her too, old fellow; she told me all about it, and there was no friend had a closer place in her heart than you. I don't know how to thank you for all you have done for her. I can't think yet..." Here he suddenly broke down, and threw his arms around my shoulders and laid his head on my breast, crying (Stoker 205)

Arthur specifically takes Seward with him to see Lucy, as he stated, because Lucy loved him too. Lucy, Arthur, and Seward, by means of both Lucy's love for the two of them and her reception of both their fluids, were engaged in a queer, pseudo-sexual, polyamorous relationship. This scene paints Arthur and Seward as brother-husbands, creating a slew of relationships that can only be described as queer. Most important, however, is Seward's reaction to Arthur's emotion, as it defines the "normal" expression of emotion for his gender. Seward notes, "I comforted him as well as I could. In such cases men do not need much expression. A grip of the hand, the tightening of an arm over the shoulder, a sob in unison, are expressions of sympathy dear to a man's heart" (Stoker 205-206). Stoker has Steward state all these as rules for proper male comforting so that just a few pages later he can reveal their incredible falseness. In response to Lucy's entombment, Dr. Van Helsing "laughed and cried together; just as a woman does," to which Dr. Seward reacted by trying his "best to be stern with him, as one is with a woman under the circumstances; but it had no effect. Men and women are so different in manifestations of nervous strength or weakness!" (Stoker 211). Dr. Van Helsing is mourning improperly by Seward's set standards, and so he genderbends Van Helsing into a woman,

assuming that some binary of normalcy exists between genders, and that man and woman are somehow opposites, which would allow some sort of 'acceptable' queering in Seward's mind. By having a character attempt to rework Van Helsing into a woman mentally to explain some sort of emotional reaction only further queers the scene. The intense confusion felt by characters and audiences during these encounters is Stoker's way of dramatizing fears of cultural chaos during this era of great gendered change. The vampire, as the initial queerness within this text, is the cause of this chaos.

Both *Dracula* and *Carmilla* use the vampire as a conduit for the dramatized cultural fears surrounding gender and sexuality of this era, so it is imperative to examine how the endings of these novels vanquish these evils, and how these novels re-establish normativity. Stoker's *Dracula* ends with, after a ten-chapter-long hunt for Dracula, the slaying of his Brides, and the destruction of his various hideaways, Dracula being stabbed twice, "his whole body crumbled to dust and passed from our sight" (Stoker 418). After such a long wait, and ten chapters of build-up, Dracula is simply stabbed and then vanishes, and after that the audience is told that all characters are married with children in a one page summary. The ending is so jarring after such an intense buildup of drama and intrigue that the audience is left to ponder whether or not the entire journey was actually worth it. The dramatized queer evil was defeated, and heteronormativity can now flourish, free of worry from the vampiric menace. It is almost saccharine, with loud thanks to God as a notably rosy light shines into the eyes of all the men present, giving them almost literal rose-colored glasses through which to ecstatically take in their complete victory. Stoker gives audiences a dramatized ending to highlight the dramatized fears presented through the vampire. If the threat is so, immensely terrible, then the reward for defeating such a thing must be great. Perhaps this is Stoker's way of mocking these normative

values and the pillar upon which society places normativity, but I think it more a reactionary approach to the dramatized fears he presented. Le Fanu, on the other hand, presents a much quieter ending to his novel, one that reflects thoughtfully on what was really lost: a beautiful queer relationship. Laura's last words in the novel are used to state that she still often thinks of Carmilla, as both the "playful, languid, beautiful girl" and the "writhing fiend I saw in the ruined church" (Le Fanu 96). Carmilla is remembered for her beautiful and horrific qualities, remembered realistically as she was. But more than that, Le Fanu highlights that Laura still desires her, "fancying I heard the light step of Carmilla at the drawing room door" (Le Fanu 96). Unlike Stoker, Le Fanu paints a kinder picture of queerness, leaving the normalcy that returns after the death of the vampire more realistic, importantly not noting if Laura has married or if she has children. Le Fanu's ending states that queerness, even when dramatized to the point of terror, is not entirely evil, and in fact is desirable, as the love between these two women was real enough to make Laura wish for Carmilla's return to her, even with the threat of death.

Queer cultural fears in the Victorian era surrounded women's attempts to gain further existential autonomy, both in their desire to enter the public sphere and become better educated, in an age in which women's biology was argued to make them completely submissive and receptive forces incapable of making decisions. Opportunities outside the home for women, ranging from work to education to the simple ability to go in public, were on the rise, along with rapidly evolving concepts of feminism and female power. Within this era of rapidly shifting gendered and sexual norms, a fierce normativity desperately held on to traditional norms of women's subservience and asexuality. Some feminists even held true to parts of these notions. Fears of the New Woman's aggressive and dangerous sexual nature, along with her possible homosexuality, persisted even within liberal circles, like the minds of early feminists and the

“The Men’s and Women’s Club”. Such fears of non-normative genders and sexualities can be described as fears of queerness. The Gothic genre is a way to dramatize this fear of queerness, establishing monstrous conduits to channel these anxieties. The most important figure of queerness within this genre is the vampire. A being of not only uncanny attraction/repulsion, but one of non-normative reproductive and sexual practices, straddling the line as a humanoid monster that is neither dead nor alive, the vampire is the literal embodiment of queerness, and therefore the perfect tool of dramatized queer horror. The two most important vampire novels of the era, Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, use this figure to dramatize fears of queerness surrounding women, power, sexuality, masculinity, and femininity, but do so in different ways. *Carmilla* dramatizes fears of lesbianism through its portrayal of a feminine, female vampire’s seduction of a feminine, female aristocrat. Le Fanu presents Carmilla’s aggressive sexual tendencies as horrifying, in the way that protagonist Laura’s life is at stake, but unnerves audiences and his own characters further in Laura’s enjoyment of Carmilla’s approaches and her own repressed sexuality. Through *Carmilla*, Le Fanu combines the feminine and the penetrative, dramatizing fears of female sexual power. *Dracula* uses the queer figure of the vampire to dramatize anxieties of cultural chaos in the wake of shifting norms in gender and sexuality. Jonathan’s initial feminization at the hands of Dracula and later his vampiric Brides spirals from the female insertive sexual power to a polyamorous, homosexual scene of constantly shifting characters’ gender and autonomy. The very presence of the vampire then has a ripple effect, causing confusion in the genders and relationships of non-vampire characters as well. By examining what fears are dramatized and how, we are able to better understand the cultural anxieties of this time period. By identifying the vampire as the main tool of this dramatization then, we are able to better understand how this figure might be used today.

Part 2: Duo Des Fleurs

The figure of the vampire enjoyed a particular resurgence during the 1970s and 80s, with films like *Nosferatu: Phantom der Nacht* (1979), *Dracula* (1979), *Blacula* (1972), *The Lost Boys* (1987), and *The Hunger* (1983), just to name a few. This was a time in which it is no longer necessary that the vampire be a crypt-dwelling royal that sleeps in coffins, or even that it has fangs. This was also a time, with the feminist movement in full-swing and the Sex Wars presenting dilemmas for liberal and conservative feminists alike, in which the biggest anxieties stemmed from lesbian sexuality. While society fretted over the transgressive nature of women having sex with women, feminists feared the lesbian as a reflection of patriarchal sexualization, the very presence of lesbians forcing heterosexual women to view themselves as sex objects. These anxieties are notably dramatized in the 1983 vampire thriller film *The Hunger*, directed by Tony Scott. Male fears of emasculation from presumed usurpation of male gender roles are dramatized through the rapid aging of vampire John Blaylock, and feminist fears of the lesbian gaze rendering them sexual objects stripped of agency are dramatized through the horrific relationship of vampire Miriam Blaylock and human scientist Dr. Sarah Roberts.

One anxiety about gender and sexuality in the 1970s and 80s was the fear of lesbian feminism. Lesbian feminism began as a counter movement, reacting to what some women saw as shortcomings in the feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s. Lesbians were unable to find support among the women's rights movement Betty Friedan, for example, famously referred to lesbians as a "lavender menace" and gay rights groups often ignored lesbians' call for women's equality as they were not focused on women's equality (Valk Britannica). The latent homophobia in the women's rights movement and the sexism of the gay rights movement forced lesbians to form their own groups, such as the Radicalesbians, and write their own theories on

gendered and sexual oppression. These groups, after noting heterosexual feminists' "discomfort over having sex re-injected into" the feminist world, had to separate lesbianism from sexuality, presenting it as a political force (Westerband Outhistory).

Straight feminists feared that they would once again become sex objects, or be forced to view themselves as sex objects, as addressed in the Radicalesbians 1970 manifesto "The Woman-Identified Woman". Being made into sex objects "dehumanized" women, the manifesto noted, but in heterosexual relationships there were "certain compensations" ranging from "identification with his power" to feeling like a 'real woman'" and "finding social acceptance by adhering to her role" (Radicalesbians 2). Being sexualized by men had certain societal benefits to straight women, but if a woman is sexualized by another woman, there are "fewer rationalizations, fewer buffers by which to avoid the stark horror of her dehumanized condition" and this creates a sense of fear, of anxiety when straight women are presented with the notion of being a "sex object" to women (Radicalesbians 2). By this reaction, heterosexual women assign a "surrogate male role on the lesbian" transforming the lesbian into the terrifying "dyke," an aggressive lesbian whose only goal is to seduce and sleep with women, robbing them of their agency, and turning otherwise "safe," all-women spaces into another hunting ground.

From these fears of lesbian sexuality emerged two groups during the "Sex Wars" of the late 1970s and 1980s: cultural feminists, who argued that lesbians should only allow themselves "sexual interests [that] reflect superior female ideals" and lesbian sexual radicals, who encouraged "pornography, sexual role playing (including s/m 'violence' and butch/femme relationships" (Faderman 250-251). Both of these groups argued about lesbian sex. Was it empowering lesbians through freedom of expression? Or disempowering lesbians through the reinforcement of heteronormative ideas of a more dominant and a more receptive partner in a

queer relationship? From both sides of this argument we see anxieties concerning lesbian sexuality, a dual-sided fear of both de-sexing and re-sexing the lesbian. Sexual radicals sought to create an alternative to “politically correct sex” as it “denied lesbians those experiences that heterosexuals and homosexual men had claimed as their right” (Faderman 253). Again we see the fear of the sexually aggressive lesbian from a society, including some feminists, who felt lesbianism and sexuality should not be linked.

Some lesbian theorists, however, touted lesbianism, and especially lesbian separatism, as a radical feminist alternative. In the 1972 essay “Lesbians in Revolt,” for example, feminist theorist and lesbian Charlotte Bunch argues that lesbianism as a movement frees women from patriarchal oppression. Bunch states that society defines lesbians as “not real women,” so by this logic she argues “a real woman is one who gets fucked by men” (129). To be a woman is to be penetrated. To submit to more dominant, aggressive forces is what makes one womanly. Bunch argues that the only way to become liberated from this oppression, to rise up from this position of submission, is to not engage in sexual relationships with men. When women “give primary energies to other women” it becomes possible to fully concentrate on “building a movement for [women’s] liberation” (129). Bunch states that heterosexuality “separates women from each other” (131). By participating in relationships with other women, lesbians are free from the rat race of heterosexual partnership. Bunch argues that heterosexual women are forced to “define themselves through men,” forced to “compete against each other for men and the privilege that comes through men and their social standing” (131). Women exist as an extension of male partners when they are in a heterosexual relationship, because they are unable to have their own identities, becoming men’s property. Bunch comments that heterosexual relationships naturally lack balance and the “original imperialism was male over female: the male claiming the female

body and her services as his territory” (130). Men, given the privilege of their gender in a patriarchal society, are not subject to the challenges that women are. In engaging in a sexual relationship with men, women become disempowered, as they must naturally surrender to being the receptive partner and rely on the privilege of being connected to a man.

In relationships between one man and one woman, gender dynamics and therefore power dynamics in terms of sexual dominance/submissiveness are forced to come into play. If to be a woman is, as Bunch and Kosofsky-Sedgwick have defined it, is to be a receptive partner, to be “fucked by men”, then to be a woman is to be constantly the submissive partner. By these definitions, if a woman engages in a heterosexual relationship then she is essentially in a constant state of powerlessness.

Cheryl Clarke’s 1981 article “Lesbianism: an Act of Resistance” similarly argues that heterosexual relationships are disempowering to women, and she points to lesbianism as a source of liberation. To be lesbian is to have a passion for women, and this passion “will ultimately reverse the heterosexual imperialism of male culture” (128). Relationships between women, ideally, will not have a power imbalance. Because neither partner has male privilege, these relationships should be equal, and it is this notion of gendered equality that makes lesbianism ideal. As Clarke states, “I am trying to point out that lesbian-feminism has the potential of reversing and transforming a major component in the system of women’s oppression, viz. predatory heterosexuality” (134). Relationships between women free them patriarchal oppression through the establishment of balanced gender dynamics in which no penetrative or dominant force is present.

To be a lesbian was to be a woman-supporting woman, but critics of lesbian feminism criticized that it “de-emphasized the significance of sexual desire” between women (Valk

Britannica). Lesbian feminism made being a lesbian not about love, but about politics and power. Lesbianism was not only frightening by male patriarchal standards, but frightened heterosexual feminists, who thought of lesbians as “bogeywomen out to sexually exploit women” (Westerband Outhistory). Lesbian feminism was therefore something to be feared both by the male patriarchy and by feminism.

The Hunger dramatizes these anxieties. Through the emasculation of its main male character and power struggle between its lesbian characters, *The Hunger* exaggerates cultural fears of lesbianism and power. The film centers on vampire Miriam Blaylock and her relationships with her husband and fellow vampire, John, and with the scientist Dr. Sarah Roberts; the interweaving of their lives leading to their deaths and undeaths in 1980s New York City. Originally based on the 1981 novel of the same name by Whitley Strieber, the film premiered in 1983, just two years after the novel’s release. While originally marketed as an action-horror film, one trailer referring to the beautiful Miriam as a “monster you’ll never forget, no matter how hard you try,” followed by the terrified screams of a child, the work is actually an art film (Scott Trailer). I bring this up because the film received generally mixed reviews, and the strange marketing of the film could have contributed to that. One review describes *The Hunger* as having “all the elements horror films expect, but not being “strictly speaking, a horror film” (Canby, Times). It is instead a “film of visual sensations,” one in which “the screenplay, the direction, the performances, the photography (by Stephen Goldblatt) and the production design (by Brian Morris) are all of a piece” (Canby Times). It received generally mixed reviews, but has become an arthouse classic.

The film first introduces audiences to a unique type of vampire. John and Miriam Blaylock do not have fangs, penetrating and drinking from their prey with the ankhs they were

around their necks, and have blended easily into New York society, going so far as to give music lessons to their young neighbor, Alice. The first half of the film focuses on John Blaylock. Although John has been promised by his Sire and wife Miriam that he will live forever by her side, he suddenly begins rapidly aging, with such speed that he cannot even play the cello. Miriam supposedly seeks help from Dr. Sarah Roberts, a researcher at a local hospital, because she is studying the science behind aging, but her interests in Dr. Roberts take a more sexual turn, with Miriam planning to make Dr. Roberts her next progeny. John seeks out Dr. Roberts personally to slow or stop his aging, but is turned away. Fearing that tomboyish neighbor Alice will be Miriam's next progeny/lover, John kills her. Soon after John turns into a mummified, living corpse, stowed away in the attic by Miriam, alongside her other past, decrepit lovers, who have rapidly aged in the same way John has. Miriam sets her sights on Dr. Roberts, who visits the Blaylock's upscale New York townhouse and ends up making love to/being sired by Miriam. Dr. Roberts, however, turns this back on her, killing Miriam in the end with her own ankh and apparently replacing her as the head of a new vampire lineage.

Lesbians, by socio-cultural standards, were perceived as "masculine" through their imagined status as unreceptive and therefore penetrative sexual forces, their queerness a disruption of heteronormative ideas on sex and power. They defied societal norms which stated that women were meant to be a sexually submissive force, and this transgression upset ideas of male, heterosexual, masculine power. This cultural fear of lesbian power is represented in the film through the emasculation of John Blaylock. John's emasculation stems from the transgression of the women around him. John is first emasculated by Miriam through his siring and her duplicitous actions surrounding it, then by Dr. Roberts, whose lack of attention to John

contributes to his aging. Ultimately, John is driven to murder by his inability to reinforce his masculinity.

John's emasculation is set in motion by Miriam's first transgression, John's siring. John is presented as young and virile in the beginning of the film, and the audience is led to believe that he is Miriam's sire. Within the first five minutes of the film, the audience watches these two vampires hunt. Miriam turns to John after looking out over the crowd, the camera zooming in on his face so that he may see their next victims (2.10). This implies to the audience that he is in charge of deciding who he and his wife will penetrate, reinforcing heterosexist norms that he is already in charge of her as the dominant, penetrative force of their relationship. This, however, is not the case.

John's aging is brought on by the transgressions of Miriam, whose disruption of heteronormative gender and sexual codes would have labelled her a lesbian. After John's rapid aging, it becomes clear that Miriam was John's sire, meaning he is not the penetrative but the receptive party. Miriam therefore performed the initial penetration and fluid exchange that allowed him to become a vampire. This means that, in the vampiric sense, Miriam is the penetrative force. Penetrative forces were aligned with power, and empowered women were lesbians, by both heteronormative cultural definitions and lesbian-feminist definitions. In the push for women's equality "being labeled a lesbian acted as a powerful deterrent" to transgressing social codes and acting as equals to men (Valk Britannica). And within lesbian-feminist culture women that were "producing anything worthwhile...were lesbians" (Faderman 218). By this logic, to be transgressive was to be a lesbian. And as Bunch writes the very existence of "The Lesbian" intimidates "the ideology of male supremacy" (Bunch 130). With Miriam as masculine force of this relationship, the one that holds the power, she is disrupting

societal norms, becoming a dramatized lesbian horror that has tricked John into thinking that she was his “forever and ever” (Scott 12.13). We learn later in the film that this rapid aging has occurred with all of Miriam’s lovers. Each expects to live forever in a relationship with Miriam, but after 150 years, each suddenly begins to rapidly age. John’s relationship with Miriam is therefore unequal in power, because Miriam withholds this secret from him so he can be more easily controlled (47.45). The audience realizes all of this information at once, with John’s identity as Miriam’s progeny being aligned with the physical embodiment of emasculation, his rapid aging. In this way, Miriam’s transgression results in John’s emasculation, starting him down a spiraling path to murder.

John seeks out Dr. Sarah Roberts on Miriam’s advice, and his masculine power is once again undermined by a transgressive woman. John barges into Dr. Roberts’ office and she refuses him, the first of several incidents that lead to John’s madness and death. He not only demands Dr. Roberts’ time, but expects it, stating “I’m a young man. Do you understand? I’m a young man” (22.57). John does not just highlight the fact that he is young, an appropriate reaction to one who is rapidly aging, but also includes his gender in both of the reminders of his predicament. He is young, yes, but he is also a man. His gender relegates him to a higher status than the researcher he is speaking to in his mind, and in heteronormative culture. Dr. Roberts assures him that she’ll speak to him after her meeting in fifteen minutes. “Fifteen minutes” John insists, grabbing Dr. Roberts’s arm, exhibiting a small show of force (23.28). John goes out to sit in the lobby, and Dr. Roberts phones security, telling them that she’s never going to meet with John, and expecting him to walk out. In this way, Dr. Roberts asserts her power over John. This move causes John to age rapidly, going from middle aged to remarkably old in less than a few

hours (27.48). Dr. Roberts ignores John, using her power as a doctor to ignore him in a way that contributes to his aging.

Under heteronormative social conventions, masculinity is aligned with dominance and the ability to penetrate. This sentiment is matched by the theories on penetrative and submissive partners put forth by Kosofsky-Sedgwick. Therefore, in order for John to feel like a man he must feed on others; penetrating them, in the way most familiar to vampires, through the taking of their blood. Feeding within *The Hunger* is presented, up to this point, as being animalistic in its power imbalance. The penetrating partner has complete control over the receptive partner, to the point of the receptive partner's murder. In the film's opening scene, John and Miriam lure a young couple back to their apartment with the promise of sex. Vampires in *The Hunger* do not use fangs, as other vampires might, but instead slit the throats of their victims with a knife concealed within an ankh around their neck. John and Miriam separate the couple, John taking the woman and Miriam the man, and proceed to engage with them sexually, John spreading the woman's legs and Miriam positioning herself in the man's lap (4.50). The humans are entirely receptive, barely moving as John and Miriam take control of the situation, ultimately slitting their throats (6.00). Within the film, to penetrate with one's ankh is to have total and complete control over a person.

To penetrate a human with his ankh would give John some semblance of control, of power. With both power and penetration being aligned with masculinity, if John can feed from a human he can masculinize himself. John first considers murdering a half-nude man in a restroom in Dr. Roberts' hospital, even reaching to unsheathe his ankh, but is unable due to the presence of multiple men (29.25). A similar scene occurs just one minute later, with John desperately looking from a woman's chest to her neck, the sexualization and presence of blood in both areas

amplified by an aroused and predatory pumping that drowns out the dialogue of the scene (30.25). It is important to note that John hunts not because he needs to feed, as he fed just a few nights ago with Miriam and she has not been shown feeding since, but to prove to himself that he still has the power to do so. If he can still feed, can penetrate no matter how old and decrepit he's become, he still has power and is still masculine.

These scenes, however, reveal he is not strong enough to feed on men, and not strong enough to feed on women, so the terror of his emasculation-emasculaton drives him to attack in broad daylight a stranger whose ambiguous gender highlights John's inability to enact penetration on any adult. The scene shows a long-haired figure roller-skating to music, immediately slammed against a wall by John, taking out his ankh and slitting the figure's throat, desperate to reassert his penetrative power (31.41). The figure is revealed to have a deep voice and fights back, and John flees (32.19). John is unable to penetrate men, women, or anything in between, so he staggers home, emasculated. John loss of power stems entirely from the transgression of Miriam, who not only exhibited power over John as a penetrative force, but tricked him into thinking their relationship was equal by swearing herself to him and neglecting to mention the fate of her past lovers to him, dramatizing fears of lesbian usurpation of male supremacy by being unreceptive, penetrative women. Dr. Roberts' transgression was small, but involved deceit just like Miriam's, and not only rejected John's masculine blustering but contributed to his rapid aging. Finally, John's inability to penetrate any human adults after his exit from the hospital dramatizes male fears of loss of penetrative power equating with a loss of power and therefore masculinity.

John's murder of Alice, the neighbor girl who takes music lessons from the Blaylocks, stems not only from how desperate John's emasculation has made him in his need to penetrate,

but also because he sees Alice as a threat to his relationship. Before leaving for the hospital to meet with Dr. Roberts, John even goes so far as to accuse Miriam of picking out “someone else” (21.30). It is heavily implied that Miriam’s future consort might be Alice, as she and John are eerily paralleled both as musicians and in the way they speak to Miriam. One scene, as John ages and becomes unable to play his cello, places him across from Alice, who excellently plays a smaller version of his instrument, the violin. (16.03). Beyond that, it seems that Alice visits the Blaylock’s home daily, and while she refers to John as “Mr. Blaylock,” she refers to “Mrs. Blaylock” as Miriam, in the same way all Miriam’s lovers in the film do (33.09). John has aged so much that Alice does not even recognize him, and when questioned by John over her feelings for Miriam, Alice replies honestly “Miriam’s fantastic, she’s my best friend” hurriedly adding that she “love[s] them both” (36.11). John, unable to kill adults and terrified that this young lesbian will take away his wife, murders Alice, not only because of her diminutive size but because of what she represents. Lesbians are, according to Bunch, a threat to male supremacy. Lesbians presented a disruption of heteronormative codes on masculinity and sexual power being a tool that could only be wielded by the patriarchy. In killing Alice John attempts to kill a threat to his relationship and regain his own masculinity by proving he has penetrative power, in the same way society wished to destroy the idea that women could engage sexually with other women, and wield masculinity as men could.

From this point Miriam and Dr. Roberts become the primary characters on screen, and dramatize anxieties many feminists held at the time, that lesbians would take otherwise empowered women and strip them of their agency by turning them into sex objects. In many ways, this is exactly what happens. It becomes clear that Miriam has been watching Dr. Roberts. What, up to this point, has appeared to be a doting wife looking for anyone that can cure her

ailing husband, is revealed to be a predatory lesbian picking out her next progeny. Miriam watches Dr. Roberts on television, then appears at her book signing, managing to fluster the young doctor in just one sentence, “I’d like to talk to you” “Y-Yeah, I’d like that” (17.04). She implants herself into Dr. Roberts’ mind, appearing in Dr. Roberts’ bathroom mirror just before Dr. Roberts settles into bed with her boyfriend, Tom.

Miriam is almost a voyeur, transforming Dr. Roberts into an exhibitionist by constantly watching her, never allowing her to escape the role of a sex object even for a moment. While in Miriam’s home, Miriam sits down and expectantly watches Dr. Roberts shed her clothing, never being shown undressing herself before their sex scene (1.00.31). Later, when Dr. Roberts attempts to run from Miriam and seek out her boyfriend, Miriam appears as an illusion in Dr. Roberts’ mind, constantly present and constantly forcing Dr. Roberts to see herself as a sex object (1.12.18). Even when men proposition Dr. Roberts for sex, the only penetrative force she can imagine is Miriam, hallucinating that the man’s necklace is Miriam’s ankh and quickly fleeing (1.12.19). Even when Miriam is not physically present, the threat of her remains burned into Dr. Roberts mind. One perfect example of this is a statue previously compared to Miriam seemingly leering at Dr. Roberts when she turns away from it (Right).



Miriam is the threat of the lesbian within feminist culture. All-women spaces were considered to be sacred by some feminists. They were places to be free from the eroticizing gaze of men. This was believed even to the point that demands were made to fire a male-to-female transsexual recording engineer from an all-women record company, under the argument “A man is a man” (Faderman 224). It is not possible, however, to immediately know what a person’s

sexual orientation is just by looking at them. This meant that it was impossible to know who was and was not a lesbian in an all-women space. In this way, the very idea that lesbians exist, that the women around them could be sexually attracted to them, is terrifying. It forces women in all-girl, feminist spaces to view themselves as sex objects even when no men are present, because a lesbian might be eyeing them.

By the time Dr. Roberts goes to the Blaylocks' residence to seek out John in hopes of helping him with his rapid aging, she already knows and is excited to see Miriam. Dr. Roberts seems almost desperate to be with Miriam, asking her within two minutes of walking through the door and hearing that John has mysteriously left the country, "Are you lonely?" (Scott 58.30). Then, moments after she compliments Miriam's ankhs, Miriam's penetrative force, Dr. Roberts is suddenly without a jacket (59.06). But what happens next is the most interesting in terms of anxieties surrounding the stripping of heterosexual women's agency. Miriam settles down at her piano, beginning to play "Flower Duet" by Leo Delibes during her seduction of Dr. Roberts. The piece depicts a Brahmin princess and her slave, Malika, going down to a river to gather flowers, discussing their desire to run away together down the river (Montreal Opera NPR). When asked if it's a love song, Miriam coyly replies "It was sung by two women". When pressed again with "It sounds like a love song," responds "I suppose that's what it is" (59.30-59.48). The choice of song is notable, because it presents a relationship between two women as having a master/slave dynamic, yet simultaneously presents it as romantic.

Five minutes after Dr. Roberts steps into Miriam's home, the two of them have sex, and while portrayed as beautiful at first, the scene then reveals the horror of Dr. Roberts' loss of agency. Miriam and Dr. Roberts make love in a sea of flowing white fabric to the ethereal tune of "Flower Duet" from *Lakme*. The scene seems reminiscent of the idealistic ideas of Bunch,

Clarke, and the Radicalesbians, with two women in an equal and positive sexual encounter, before drastically changing. Ominous echoes radiate within the opera singing, and Miriam penetrates then feeds from Dr. Roberts' wrist, then gives Dr. Roberts her own blood, the fluid exchange siring Dr. Roberts and transforming her into Miriam's new vampire companion (1.03.26). This act is done without Dr. Roberts' consent or even knowledge, and simultaneously makes her a permanent sex object under Miriam, while transforming her into the dramatized horror of a transgressive woman, the lesbian.

Upon leaving Miriam's home, Dr. Roberts is unable to return to her life as a heterosexual woman, no longer able to be defined by her allegiance to her boyfriend, Tom. The audience is presented with what would most likely be normal dinner between Tom and Dr. Roberts, with Tom's attempts to define her being twisted at every turn. He comments on her unusual order of rare steak, and after being told she had sherry with Miriam, states "You hate sherry, it gives you a headache" (1.03.45-1.06.00). As Bunch said, "heterosexuality makes women define themselves through men" (131). And since Dr. Roberts is no longer heterosexual, she is unable to be defined as Tom once saw her. The conversation is apparently so far from their norm that Tom even furiously demands "What's wrong with you?" (1.05.50). "Do you want to know what I think?" he asks, to which Dr. Roberts aggressively replies "I'm sure you're going to tell me anyway" (1.05.55). Dr. Roberts, now that she's in a lesbian relationship, is no longer defined by her relationship with him. But this, however, leads to a horror of its own, because now she is defined through Miriam.

Horrified by her transformation, Dr. Roberts returns to Miriam, whose explanation of what Dr. Roberts has become reflects feminists' fears that lesbianism would simply be a mirroring of patriarchal male power. The Radicalfeminists acknowledge this is in their pamphlet,

The Woman-Identified Woman stating that heterosexual feminists “lay a surrogate male role on the lesbian” (2). Miriam explains that Dr. Roberts now belongs to her, “Put your faith in me, give me time, trust me” (Scott 1.09.05). Dr. Roberts initially rebels and is swiftly overpowered by Miriam, who hurls her against a wall and keeps Dr. Roberts in the house while she goes through her transformation into a vampire, experiencing “the Hunger”, a desire for blood (1.09.40). Miriam wants Dr. Roberts to be permanently stripped of her identity and be completely devoted to her. Dr. Roberts has been forced to become an extension of Miriam, not only by receiving her blood but by engaging in a sexual relationship with her.

Dr. Roberts’ full transformation is revealed when Tom visits, seeking her out, only to be penetrated and killed by her, dramatizing not only men’s fears of lesbians’ presence as unreceptive women disrupting masculine power, but feminists’ fears of lesbianism being another system of patriarchy in which one person has control over another. In a Victorian vampire, like Bram Stoker’s classic *Dracula* or Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*, the arrival of woman’s male partner generally symbolizes the death of the main vampire at his hands. Re-asserting his masculinity, the Victorian male lead in these two novels skillfully defeats the vampire with his phallic, penetrative force; a stake in *Carmilla* and a knife in *Dracula* (LeFanu 92 - Stoker 418). This is not the case, however, in *The Hunger*. Instead, it is Tom who is penetrated by Dr. Roberts, his throat slashed with the ankh given to her by Miriam (1.20.20). The scene is paralleled with the story told by Miriam during Dr. Roberts’ seduction, the image of the woman feeding off her slave flashing on the screen (1.20.54). This scene not only dramatizes male fears of lesbians -emasculating them by forcing society to imagine women as a penetrative force, but also feminists’ fears of lesbians sexual power. By becoming a penetrative force, by engaging in this unbalanced relationship, Dr. Roberts has become the fears of cultural feminists during the

Sex Wars of the 1980s. She has “validated the system of patriarchy, in which one person has power over another” and objectifies them (Faderman 250).

This same dramatized, feminist fear is the basis of one of the film’s final scenes, one that defines Dr. Roberts’ power as her ability to be penetrated. Dr. Roberts goes downstairs to be with Miriam, initiating a sensual kiss after killing her own boyfriend (1.23.18). Miriam seems pleased, until Dr. Roberts uses Miriam’s own ankh to penetrate herself, spouting her own blood into Miriam’s mouth (1.23.26). She turns Miriam’s ability to penetrate against her, drawing on her own receptive power to force her fluids onto Miriam, simultaneously penetrating and being penetrated by Miriam, slipping deeper into the area between man and woman, between penetrative and receptive force.

Having been penetrated by her own fluids Miriam is now a receptive force, lacking power and dominance. Dr. Roberts’ actions render Miriam a sex object, which renders the sexual power she had over her former lovers no longer existent. They rise from their coffins and shambled toward her. “I love you! I love you all!” Miriam shouts, almost a threat, because Miriam does not love her former lovers, she loves the power she has over them. They, like Dr. Roberts, attempt to kiss her, and Miriam is forced to fight them off destroying some of her “loved ones” in the process (1.26.40). Miriam, as a lesbian, is lost without her inability to be penetrated, her tightly coifed hair and perfect makeup becoming wilder as she fights her way through lovers that try to make her into the sexual object she made them into. Miriam then falls from her balcony, the symbol of her penetrative power almost mockingly on display. Becoming a sex object, as a lesbian, strips away her power to the point that she becomes one of the dry, monstrous corpses her lovers were turned into, while freeing them and allowing them to die

(1.28.13). The evil lesbian, her sexualizing gaze no longer existent after her penetration, seems to have been defeated, but has she?

The film's last scene seems to indicate that the cycle of lesbian sexual power will continue, with Dr. Roberts becoming the new threat to society. The final scene is of Dr. Roberts on a balcony, possibly the new Miriam, kissing a woman and staring off into the sunset, Miriam's cries of her name echoing in the background (1.33.07). Not only is Miriam not dead, a loudly echoing reminder of the dangers of lesbian relationships, but Dr. Roberts appears to have become the new Miriam. Presumably engaging in a relationship with a man, seen within the apartment, and also a woman, Dr. Roberts is reflecting Miriam's relationship with her and John. She also appears to be keeping Miriam in a coffin somewhere, in the same way Miriam kept the aged but undying bodies of her lovers (47.45). Even more than that, musical instruments are present, Miriam's piano and John's cello and Dr. Roberts is wearing Miriam's pearls (1.32.30). Dr. Roberts has not only been turned into a vampire, but her ability to penetrate, her transgression of women's receptive identification within society, has rendered her a lesbian as well, allowing a new cycle of dramatized queer horror to continue.

Through the figure of the vampire, *The Hunger* is able to reflect the societal fears within the era it was created. Feared by the patriarchy as a tool of emasculation via their lack of penetration, lesbians were seen as horrific "boogey-women" even among feminist communities. Heterosexual feminists worried that lesbians would strip them of their agency by forcing them be viewed as and view themselves as sex objects, and these fears are reflected through lives and undeaths of Miriam and John Blaylock and Dr. Sarah Roberts. *The Hunger* dramatizes male fears of lesbian power in its emasculation and rapid aging of John, leading to his murder of neighbor Alice in an attempt to defeat the threat of lesbianism. The film also dramatizes feminists' fear of

lesbian sexual power by having Dr. Roberts turned into a sex object under Miriam's gaze, only to have her turn into a lesbian herself, continuing a cycle of queer horror that will sexualize women for years to come.

Conclusion: Mainstreaming Queerness – The End of *True Blood*

In order to reinforce heteronormativity the vampire must be eliminated, or else the cycle of queerness and therefore horror will continue into the next generation. This is proven to be true in all the works discussed in this essay. In *The Hunger*, Dr. Roberts is left to become the next Miriam, the cycle of lesbian terror beginning anew (Scott 1.32.30). In *Carmilla*, the only thing that ends the seduction and then deaths of the village girls is Carmilla's murder by the powerful Admiral (Le Fanu, 96). Carmilla's death is the destruction of queerness, a literal nail in the coffin to her and young Laura's lesbian relationship. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* paints a literally rosy picture of the Count's demise, with a red sunrise creeping up over the horizon, the final page detailing how every major human protagonist is now married with children, heteronormativity restored through the death of the vampire (Stoker 419).

But what if there were a third option? One of the most popular vampire series in the past five years was the HBO television drama *True Blood*. *True Blood's* finale gives the option of assimilating what is queer, into mainstream society through the heteronormative family model. Following the adventures of several vampires trying to find their place in the world after vampires "come out of the coffin", the series follows the horrors of humans and undead renegotiating what is "normal".

True Blood is a seven-season television program created by HBO, based on *The Southern Vampire Mysteries* book series by author Charlaine Harris. It aired from 2008 until August of 2014, and follows adventures of several vampires and humans once vampires "come out of the coffin", or attempted to "mainstream", integrating themselves into human society ("Thank You"). Set in the small town of Bon Temps, Louisiana, the show is meant to represent a microcosm of American culture and society, with the reactions and experiences of main

characters reflective of persons, living and dead, all around the country. The important characters for this paper include; Sookie Stackhouse, a human waitress; Hoyt Thortenberry, a human resident of Bon Temp; Sarah Newlin, a radical Christian and anti-vampire advocate; “Vampire” Bill, a vampire and native Louisianan who returns to his home in Bon Temps once vampires are revealed to society; Jessica, Bill’s vampire progeny; and Eric and Pam Northman, two vampire businesspersons. Vampires within the world of *True Blood* are able to mainstream because of their ingestion of “Tru Blood” a synthesized drink that eliminates their need to feed on humans. Vampires are suddenly brought, “out of the coffin”, a term obviously based on the queer term coming out “of the closet”, highlighting the show’s representation of queerness through the vampire.

This renegotiation is reflective of modern, societal concessions concerning homosexuality and normativity. The final episode of *True Blood* reveals a method by which culture can commit normalization through the mainstreaming its vampire characters. The marriage of vampire Jessica to human Hoyt Thortenberry normalizes her. A committed relationship allows Jessica to mainstream. In fact every character in the end of the series celebrates consumption in the series final scene. Normative relationships are also shown in the episode’s final scene, a Thanksgiving holiday feast, in which each character in the series, down to the town drunk, is shown to be in a committed relationship during a feast. Finally, *True Blood* reveals homo-normalization through the death of its main vampire, Bill, who begs for death because of his inability to contribute to society via his inability to have children.

True Blood normalizes its vampires through marriage, reflecting the anxieties of many queer people concerned with the assimilation of queer culture. In their book *When Gay People Get Married: What Happens When Societies Legalize Same-Sex Marriage*, author M.V. Lee

discusses fears held by members of the gay community in the late 2000s concerning the gay marriage debate. While some LGBT individuals feared that “the dispute over marriage is hijacking gay support for other issues and movements”, the arguments against gay marriage from within the gay community centered on a feared loss of queer culture (Badgett 129). Badgett, citing gay people against gay marriage, notes that earning gay marriage would simply be “winning the freedom to act like heterosexual people” (131). This type of assimilation, they argue, would “leave behind healthy and valuable kinds of family relationships” that do not conform to one, monogamous partner and children (132). This idea of assimilation into mainstream, heteronormative culture is revealed in some articles supporting same-sex marriage.

This is the method by which Jessica, the progeny of Vampire Bill, one of the chief vampire protagonists, is humanized. Jessica and Hoyt’s relationship is built up slowly early in the series. They first get together in season four but then break up by the end of the fifth season. Jessica’s relationship with this Hoyt was so traumatic for him that he begged to have Jessica erased from his memory and moved to Alaska (“Gone, Gone, Gone”). I bring up the seasons in which Jessica and Hoyt’s relationship evolves to show the time put into bringing these characters together and breaking them apart. Their relationship has a long, dramatic arc, and ends with the implication that Hoyt will never return. And yet Hoyt does return, abruptly and two seasons later with only three episodes left in the series. He has no memory of Jessica, and yet marries her in the finale (“Thank You” 36.56). The justification that’s given is “When [love] is real it can happen in an instant” (17.28). The rapidness of this change is almost unbelievable, but the rushed union between these two characters is portrayed as beautiful, and the very definition of love, with both parties swearing to be together forever. In this way, Jessica is not a vampire, but a

wife, and she and Hoyt a representation of queer marriage, with vampire and human relationships being heavily correlated with gay relationships within the series.

The final method of elimination comes from the assisted suicide of Vampire Bill, who kills himself because of his inability to mainstream into society. Bill is unable to fulfill a heteronormative family model making his normalization impossible. In the very opening of the finale, Bill bursts into main human character Sookie's home, begging to be killed and observing: "We are born and we learn and we grow and we have children and maybe we get to meet our children's children, but then we pass on and that – that is a life!" (02.10). Bill is unable to have biological children because he is a vampire, which causes him to deem himself unworthy of marrying Sookie. In this way, Bill is almost the most "human" vampire in the series. He wants to embrace the heteronormative family model, but cannot, so he wants to make sure all around him do so before he ends his own life. His only desire in his final days is seeing his progeny married off, and his long-time companion Sookie encouraged to become normal herself. Bill asks Sookie to "use up her light" in killing him, or drain the tiny amount of fairy magic in her blood and normalize herself. His only desire for Sookie is to see her a wife and mother, living out a normal life based on a heteronormative family model. Bill is so lost without the idea of a fertile wife and children that he has Sookie line up a stake and then pierces his own heart, leaving Sookie weeping over his remains (51.59).

Four years later, Sookie is pregnant, and in a relationship with a human man whose identity is unknown to the audience. In fact, the entire town seems to be in committed, monogamous relationships, with most of the women pregnant or holding children (1.02.17). Every single character has come together to be one, great big happy family, celebrating the American holiday of Thanksgiving, even characters as minor as the town drunk, also suddenly

married, in attendance. The last scene is a joyous party, with every character not only sipping on glasses of wine or Tru Blood, plates filled to the brim with food, but either in a committed relationship or in a committed relationship with children, literally consuming the treats of the party and fully able to contribute to consumer society via their marriages and children. Viewers are meant to feel joy, completion, in seeing characters they had spent seven seasons watching grow, finally stable and mainstreamed into society. The camera pans across the smiling forms of each and every living or undead character, most reaching out to touch the arm or shoulder of their committed partner, or their baby, or their own pregnant stomach. Led Zeppelin's "Thank You" plays over the inaudible conversations of every character as they eat, drink, and be merry. The very last words, sung in the credits, of the entire series are "Happiness, no more be sad. Happiness. I'm glad."

Within *True Blood*, as within any piece of vampiric media, cultural anxieties are dramatized through the vampire. Monstrous beings that straddle the line between living and dead, attractive and repulsive, the figure of the vampire dramatizes societal anxieties surrounding queerness. The series finale of *True Blood* focuses on the "mainstreaming" of vampires, of integrating them into human culture in order to de-queer them. One method of mainstreaming is monogamous marriage. Vampires unable to comply with this method cease to exist. In modern, American life, it would appear that queerness and queer culture have found ways to become integrated into mainstream society. Through its normalization of the vampire, *True Blood's* finale raises some interesting questions. Have we reached an age in which, instead of defeating our monsters like the Victorians did, or allowing them to continue to exist in their queerness like in *The Hunger*, we now integrate them into society? And if so, what does this say about

queerness in general? Is queerness becoming more acceptable, or is it, like the vampire, becoming normalized? And if so:

Has normalization become the true horror of the vampire?

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“Listen to them - the children of the night. What music they make!”

-Bram Stoker, *Dracula*

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