Women Suck:

Women as Vampires in Victorian Fiction

By Eleanor Forestell

Advisor: Prof. Alan Richardson
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Part One: Introduction

The term "vampire" conjures a plethora of images, each slightly different from the others. One might picture Bela Lugosi as Dracula in his black cloak and slick, black hair with a patch of light illuminating his wild stare. Alternatively, one might picture Robert Pattinson as Edward Cullen with shimmering skin and sunken eyes as he tries, rather flimsily, to convince Bella of the threat he poses to her life. Blood-drinking, fang-bearing, coffin-dwelling creatures of the night are what vampires have become in popular culture. Far be it from me to take issue with that characterization of the vampire; however, for the purposes of this thesis, I find it helpful to both simplify and broaden the definition of "vampire." A vampire is, ultimately, a life-stealer: a being who feeds on the life forces of others. Typically, vampires feed on blood because, in the Christian tradition, blood symbolizes life. However, feasting on blood is not the only means for a vampire to steal its victim's life force.

The 2019 FX television series *What We Do in the Shadows*, created by Jemaine Clement and Taika Waititi upon the success of their 2014 film of the same name, introduces the character of Colin Robinson, a self-proclaimed "energy vampire." Like his traditionally vampiric housemates, Collin drains his victims of their life force; however, he does not do so by draining their blood. Rather, he annoys or bores them with inane conversation. Despite his lack of fangs or taste for blood, Collin Robinson is a vampire nevertheless. I use him as an example of how

broad I wish to make the definition of "vampire." A vampire is a being who subsists on life stolen from another.

This brings me to the far more nebulous term: "monster". Our first impulse might be to say that "monster" is synonymous with "evil;" however, as Mary Shelley has taught us, that definition might be inadequate. Fortunately, I am not the first person to attempt to ascertain what a monster is. In his essay, "Monster Culture (Seven Theses)," Jeffrey Jerome Cohen outlines seven core characteristics of monsters, but I will focus on four in particular. His first assertion is that "The monstrous body is pure culture. A construct and a projection, the monster exists only to be read: the *monstrum* is etymologically 'that which reveals,' 'that which warns,' a glyph that seeks a hierophant" (38). The very being of a monster exists as a harbinger of cultural paranoia. Monsters simultaneously warn of danger to come and respond to current social behaviors.

As a result of the constant ebb and flow of cultural paranoia, monsters resist capture or death and persist long after cultural fears have shifted. Cohen continues, "the monster's body is both corporeal and incorporeal; its threat is its propensity to shift" (39). The monster eludes deconstruction. The nuances of its form mutate alongside the culture that created it, thus it cannot really be killed. This is Cohen's second thesis: monsters always escape. Be it in the text itself or in popular consciousness, the monster cannot be confined by its creator.

Cohen's third and fourth theses state "the monster notoriously appears at times of crisis as a kind of third term that problematizes the clash of extremes as 'that which questions binary thinking and introduces a crisis'" and "The monster is difference made flesh, come to dwell among us" (40-1). Which is to say that monsters are the embodiment of difference and their

refusal to fit neatly into established social categories is key to why they scare us.[1] Monsters are, according to Cohen, the Other as we imagine them in our worst nightmares.

Monsters are tools wielded by story-tellers to comment on contemporary cultural phenomena. This thesis will explore how two nineteenth-century stories use vampires to comment on contemporary questions surrounding women's sexuality, the performance of femininity, and the role of women in shaping "Englishness."

In the Victorian era, a woman's ability to perform femininity was largely contingent on being middle or upper class. Like their male counterparts, working class women were often called to perform hard manual labor from hauling mine carts to working in factories.[2] However, middle and upper class women remained, for the most part, in the home and were considered weaker and less intelligent than men. Sarah Stickney Ellis, a prolific writer on women of the time, writes in her essay "The Daughters of England, Their Position in Society, Character and Responsibilities," "As women, then, the first thing of importance is to be content to be inferior to men--inferior in mental power, in the same proportion that you are inferior in bodily strength" (99). While feminist writers and activists were certainly active during the Victorian era, positions similar to Ellis' dominated contemporary discourse on womanhood.

Women were relegated to objective status, meaning that they lacked the ability to assert themselves as individuals with wants and needs of their own. Nowhere was this more apparent than in Victorian conceptions of women's sexuality. Mary Poovey writes, "Desire, in effect, centers on and returns to a woman; it does not originate in her emotions, her imagination, or her

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[1] Julia Kristeva uses psychoanalytic language to describe the same phenomenon as the Abject in her essay, "Approaching Abjection." She claims that monsters, through their abject nature, allow us to experience The Real and escape from the constraints of the Symbolic.

[2] Hudson, Pat. "History - Women's Work." *BBC*, BBC, 29 Mar. 2011, https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/victorians/womens_work_01.shtml.

body" (*The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer* 4). Victorian literature and culture posited women as objects and receptacles of desire, but rarely as the source.

Motherhood played a crucial role in defining womanhood in the Victorian era. It was all women of the middle and upper classes could aspire to, thus fulfilling the role of the "good mother" was paramount. Queen Victoria, despite being the reigning queen, was often depicted as a mother first and foremost. Her conservative notions of gender and motherhood became a model to which the women of England could aspire.[3]

[3] In a letter penned by Queen Victoria, she says, "Let woman be what God intended, a helpmate for a man-but with totally different duties and vocations" (*The Affairs of Women* 134)

Figure 1: Queen Victoria and Prince Albert surrounded by their nine children[4]

Figure 2: Prince Albert and Queen Victoria instructing their children[5]

Women's role in the maintenance of the British Empire was tied to their roles as mothers. Sarah Stickney Ellis writes,"The immediate object of the present work is to show how intimate is the connexion which exists between the *women* of England, and the *moral* character maintained by their country in the scale of nations" (*Women of England* 53). Her position was that women functioned as the moral barometers of their nation. Well-behaved women served as proof of the greatness of England and its empire. However, women of color—specifically those who

[4] *Queen Victoria and Prince Albert Surrounded by Their Nine Children*. Engraving by Best, ca. 1855. engraving;, 1855? Wellcome Collection, JSTOR, https://jstor.org/stable/community.24905753. Accessed 7 Mar. 2023.

[5] Doyle, John. *Prince Albert and Queen Victoria Instructing Their Children in the Alphabet; a Political Alphabet Frames the Image*. Coloured Lithograph by H.B. (John Doyle), 1843. lithograph, with watercolour;, 3 July 1843. Wellcome Collection, JSTOR, https://jstor.org/stable/community.24908144. Accessed 7 Mar. 2023.

immigrated to England from the far corners of the empire—presented a challenge to this notion of women-as-morality. In her book, *The Bigamy Plot: Sensation and Convention in the Victorian Novel*, Maia McAleavey writes, "Yet as thousands of emigrants left England and, especially, Ireland and Scotland, for distant colonies, Victorian novelists imagined not only the convenient emigrations and handy transportations of Micawber or Hetty Sorrel but the inconvenient return of troubling, extraneous spouses from the colonies" (116). Victorian writers begin to hone in on the problem of colonists returning to England with foreign wives. These wives challenge Ellis' connection "between the women of England, and the moral character maintained by their country," because they are considered neither English nor white.[6] Colonial repatriation exposes the fragility of the Victorian moral structure where white women were morally pure and women of color were not.

How can a writer either push back against contemporary feminine ideals or express their anxiety about what might happen if the rules for women are broken? Florence Marryat and Joseph Sheridan LeFanu chose to make monsters out of women who did not fit the Victorian mold. Where Marryat used her vampire primarily to critique social condemnation of sexually liberated women, LeFanu used his vampire to highlight the destruction a sexually liberated woman could cause.

[6] "Whiteness" is an incredibly complex and arbitrary category. Many groups that we may, as twenty-first century Americans, consider "white" would not have been thought of as such by the people of Victorian England.

Part Two: The Sins of the Mother; Harriet Brandt in Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire*

1. Introduction

Florence Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* sees a quarter-Black colonial girl called Harriet Brandt arrive in England for the first time. When people whom Harriet loves begin mysteriously falling ill and dying, she learns that she is in fact a sort of vampire that feeds on the life forces of those who get close to her. Marryat was deeply involved with the Spiritualist movement of the Victorian era and Harriet's status as a proto-energy-vampire reflects Spiritualist beliefs about life force and energy. She inherits her vampirism from an incident in which her grandmother was bitten by a vampire bat while pregnant with Harriet's mother. The distinctly matrilineal nature of Harriet's vampirism evokes images of Eve passing her transgressions onto her daughters via childbirth (Genesis 3:16). The novel's title itself refers to Harriet's lineage and establishes a fear of female corruption rooted in motherhood because Harriet's "blood" drives her to drain and kill her victims.

In her time, Florence Marryat was looked down upon by critics for writing sensation novels, a genre primarily written by women for women, and this uniquely feminine mode allowed her to comment on and criticize contemporary standards of femininity. Unlike other writers of vampire fiction such as Stoker and LeFanu, Marryat was a woman creating a female vampire for a female audience and incorporated her own feminine experience into the character of Harriet Brandt. She approaches the female vampire from a uniquely sympathetic perspective. Harriet is a threat to Victorian society, but whether the system she threatens is worth protecting remains ambiguous. There are certainly some aspects of Victorian society, particularly its whiteness, that Marryat seems bent on protecting; however, the Draconian standards women

were held to becomes a point of criticism for Marryat. Where other female vampires are presented as categorically bad because of their deviance, Marryat uses the vampire figure to gesture towards flaws in Victorian gender roles.

2. Race and Colonialism, & A Note on the Language of the Text

The language and content of the text necessitate a brief warning. Though the novel adopts a distinctly anti-slavery attitude, Marryat uses extreme violence perpetrated against Black slaves to illustrate the cruelty of slavery. Marryat does not shy away from vivid descriptions of heinous acts and the language she uses in those moments would be unacceptable by most modern accounts. For the purposes of literary analysis, I must include a direct quotation of one such instance, and all censorship within the quotations is my own.

Despite abolitionist leanings, Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* uses Harriet's race and vampirism to express anxieties around the incompatibility of English people and Black people highlighted by colonial repatriation. She attributes Harriet's monstrous nature to her racial identity, but also characterizes Harriet's delight in the exploitation of slaves as monstrous, complicating the racial politics of the novel. We often assume that abolitionists were not also racists because they recognized the humanity of Black people, but that is patently false. Abolitionists were often just as racist as their pro-slavery counterparts, and *The Blood of the Vampire* illustrates this tension uniquely. Harriet's race seeps into every aspect of her character from the way other characters judge her to the way the narrative itself judges her, and these judgements exemplify a society suspicious of outsiders.

Marryat makes it clear that Harriet's unmarriageability and monstrosity stem directly from her Blackness, thus associating monstrousness with Blackness. When Dr. Phillips attempts to persuade Mr. Pennell of Harriet's unworthiness he says, "Whatever the girl may be, she

inherits terrible proclivities, added to the black blood. She is in point of fact a quadroon[7], and not fit to marry into any decent English family" (198). He counts her "black blood" among such "terrible" attributes as her propensity for sucking the life out of those around her. This association between Blackness and Harriet's vampirism posits her Blackness as itself monstrous. Additionally, her Blackness makes her "not fit to marry into any decent English family," and creates a sharp separation between her and the rest of English society. Contemporary theories of race were, perhaps unsurprisingly, supportive of such a separation predicated on differences of race. Anthropologist James Hunt wrote in an 1864 edition of the *Journal of the Anthropological Society of London*, "there is as good reason for classifying the Negro as a distinct species from the European as there is for making the ass a distinct species from the zebra; and if we take intelligence into consideration in classification, there is far greater difference between the Negro and Anglo-Saxon than between the gorilla and chimpanzee" (xvi). Concurrent theories of race asserted that Black people and Europeans were different species and thus unfit for intermixing because Black people were considered less intelligent and therefore less evolved. Dr. Phillips expresses this attitude in his plea to Mr. Pennell to abandon Harriet. As a medical doctor, Dr. Phillips would know that contemporary science stated that Harriet's Blackness rendered her unmarriagable by a white English man.

The separation between Englishness and Blackness Marryat invokes expresses contemporary anxieties regarding colonials moving to England. The fact that *English* and *Black* are mutually exclusive identities indicates a conception of England as a place where non-whites are not welcome.[8] While complaining to Harriet about Captain Pullen's return from India to

[7] From Merriam-Webster: "quadroon- *dated, offensive*: a person of one-quarter Black ancestry"
[8] In her book, *The Bigamy Plot: Sensation and Convention in the Victorian Novel*, Maia McAleavey writes, "Colonial returns shrink space: apparently safely dispatched to the periphery, they return from a newly interconnected world" (117). The repatriation of colonials into English society often came with the question of their indigenous wives and mixed children. Marryat's

England, Mr. Pennell says, “A man who accepts service in India should make up his mind to live and die in the country…” (308). Here he expresses a cultural concern that those who venture out to the colonies, and especially their mixed race progeny, should stay where they belong lest they taint mother England. Of course, his infatuation with Harriet blinds him to the fact that her presence in England violates this sentiment.

Despite the novel’s implementation of racist rhetoric, it remains distinctly anti-slavery. Harriet’s delight in the violence she and her father inflicted upon their slaves and other characters’ horrified reactions to that violence posit slave owners, and therefore slavery, as monstrous. In a conversation about her time in Jamaica with Margaret Pullen, Harriet recalls, “[the Black overseer] used to let me whip the little n*****s for a treat, when they had done anything wrong. It used to make me laugh to see them wriggle their legs under the whip and cry!” (29-30). Her description of the whipping and her delight in it is so extreme, it reads as satire in a similar vein as Swift’s “A Modest Proposal.” Because Harriet is the vampire of the novel, her pleasure in violence reads as monstrous and the way Margaret Pullen reacts to her emphasizes her monstrosity. She says, “‘O! don’t, Miss Brandt!’... in a voice of pain” (30). Her protestation in addition to the “pain” in her voice indicates her discomfort with Harriet’s tale. Margaret serves as the good-girl foil to Harriet in the novel, thus her viewpoint reads as the morally right of the two. In addition to Harriet’s personal recollections of slavery in Jamaica, Dr. Phillips explains that Harriet’s father, a mad vivisectionist who operated on his slaves, was killed by his slaves during a revolt. He says, “I am glad to say it, for he richly deserved his fate, and no torture could be too severe for one who spent his worthless life torturing God’s helpless animals” (114). Dr. Phillips expresses support for the slaves rising up against Dr. Brandt because he was

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distinction between *Black* and *English* alludes to this question of what to do with foreigners coming to England.

cruel to them. The way characters express discomfort with descriptions of violence against slaves and express a sense of justice when slaves revolt against their oppressors gestures towards the abolitionist movement as a means of fighting against monstrosity.

Marryat repeatedly zoomorphises Harriet which, reinforces her status as racial and therefor inhuman. Marryat likens Harriet to a variety of animals including a "panther," "snake," "a restless animal," "some wild creature," and "a domesticated lion or tiger" (224, 298, 305). This association between Harriet, the only non-white character in the novel, and animals creates the sense that her Blackness is what makes her animalistic, which only reinforces Hunt's conceptualization of a species difference between Europeans and Black people. The big cat imagery also characterizes Harriet as predatory, which connects Blackness to predation. Additionally, this zoomorphism plays into the way Harriet's and her mother's sexuality are racialized and condemned in the novel.

3. Bad Women

Like much of the vampire fiction of the nineteenth century, *The Blood of the Vampire* fixates on all the ways women can corrupt and be corrupted. In addition to outright condemnation of Harriet's and her mother's sexuality, Marryat obsesses over the notion of female hunger and gluttony as a transgression against a commonly accepted notion of feminine virtue. Her focus on Harriet and her mother's sensuality adds a racial dimension to the paradigm of female transgression that these characters embody. Marryat uses Harriet and her mother's desires for sex and food to illustrate their moral decay because female desire for physical pleasure shatters the image of woman as disembodied and repressed, informing Victorian domestic ideology.

Marryat's racialized characterization of Harriet's and her mother's sexualities posits women's sexuality as base and sinful because of its association with Black women. Dr. Phillips says of Harriet, "... if this girl is anything like her mother, she must be an epitome of lust" (120). The association he makes among Harriet, her mother, and lust evokes Eve and the notion that original sin passes down matrilineally. Additionally, the association has a racial undertone because of the women's shared Blackness. Dr. Phillips specifically associates Harriet's lustfulness with her half-Black mother and not her English father.

The use of zoomorphic imagery to characterize Harriet's sexuality posits female sexuality as predatory and base. When Harriet is alone and fantasizing about Captain Pullen, Marryat writes that Harriet is "longing with the fierceness of a tigress for blood, to feel his lips against her own and to hear him say that he adored her" (147). The likening of Harriet to a tigress longing for blood creates the image of female lust as violent and deadly to the man whom she desires. In this conception of female desire, sex becomes dangerous to the man and can only be enjoyed by the woman, something unacceptable by Victorian standards. Marryat continues this metaphor after Harriet has fixed her sights on Bobby, writing, "The tigress deprived of blood, will sometimes condescend to milder food. And the feelings with which she regarded Captain Pullen were such as could be easily replaced by anyone who evinced the same reciprocity… She kissed and fondled [Bobby] as he sat beside her…" (153). Marryat reduces Harriet's sexual conquests to "food," indicating that Harriet has no emotional attachment to them beyond her desire to consume them. Even now, the notion of female sexual desire detached from romantic love remains transgressive, but in the Victorian era it was monstrous.

Marryat uses Harriet and her mother to condemn female appetite by associating it with sensuality, greed, and a lack of restraint. Upon seeing Harriet for the first time, Elinor Leyton

remarks, “I only observed that she had a mouth from ear to ear, and ate like a pig” (15). Again, Marryat zoomorphises Harriet, only this time she likens her to a pig, thus making a connection between Harriet’s eating habits and lowliness. Elinor’s fixation on Harriet’s mouth and its large size also emphasizes Harriet’s increased capacity for consumption compared to the smaller-mouthed women of the novel like Elinor herself. Later, when warning Captain Pullen of Harriet’s troubled lineage, Dr. Phillips says, “... I can tell you by the way she eats food… that she has inherited her half-caste mother’s greedy and sensual disposition” (130). The fact that he reemphasizes Harriet’s racial lineage indicates that Harriet’s “greed” and “the way she eats food” are a result of her racial heritage. This connection between Blackness and appetite alludes to the belief that Black people were less evolved, and therefore less capable of self-regulation, than Europeans. Self-regulation, especially when it came to food, was crucial to the Victorian image of an ideal woman because it “attests to her discipline over her body and its hunger, despite the persistence of that hunger, and indicates her discomfort with or even hatred of her body and its appetites, which may or may not include her sexuality” (Silver 3). Because Harriet has no regard for English standards, having been raised in Jamaica, her appetite as well as her role as the vampire transgresses Victorian ideals of women’s self-control. Anna Silver continues saying, “The vampire myth therefore takes on a new significance in a culture, like nineteenth-century Britain, that denigrates female appetite in favor of self-discipline and self-control” (Silver 118). Harriet’s vampirism means that she consumes people’s life-force at all times and has no control over it. She quite literally cannot stop consuming, which transgresses against the cult of self-control.

4. "Good" Women

The dynamic between supposedly good women and bad women serves as a lynch pin in many gothic narratives. From Victoria and Lilla in Dacre's *Zofloya* to Lucy and Mina in Stoker's *Dracula*, Elinor is deeply judgmental of others and profoundly repressed. As previously mentioned, Victorians expressed deep discomfort at the notion of female desire. Mary Poovey describes the commonly accepted schema of desire saying, "Desire, in effect, centers on and returns to a woman; it does not originate in her emotions, her imagination, or her body" (4). Within the Victorian conception of desire, a good woman must only be the object of desire and never the source. Marryat uses Elinor's extreme repression to criticize the absurdity of contemporary standards for women.

Elinor Leyton's adherence to the rules of polite society turns her into a cold, unfeeling woman and drives her fiancé to cheat on her, which indicates that Elinor functions as a criticism of proper Victorian ladies. Elinor "would have sooner die than admit [Captain Pullen] was necessary to her happiness,---at the same time she considered it her dignity as a woman, never to give in to his wishes… " (40). Despite her engagement to Captain Pullen, Elinor feels it improper to express desire for him in any form. Her "dignity" demands that she maintain the appearance of disinterest because to do otherwise would expose her as a source of desire.[9] Elinor's frigidness makes Harriet's overt sexuality look more appealing to her fiancée, so he pursues Harriet. Diane Long Hoeveler's argument about Emily from Anne Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* applies to Elinor's relationship to Harriet and the Baroness. She writes, "she fears… that all women are prone to becoming violently passionate criminals and murderesses" as a direct result of their

[9] Harriet's extreme, overt expression of her sexuality plays into the notion of excessive femininity. Hoeveler asserts that, "In gothic novels the sexes are arrayed along an axis of characteristics, with the extremes coded as clearly evil" (31). Elinor's self-repression indicates her consciousness of this trope and desire to avoid extreme forms of gender expressions.

sexual impulses (93-4). To Elinor, Harriet represents the hedonistic, passionate woman that she could become if not for her extreme discipline. Considering that Marryat herself infamously had numerous affairs, and was often lambasted by the proper ladies of society amongst whom Elinor would fit right in, she seems to be using Elinor's repression to comment on how ridiculous Victorian standards were.

Marryat's biography and contempt for Elinor call into question what it means to be a good Victorian woman. Marryat had several husbands and her fair share of lovers throughout her life. Her most notable lover was a twenty-four-year-old actor whom Marryat became involved with when she was fifty-seven—though she sought to mitigate some scrutiny by claiming to be only forty-five.[10] Her personal history of violating taboos posits Marryat as a "bad woman" who aligns more closely with Harriet than Elinor. Male writers of vampire fiction never had to deal with the fall-out of being a "bad woman," but Marryat did. According to Catherine Pope, "Harriet represents the modern, sexually-liberated woman" which Marryat herself embodied (113). Her experience as a woman placed Marryat in a unique position to criticize Victorian gender-norms.

5. The Bisexual Contagion

Despite sex-positive readings, Harriet's bisexual feeding habits pose a threat to those around her. She feeds on Olga, Margaret, Ethel, Bobby, Captain Pullen, and Anthony, all of whom vary by age and gender. This "primitive bisexuality," as Octavia Davis describes it, marks Harriet as an almost "hermaphroditic" being that exists in a space between masculine and feminine (45). Harriet's indiscriminate feeding means that that good women like Margaret Pullen are subject to corruption by Harriet's unrestrained appetite.

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[10] Pope, Catherine. *Florence Marryat*. Edward Everett Root, Publishers, Co. Ltd., 2020.

Harriet's pursuit of physical pleasure goes hand-in-hand with her racialized depiction, and her feeding on men and women further exoticizes her. Darwin and his contemporaries argued that male and female bodies were fundamentally different and thus capable of different things. Male bodies were geared towards the pursuit of sex and female bodies were made to passively receive. This definition of sexual dimorphism was widely adopted during the nineteenth century and meant that, "Any behaviors inconsistent with [Darwinian] definitions of sexual dimorphism were interpreted as reversions to a more primitive state" (Davis 45). Harriet's pursuit of both male and female bodies defies convention because it firstly positions the female body in the active role and secondly places her male and female prey in the same role. Her bisexual feeding habits, like her mixed blood, characterize Harriet as impure because she fails to fit into strictly regulated categories of femininity and heterosexuality.

Harriet's former life in the convent as well as her propensity for feeding on women means that, hypothetically, she can survive and seek pleasure entirely independent of men. Such an existence is deeply threatening to nineteenth-century conceptions of femininity and heteronormativity. Harriet describes her early life in the convent saying, "we were never left alone for a single minute. There was always a sister with us, even at night, walking up and down the rows of beds… with her eyes on us the whole time and her ears open to what we said" (27). Harriet's description of the nuns' constant surveillance indicates a paranoia around what girls might do when left alone with each other. Good women cannot seek pleasure within the conventional definition of sexual dimorphism, and they certainly cannot receive it from other women. When Harriet feeds on Margaret, she becomes a "vector of lesbian contagion" (Pope 114). Pope continues, "Women like Harriet were capable of seducing and corrupting 'normal,'

sexually healthy individuals" and thus needed to be quarantined in the interest of protecting vulnerable women and children (114).

When Harriet drains Ethel to the point of killing her, she reflects timeless fears of the dangers queer people supposedly pose to children and she becomes the anti-mother. When Elinor Leyton grows suspicious of Harriet's overly-affectionate behavior towards children, Olga Brimont tries to defend her saying, "Sometimes, I tell her, I think she would like to eat them. But she only means to be kind" (97). Of course, Olga does not know that Harriet is eating the children in her own way, but her comment inadvertently proves Elinor right. Harriet's vampirism makes her a threat to children and, because Ethel is a little girl, frames her as an anti-maternal figure. Concerns regarding the existence of a queer threat to children have existed for as long as queer people have, but this particular instance fits in to the novel's overall theme of bad mothers.

6. Bad Moms

Mothers and motherhood were integral to Victorian society and to the image of an ideal woman. Queen Victoria brought extreme, rigid views on motherhood with her to the throne and her ideals seeped into the broader English culture. As a result, a large body of contemporary literature fixated on what might happen if a mother goes bad. There were many ways a mother could go wrong: she could beat her children needlessly, she could neglect her children, but the worst thing she could do was corrupt her own children either by leading them down the wrong path or simply by having bad genes. The Baroness, Harriet's mother, and her grandmother are all guilty of at least one of these transgressions against their children. Marryat uses Harriet's vampirism and killings to illustrate the result of bad maternal influences.

Upon her arrival in Heyst, Harriet encounters a variety of women. One older woman, Baroness Gobelli, sees Harriet's beauty and flirtatiousness and decides to take her under her

wing. She becomes a sort of mother-figure to Harriet; but, like Harriet's biological mother, the Baroness is vile, cruel, and repeatedly zoomorphized. When discussing the Baroness, Elinor says to Margaret, “She’s not a woman, my dear! She’s a female elephant” (35). Like Harriet’s mother, the Baroness’ exterior reflects her rotted interior.

The Baroness’s abuse of her son, Bobby, and desire to use Harriet to boost her social status drives the two together and leads to Bobby’s death. One of the first pieces of dialogue Bobby has reads, “It’s cruel—to strike me with her stick before all those people, as if I were a baby, and to call me such names!... Do all mothers do the same, Miss Leyton?” (34). He reveals how his mother’s beatings extend beyond what may have been justified under the umbrella of “discipline” into the realm of cruelty and abuse. Bobby draws attention to the fact that his mother abuses him in front of others and infantilizes him, which isolates him from people his own age. This isolation leads Bobby to revel in the attention Harriet shows him once she arrives at the Red House.

The Baroness’s desire for social status exemplifies how selfishness rendered women bad mothers because she prioritizes her own desires over the well-being of her child. Marryat characterizes the Baroness’ first encounter with Harriet saying, “She saw that the girl was attractive, she heard that she was rich, and she liked to have pretty and pleasant young people about her when at home—they drew men to the house and reflected a sort of credit on herself…” (54). Here, the Baroness does not mention a desire to help a desperate, innocent girl out of the goodness of her heart; rather, she wants to use Harriet to achieve her goal of social climbing. The Baroness becomes a corrupted mother figure to Harriet and instead of nurturing her, wishes to exploit her to further her own goals. Marryat warns of the threat selfish women pose to their children through the Baroness’ admittance of Harriet into her home, an action which grants

Harriet access to Bobby. The only reason Harriet kills Bobby is that the Baroness invites Harriet to her home in hopes of social climbing, thus the Baroness' selfishness leads to the death of her child. Davis describes the Baroness as, "the lower-class European double of Harriet Brandt's vampiric mother," which creates a point of connection between her and Harriet's mother (47). This connection between the Baroness and Harriet's mother alludes to the responsibility mothers have in shaping their children's actions, and their ability to pass their own faults down to their daughters.

The way sin passes from mother to daughter in Harriet's family mimics the way women are believed to inherit Eve's sinfulness and ties sin to maternal lines. Dr. Phillips describes Harriet's mother saying, "She was not a woman, she was a fiend… A fat, flabby half-caste, who hardly ever moved out of her chair but sat eating all day long… I can see her now, with her sensual mouth, her greedy eyes, her low forehead and half-formed brain, and her lust for blood…" (115). His insistence that Harriet's mother was not a woman, but a fiend emphasizes her monstrousness. Dr. Phillips' focus on the mother's "sensual mouth" mirrors Elinor's focus on Harriet's mouth and reinforces the matrilineal connection between the two. In the cases of both Harriet and her mother, their mouths are linked directly to their sensuousness and appetite and serve as a point of connection between the two. Dr. Phillips also makes explicit reference to Harriet "inheriting" her appetite for food and sex from her mother, thus solidifying the notion of sinfulness passing from mother to daughter. The passing of sin from mother to daughter mirrors Eve's passing of sin to womankind via women's inheritance of painful childbirth (Genesis 3:16).[11]

[11] See also Kate Ferguson Ellis' *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology*. In the second chapter of her monograph, she explores how the Gothic genre uses and subverts the Genesis creation myth to disrupt domestic ideology and sexual dimorphism.

As the product of a bad mother and a bad mother-figure in the form of the Baroness, Harriet seems fated to live sensuously and prey on others. Marryat uses Harriet to illustrate how much damage bad mothering can do beyond simply ruining the family. Harriet's lack of a good mother or mother-figure leads to her killing people without knowing it. Without a good mother, a child can be victimized like Bobby, or become the villain like Harriet. Complex and "profoundly dysfunctional mother-daughter relationships" crop up frequently in Marryat's fiction and, when asked if childhood was the happiest or most miserable stage in life, Marryat herself said, "I should say decidedly the most miserable, and made so by the folly, ignorance, or neglect of parents" (Pope 15-6). The way she attributes fault to parents for the misery of their children sets up Marryat's fixation on the effects bad parents have on their children in *The Blood of the Vampire*. Her ascription of fault also calls into question whether people raised by bad parents are responsible for their actions, or if their actions are the result of bad parenting.

7. Is This Harriet's Fault?

Harriet never intends to kill her victims. In fact, she only learns of her vampirism in the last fifty-or-so pages of the novel. Instead of malice driving her to kill, Harriet's vampiric nature is a consequence of her maternal lineage and not of her own misdeeds. Her birth to a sensuous mother and a stark, raving father dooms her to a life of killing and sensuality. This argument for the case of predestination is representative of Marryat's views on parentage and alleviates Harriet of narrative guilt.

Harriet's ignorance of social customs makes her a danger to proper society. She recounts her education in a convent in Jamaica saying, "[A nun] told me I must never even talk with gentlemen, if I could avoid it—that they were all wicked and nothing they said was true, and if I trusted them, they would only laugh at me…" (28). Harriet's teacher misrepresented society to

her in order to make her afraid of men and repress her sexuality. The nun characterizes "gentlemen" as "wicked" which indicates that she views even the most highly esteemed men as a threat (28). As a result, when Captain Pullen and other men show Harriet positive attention, she is unprepared to respond appropriately and so she acts on her baser instincts. Elinor remarks on Harriet's behavior saying she is "... half educated, wholly ignorant of the usages of society, with a passionate undeveloped nature and a bold spirit…" (191). Elinor's use of the words "undeveloped" and "half-educated" not only invoke a racialized view of Harriet's capacity to interact with society, but also evoke a failure of those in charge of her education. Instead of learning how to cohabitate with men in the proper way of her time, Harriet is thrust into society in ignorance of the proper ways of behaving. Her ignorance renders her a menace to society because that is why she freely expresses her sexuality and hunger: she simply does not know any better.[12]

Harriet tries to save Anthony Pennell from herself, but he refuses to believe she poses a threat to him because of her femininity; his disbelief and disregard for Harriet's vampirism kills him, not Harriet herself. After learning of her vampirism, Harriet tries to distance herself from Anthony saying, "Don't touch me, Tony!---don't come near me. You had better not! I might harm you" (278). Harriet's words become commanding and forceful towards Anthony as she tries to push him away. She does not want to kill or even harm Anthony and attempts to place physical distance between them in order to protect him. Despite taking great pleasure in physical touch, once she learns the danger her touch poses, she immediately abandons her own desires for the sake of protecting Anthony. Harriet does not want to hurt him, and explains her situation as

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[12] From Ellis' *The Contested Castle*, "the cause of evil in this world… is the man-made institutions that attempt to confine sexuality, both male and female" (73). As in Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, Marryat posits the nun's attempt to repress Harriet's sexuality as a causative agent of her behavior.

Dr. Phillips had explained it to her, but Anthony denies her saying, "Nonsense! I don't believe a word of it… it is a parcel of old woman's tales" (278). His characterization of Harriet's condition as "old woman's tales" links the absurdity of her story to the feminine mind. To Anthony, only a woman could come up with a tale as tall as Harriet's despite the fact that a male doctor revealed her story to her in the first place. Later he tells Harriet that she can choose whether they get married or not, but when she fails to decide within his timeframe he says, "I shall decide for you… and that is that you make me and yourself happy, and you forget all the rubbish these people have been telling you" (301). Again, Anthony dismisses Harriet's vampirism as fiction, but he also deprives her of control over herself. He is only able to enact his will upon Harriet because she is a woman and he ignores her despite her efforts to save him. Anthony's failure to heed Harriet's warning results in his death despite her efforts to control her nature to protect him.

The circumstances of Harriet's birth damn her to a fate of sensuality and murder from which she cannot escape. In other words, Harriet cannot defy her nature. Dr. Phillips characterizes Harriet saying, "A woman born in such circumstances—bred of sensuality, cruelty, and heartlessness—cannot in the order of things, be modest, kind, or sympathetic. And she probably carries unknown dangers in her train… I am afraid I should have little faith in Miss Brandt craving for anything, except the gratification of her own senses" (118). Here, Dr. Phillips attributes the social circumstances into which Harriet was born—"sensuality, cruelty, and heartlessness"—to the danger she poses to Victorian society. His assertion that Harriet "cannot" be capable of kindness or sympathy indicates that she never had control over her behavior or fate. Upon learning of her vampirism, Harriet internalizes the notion that she was doomed to a life of debauchery and blames her parents for her birth. She thinks to herself, "How *dared* they bring her into the world, an innocent yet hapless child of sin—the inheritor of their evil

propensities… and worst of all, the fatal heritage that made her a terror and a curse to her fellow creatures" (298). The way she characterizes herself as an "innocent yet hapless child of sin" gestures to the fact that the evil Harriet represents does not originate within her, rather it was forced upon her by her birth to evil parents. She is not responsible for her "fatal heritage," but it binds her to a life of killing. Harriet summarizes her plight saying, "My parents have made me unfit to live" (318, 299). She acknowledges that her "unfit[ness]" for life does not originate from her own self, but rather her parentage—or blood. Harriet's tainted blood represents a fatalistic attitude towards pedigree and a child's ability to escape the fate laid by their parents.

In addition to placing the blame on her parents for her life, Harriet's suicide also functions as an end to her bloodline, and an end to vampiric women. The note Harriet leaves prior to taking her own life reads, "Let me go to a world where the curse of my heredity which [my parents] laid upon me may be mercifully wiped out" (318). Her plea to God and hope for a better life in death posits said death as a moral obligation to the world. Harriet's death is "merciful" to those she leaves alive because it rids the world of her tainted blood. Butler points out that, "*The Blood of the Vampire* confirms that women must act first and foremost as mothers of the race, even if it means sacrificing their own lives" (51). In order to be redeemed, Harriet must eliminate the possibility of producing another mixed-race monster by killing herself.

8. Conclusion

Marryat's *The Blood of the Vampire* occupies a unique space within Victorian vampire fiction with its depiction of a female vampire written by a woman. Through Harriet Brandt, Marryat simultaneously questions and confirms Victorian paranoia regarding women and their behavior. On the one hand, she uses Harriet to espouse deeply racist beliefs about Blackness, evolution, and declares it the root of evil. But on the other hand, she uses Harriet to highlight the

fact that the very men who insisted women repress their affections were put off by callousness. The woman question looms over much of Gothic fiction, and issues of race, colonialism, and queerness are often minor specters accompanying said question.

The Blood of the Vampire began a long legacy of placing vampiric figures in dialogue with slavery in the American south and Caribbean islands. The connection between vampires and slave-holders crops up in Rice's *Vampire Chronicles*, Harris' *The Southern Vampire Mysteries*, the CW adaptation of Smith's *The Vampire Diaries*, and even Meyer's *Twilight*. Oddly, despite being the oldest in this line of works, *The Blood of the Vampire* makes the inherent monstrosity of slave ownership more clear than its descendants, which cannot necessarily be said of later works. The novel is by no means anti-racist—it is quite the opposite—but Marryat's confrontation of slavery as a system is direct and her criticism scathing.

Part Three: "You and I Are One Forever"; Carmilla and Laura in LeFanu's *Carmilla*

1. Introduction

The differences between Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu and Florence Marryat become immediately apparent. For one, Le Fanu is a man and his writing reflects that fact. Unlike Marryat, Le Fanu presents no challenge against the prevailing attitudes regarding women's role in society. The problem with the two female characters in *Carmilla* is simply that they are female. Carmilla and Laura each represent opposing paradigms of femininity with Carmilla's brand being active with Laura's being passive; however, rather than punishing Carmilla for her transgressions against Victorian ideals of femininity and rewarding Laura for upholding them, the story punishes both women simply for existing as females. Carmilla's agency poses as much of a threat to Victorian society as Laura's innocence and passivity, leaving women in a sort of catch-twenty-two.

The story of *Carmilla* follows a young woman, Laura, the daughter of an English exile living in the Romanian region of Styria, who encounters a beautiful and mysterious young lady called Carmilla. Carmilla bears a striking resemblance to a woman whom Laura had encountered in a childhood dream, and Laura seems to fall under Carmilla's hypnotic spell. Whereas in *The Blood of the Vampire* Harriet's queerness appeared as subtext, the dynamic between Carmilla and Laura is overtly and undeniably lesbian. Le Fanu uses the titular character Carmilla to express concerns regarding women and their position in society. Carmilla's perversion of motherhood, her status as non-English, and the ways she wields her femininity and sexuality all underscore her agency. That agency threatens Victorian society because it contradicts the societal ideal of passive femininity devoid of desire. Laura embodies contemporary feminine ideals and is, thus,

allowed to survive, but she does not escape completely unscathed. Carmilla succeeds in preying on Laura, which marks Laura as a point of ingress for external monstrosity. She lives the rest of her life in perpetual fear of Carmilla's return saying, "to this hour the image of Carmilla returns to memory with ambiguous alternations—sometimes the playful, languid, beautiful girl; sometimes the writhing fiend I saw in the ruined church; and often from a reverie I have started, fancying I heard the light step of Carmilla at the drawing room door" (339). These lines end the story and leave readers with the sense that Carmilla lingers over Laura's life, refusing to allow her peace. Laura is not allowed to move on after her encounter with Carmilla.

2. The Colonial Threat

As an Anglo-Irish growing up in Dublin, Le Fanu occupied a similar position as Laura and her father. Protestants living in Ireland, despite many having been born and raised in Ireland to parents likewise born and raised in Ireland, clung to their English heritage and remained skeptical of their native, Catholic servants and neighbors.

Laura's physical isolation from others and her obsessive performance of Englishness mask a pervasive colonialist fear of losing one's English identity in a foreign land. Laura characterizes the location of her home saying, "The nearest inhabited village is about seven of your English miles to the left" (275). A trip of seven miles by carriage or foot takes hours to complete, rendering Laura practically cut-off from society. Even so, her residence in Styria means she is also disconnected from English society and all the affordances of hierarchy and safety it holds. She specifies "your English miles," as if conceding that her Englishness is only a facade. Laura's father compulsively has her drinking tea, practicing English, and constantly reminds her of her English name in an attempt to compensate for their separation from mother England. Laura remarks, "My father is English, and I bear an English name, although I never

saw England. But here, in this lonely and primitive place…" (275). The distance between the home country and the colonial periphery creates a hyper-patriotism that manifests in and disguises the fear of losing one's culture. Laura herself, though only English in name (having been born to a Styrian mother in Styria) characterizes the land as "primitive" (275). Her performance of Englishness and rejection of her connection to the land she inhabits exemplifies English disdain for colonial integration. Laura embodies Victorian anxieties regarding the separation from Englishness that accompanies colonialist occupation.

Laura's constant exposure to non-English culture threatens to override her Englishness and turn her into one of the "natives." Laura remarks, "How very small is the party who constitute the inhabitants of our castle…" but among them, her nanny is "... a native of Berne…" (276).[13] Her proximity to "natives" creates opportunities for Laura to fall under their influence, and the fact that her nanny is non-English indicates that Laura, despite her father's efforts, has been brought up as a Styrian rather than an Englishwoman. In this way, she becomes a weak link in the armor of Englishness her father has erected to protect himself and his daughter from "going native." The family's proximity to indigenous servants means that the threat of "going native" constantly looms overhead. The servants themselves are described as "an ill-looking pack of men," which emphasizes their inferiority to Englishness (286). The word "pack" conjures images of unruly animals and its application to the servants dehumanizes them. Laura's

[13] For Laura and her father, their castle is both "home" in the sense that they, the owners, are English and therefore "safe," and also "dangerous" as Laura and her father are outnumbered by native servants and surrounded by foreign land. The castle poses a special threat to Laura, who will later fall victim to Carmilla within its walls and become confined to it; as Katherine Ferguson Ellis writes of castles in Gothic novels, "Any enclosed space seemed to me to present this paradox, which links the 'safe' sphere of home inseparably to its dark opposite, the Gothic castle" (x). Laura's home is a literal Gothic castle, which becomes the scene of her entrapment by Carmilla.

interactions with the native servants plays on Victorian Anglo-Irish fears of losing one's civility to the surrounding native culture with which LeFanu was well acquainted.

The concept of race in *Carmilla* becomes further complicated by the appearance of a Black woman, whom LeFanu uses metonymically for Carmilla's hidden evil. The woman herself only appears this one time, and never says a word. Her relevance to the story is, admittedly, a mystery; however, her presence provides insight into how Le Fanu conceives of race and nativity in *Carmilla*. Laura describes "a hideous black woman, with a sort of coloured 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" (286). Obviously, "hideous" creates a sense of repulsion towards the character as we see her seemingly encouraging Carmilla and her mother's lies. The detail of the turban further orientalizes the woman, and speaks to the Western habit of representing non-white cultures as interchangeable. The woman's large eyes and set teeth evoke images of predatory species. Like Harriet Brandt, the Black woman is zoomorphised, but the darkness of her skin prevents her from hiding her monstrosity. Carmilla transforms into a "a sooty black animal" only when she feeds, which simultaneously aligns her with and distinguishes her from the Black woman (304). Where Carmilla disguises her monstrosity, the Black woman wears hers on her sleeve. If Carmilla herself embodies the unseen predator, the Black woman becomes the seen predator. As in *The Blood of the Vampire*, Blackness equals monstrosity.

Laura's mixed blood and Styrian heritage posit her as a means of ingress for the native monster. She admits that her late mother was a native of Styria, and finds a portrait of her ancestor who appears identical to Carmilla. Laura remarks, "The name is Mircalla, Countess Karnstein… I am descended from the Karnsteins; that is, mama was" (299). Little does she know

that Carmilla and Mircalla, Countess Karnstein are one and the same. Her maternal bloodline stems from a monster. The matrilineal connection between Carmilla and Laura calls into question the purity and integrity of female lineage.[14] As in *The Blood of the Vampire*, female blood in *Carmilla* puts the traditional English Victorian family in danger.

3. Even More Bad Mothers

The ways in which Carmilla represents a "bad mother" are numerous. Her first appearance to Laura positions her as a maternal figure who comes to console her sleeping child. The connection between Carmilla and Laura's mother later becomes more explicit when Laura discovers her biological relation to Carmilla on her mother's side. The connection between Carmilla and motherhood expresses fears regarding maternal abuse of power and female sexuality.

The way Carmilla undermines motherhood both plays on Victorian fears of bad mothers abusing their power and explores a sexual relationship in which a woman holds the power to dominate her partner. When Laura first encounters Carmilla, Carmilla appears as a maternal figure shortly after the death of Laura's real mother. LeFanu writes, "She caressed me with her hands, and lay down beside me on the bed, and drew me towards her, smiling; I felt immediately delightfully soothed, and fell asleep again" (277). Carmilla's position as a pseudo-mother to young Laura means that she possesses power over Laura. When Carmilla bites Laura's "breast" in order to feed on her, she takes advantage of the power given to her and uses it selfishly (LeFanu 277). This selfish abuse of power stokes Victorian fears of women taking matronly power and using it to achieve their own gratification. Additionally, because Carmilla feeds from

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[14] In *Art of Darkness: A Poetics of Gothic*, Anne Williams outlines the ten opposites that govern reality and posits that the Gothic is the result of the disruption of those opposites, particularly in a familial setting. Laura's bloodline then emphasizes the association between "female" and "evil" because the destruction of her family comes from evil female blood.

Laura's breast, she reverses the image of the mother breastfeeding the child, thereby turning a wholesome image into a perversely sexual one. Motherhood implies a dynamic of ultimate power over another individual, and so sexualizing that power exemplifies the fear of female power and authority.

In addition to bad motherhood, the initial scene between Laura and Carmilla explores themes of female sexual awakening, bolstering the Victorian conception of female sexuality as inherently perverted. When Laura—now nineteen—and Carmilla meet formally for the first time and discuss the "dream" they shared, Carmilla says, "I was aroused by a scream; you were sitting up screaming" (288). Laura's screams roused Carmilla from her slumber, but, as William Veeder points out in his article "Carmilla: The Arts of Repression", "the surface meaning of being awakened by Laura's cry carries also the suggestion that suffering, particularly female suffering, arouses Carmilla sexually" (201). For a woman to say "I am into Y sexually" remains fairly taboo, but it was all the more so in the Victorian era. Of course, it does not help Carmilla's case that her relationship with Laura is incestuous. The narrative's pairing of perversion with expressions of female sexuality creates an inextricable link between the two and cements female sexuality as inherently perverse.

4. The Queer Contagion

Carmilla's lesbianism has presented difficulties for both Victorian and later readers. On the one hand, modern readers may take pleasure in the over-the-top lesbian scenes between Laura and Carmilla where Victorian readers might have found themselves in shock and horror. On the other hand, *Carmilla* is part of a long history of queer literary monsters that continue to fuel homophobic rhetoric to this day. Carmilla's interaction with Laura as a child speaks to the storied fears regarding queer people's interactions with children. In her essay, "Other Love,"

Adrienne Antrim Major writes, “Laura is not safe, not protected by youth or femininity but rather exposed immediately upon remembrance to the sexuality that runs with (m)other love… The infant Laura experiences both the comfort of the mother’s caress and the beauty of the lover” (155). Major alludes to a gap between expectations of how a mother should act and how Carmilla acts in reality. LeFanu attributes this deviant action to Carmilla’s lesbianism. Mothers protect their children, but Carmilla by virtue of her lesbian tendencies preys on Laura. Major again points out LeFanu’s connection between mothers and lesbians saying, “Women, LeFanu warns, are naturally attracted to one another because of their identification with the mother, and their lack of understanding of themselves within a differential. Looking at the Other, they see themselves” (156). LeFanu’s connection between motherhood, lesbianism, and female identity seems to set up a scenario in which all women are secretly lesbians and all lesbians are bad mothers. This begs the question: is Carmilla a monster because of her lesbianism or simply because of her femaleness?

The autonomy with which Carmilla wields her sexuality threatens the heteronormative status-quo in which women are forbidden to be overtly sexual, and she exemplifies how much damage a sexually empowered woman can do to her society.[15] Carmilla’s sexual power terrifies Victorian sensibilities, which reject all notions of female sexual desire.[16] Veeder writes, “Social

[15] Nancy Armstrong writes, for the Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel, “In the fiction of the Victorian period, gender ceased to be the means of guaranteeing reproduction of the ruling class and provided instead the means of limiting sexual reproduction. Thus set in opposition to natural desire, or what might be called ‘femaleness,’ a woman's display of Victorian femininity marked the difference between middle-class reproductive practices and those specific to the working classes, the Irish, and so-called ‘native’ peoples” (100). The association between “nativeness” and unchecked sexuality echos the paranoia LeFanu expresses regarding “natives.” The possibility of “native” corruption of English ladies vis-à-vis a sexual encounter is reflected in Carmilla’s relationship with Laura.

[16] Carmilla’s sexual appetite is also reflective of her literal appetite for blood. In both instances, she refuses to be denied and thus defies the proto-anorexic ideal that Silver outlines in her chapter. She writes, “The vampire myth therefore takes on a new significance in a culture, like nineteenth-century Britain, that denigrates female appetite in favor of self-discipline and

theorists as well as novelists realized that orthodox attitudes toward sexual purity had caused a dangerous split between conscious and unconscious" (198). The Victorian model of sexual desire taught women to consciously deny their desires, but failed to eliminate them on an unconscious level, thus creating the "dangerous split" Veeder refers to. Because of Carmilla's awareness of her sexuality and her active pursuit of her desires, she resolves this tension. Her actions are a cathartic closing of the gap between the unconscious and conscious. Carmilla herself says "love is always selfish; the more ardent, the more selfish" (302). Carmilla is not ashamed of her "selfish" pleasure-seeking and, in fact, she asserts that love has always been in some ways a "selfish" act; the more pleasurable and passionate, the more selfish. Her so-called "selfishness" comes from her taking control of her own pleasure. The idea that a woman can be selfish in love and sex remains taboo even today, but Carmilla has exemplified it since the Victorian era.

In order to fully understand the threat Carmilla's queerness poses, we must turn briefly to Laura. Carmilla poses a threat because of her ability to draw queerness out of other, seemingly good, women. Laura describes her first romantic encounter with Carmilla saying, "It was like the ardour of a lover… and with gloating eyes she drew me near to her, and her hot lips travelled along my cheek in kisses…" (292). The words Laura uses to set the scene are erotic and reflect the confident intention behind Carmilla's actions. Carmilla's eyes do not just gaze passively, they "gloat" at the accomplishment of her goal. Additionally, Laura does not shy away from feminizing Carmilla during their sexual encounter as Laura repeats the words "she" and "her," thus admitting to an act of queerness. However, after her encounter with Carmilla, Laura

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self-control. In addition to reading in the female vampire a general fear of the independent, rebellious, or sexual woman, one can read in both Dracula and Carmilla a disgust with the act of female consumption that is emblematic of these other characteristics. Female hunger in these works is always suspect and usually grotesque, hunger itself becoming a negative sign. By connecting the vampires' overt sexuality with their insatiable hunger, Stoker and Le Fanu imply that women's hunger, as a sign of transgressive desires, is fearful in and of itself, and that women's bodies reflect their sexual propensities." (118)

remarks, “What if a boyish lover had found his way into the house, and sought to prosecute his suit in masquerade…” (293). Laura attempts to deny that she participated in a sexual encounter without a man’s involvement and that she enjoyed such an act. Laura, as a good English girl, cannot possibly be queer, because to be queer means that she cannot also be good. Herein lies the panic Carmilla’s lesbianism awakens: she draws queerness out of her victims.

It becomes satisfyingly ironic that a character like Carmilla, who was designed to demonize women and lesbians, has gone on to inspire an entire genre of books and films enjoyed by queer women featuring Sapphic vampires. Such lines as, “with gloating eyes she drew me near to her, and her hot lips travelled along my cheek in kisses” and “I have been in love with no one, and never shall… unless it should be you” [said by Carmilla to Laura] present ripe opportunities for modern lesbian adaptation (292, 300). Carmilla embodies Victorian fears about what women are capable of when given agency over their reproduction, sexuality, and performance of their femininity. The things she does are monstrous because she is a woman doing them and not necessarily because she is a vampire. LeFanu uses Carmilla’s vampirism as a symbol of deviant femininity.

5. Weaponized Femininity

Carmilla wields her beauty with intent and takes advantage of the virtues others project onto her because of her appearance. Her tactical weaponization of her own femininity presents a massive threat to Victorian standards. At the beginning of the story, Laura awaits a visit from General Spielsdorf and his daughter, Bertha; however, Laura’s father informs her that he has received a letter from the General detailing Bertha’s death. We later learn that Carmilla was responsible and that the General knew this when he wrote the letter. He writes of Carmilla, “I thought I was receiving into my house innocence, gaiety, a charming companion for my lost

Bertha" (280). The General cannot fathom a woman as anything deeper than her appearance, and Carmilla uses that to gain access to Bertha. Carmilla's awareness of others' perception of her gives her power over them. Her ability to squeeze power, however malicious, from her feminine appearance was radically terrifying considering Victorian women were meant to be "pure" and remain ignorant of their own beauty.

However, Carmilla's ability to deceive others lies not only in her appearance but also in her performance of femininity. The General recounts meeting Carmilla and her mother at a masquerade ball. As though Carmilla's deceitfulness were not enough, she also makes her victims like her, thus preying further on others' treatment of women. The General goes on to say, "Millarca[17] became very intimate with us… I liked her nature more and more every minute" (325). Not only does Carmilla use the General's conception of femininity against him, but she charms him into actually liking her. Carmilla knows that if she appears to be a nice, Victorian girl superficially, the general will assume that her appearance reflects "her nature." Her manipulation of the General demonstrates the invisible threat women pose. In a society that views women as fragile and incapable of evil, any woman can subvert that view and use it to her advantage.[18]

Carmilla's unblemished beauty subverts the notion that evil can be plainly observed and thus avoided, which plays into the not-uniquely-Victorian fear of being endangered without

[17] Carmilla goes by many pseudonyms, including "Millarca," all of which are anagrams of her original name, "Mircalla."

[18] This weaponization of fragility and femininity also occurs in Coleridge's "Christabel," which undoubtably influenced LeFanu's construction of Carmilla's character. In his article "Coleridge's 'Christabel' and LeFanu's 'Carmilla,'" Arthur Nethercot writes, "Both girls have to be helped into the homes of their intended victims: Geraldine sinks down, 'be like through pain,' just as Christabel unlocks the postern gate, and Christabel has to carry her over the threshold 'with might and main'; whereupon Geraldine quickly rises again and 'moved, as she were not in pain'" (34). Of course, Nethercot refers to the carriage scene from *Carmilla*, but her repetition of the tactic throughout the story speaks to the prevalence of fear regarding monsters preying on social conventions.

knowing it. Laura repeatedly describes her as various degrees of "beautiful" which subverts the fairy-tale notion of evil manifesting in the form of some physical mark or ugliness (290).[19] This suggests a failure not only of conventional knowledge but also of superstition to warn Carmilla's victims of her true nature before it is too late. Even the General describes Carmilla as "very pretty," but in his next sentence refers to her as a "fiend," implying that her exterior beauty disguises her nature (280). When feeding on her victims, she takes the form of "a sooty black animal that resemble[s] a monstrous cat," reinforcing the connection between Blackness and female monstrosity (LeFanu 304). Only at the moment in which Carmilla's monstrosity can be plainly seen does her form reflect her nature. When the General meets Carmilla at a masquerade ball, he says "She wore no mask" perhaps because the body she inhabits—that of a beautiful young woman—is itself a mask (319). The masquerade ball itself seems to invite creatures like Carmilla into society. In a place where everyone wears a mask, no one thinks twice about where the mask ends and the monster begins. Nothing seems suspicious about Carmilla on the surface, which makes her all the more threatening: her apparent beauty and manners disguise her monstrosity.

Carmilla also weaponizes Victorian beliefs that femininity implies weakness in order to mask her physical strength. The feminine disguise Carmilla dons extends to the way she carries herself, which Laura describes as "languid" (290). She plays up her adherence to Victorian feminine ideals that women should be "tubercular" and waifish.[20] She disguises her strength by appearing to be exhausted by even the simplest of actions, which makes her vampiric strength all

[19] Carmilla's lack of physical disfigurement separates her from Geraldine. Geraldine, upon revealing her shriveled breast to Christabel, says, "This mark of my shame, this seal of my sorrow" (Part 1). The fact that her breast bears the sign of her "shame" ties Geraldine's shame directly to her femininity, but makes her easier to single out. Carmilla, on the other hand, bears no physical mark and is, thus, harder to identify as a threat.

[20] See Chapter 4: "Vampirism and the Anorexic Paradigm" of Anna Krugovoy Silver's *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*

the more threatening—because it is thoroughly unexpected. Later, when the General attempts to apprehend Carmilla, she grabs ahold of his wrist. He does not expect Carmilla to be capable of physically besting him and when "The slender hand of [Carmilla] closed like a vice of steel on the General's wrist…", her strength shocks him (LeFanu 339). The paradox that her hand is both "slender" and "like a vice of steel" exemplifies how much more threatening the unexpected and unknown are. Being aware of the threat one faces elicits feelings of terror; however, it is infinitely more dangerous to be in the presence of a monster and not even know it.

6. Lonely Laura

Although the narrative depicts Carmilla's agency as monstrous, Laura's stagnancy does not receive much favor. Laura, as the point of view character, lacks knowledge of herself, which Carmilla takes advantage of. Before Carmilla's arrival, she is reportedly bored and lonely. Laura had been expecting a visit from a girl called Bertha, whom she had never met, but the girl's father informed Laura's father that Bertha had died. Wishing desperately for a friend, Laura immediately asks her father to invite Carmilla into the home upon seeing her for the first time. After that initial display of agency from Laura, she becomes little more than an object upon which Carmilla acts. Where Carmilla represents the threats of active femininity, Laura represents the dangers inherent in passive femininity.

Laura's loneliness allows Carmilla to corrupt her, thus the narrative warns of the dangers inherent in feminine idleness. LeFanu introduces the reader to Laura by emphasizing her loneliness: "I have said that this is a very lonely place… The nearest inhabited village is about seven of your English miles to the left" (275). The emphasis placed on her physical isolation sets up a relationship between her loneliness and the events of the story. Upon learning of the delay facing the General and Bertha, Laura says, "I was more disappointed than a young lady living in

a town, or a bustling neighborhood can possibly imagine" (279). Laura places herself in contrast with those who live around others, which emphasizes how special an occasion receiving company is for her. Her physical isolation produces social isolation which makes Bertha's delay, and eventual death, all the more dispiriting for Laura. So, when Laura sees Carmilla at the scene of the carriage crash, she immediately asks her father to invite Carmilla to stay with them saying, "Oh! Papa pray ask her to stay with us – it would be so delightful" (283). Laura sees a friend in Carmilla, something which she so desperately wants. Laura's loneliness grants Carmilla access to another victim.

7. The Hole Where a Heroine Should Be

In addition to her loneliness, Laura lacks knowledge of herself, creating a void for Carmilla to fill; thus her docile brand of Victorian femininity allows the monster into society. Laura does not get a name for the first thirty-eight pages of the story, which creates a vacuum where Laura's self-identity should be. Laura is empty, so when she encounters a being like Carmilla, who wishes to fill Laura's emptiness with herself, Laura stands no chance against her. Carmilla tells her, "You are mine, you *shall* be mine, and you and I are one forever" and leaves Laura "trembling" (192). She replies, "I do not know myself when you look so and talk so" (192). Laura has no means by which to resist Carmilla's invasion because she does not have a sense of self. After Laura is bitten and becomes ill she says, "Dim thoughts of death began to open, and an idea that I was slowly sinking took gentle, and, somehow, not unwelcome possession of me" (LeFanu 307). At this point, Carmilla's vampirism has quite literally infected Laura and slowly consumes her. Laura's admission that her sinking is "not unwelcome" indicates that she has surrendered herself to Carmilla. Additionally, Laura's ideas take "possession" over her which echos her lack of agency as she does not even control her own thoughts, rather, they

control her. Despite her performance of the compliant brand of Victorian femininity, which contrasts sharply with Carmilla, Laura still receives blame for the events of the narrative and the bite she receives from Carmilla serves to punish Laura for her complacency.

8. Consent or Coercion?

Laura's desire for Carmilla provides her with a kernel of power because Laura's action upon her own feelings advances the story, thus she becomes an active agent. However, those same desires can be weaponized against Laura and used to argue that 1) everything is her fault and 2) women are incapable of acting in their own best interest.[21] Laura's plea to invite Carmilla into the home sets the story's events into motion. This choice exemplifies the "consent" vampires need to carry out their feeding. In this way, Laura's role as prey provides her with some power over Carmilla. But it also allows the Victorian reader to point the finger at Laura and proselytize about feminine hysteria. Carmilla also expresses more outward affection towards Laura saying, "I have been in love with no one, and never shall… unless it should be you" and "I live in you; and you would die for me, I love you so," which gives Laura the power to shun Carmilla and reject her advances thus shutting her entire plot down (300). However, because Laura suffers from a near-fatal case of Victorian femininity, she remains passive and allows Carmilla into her life. In her book *The Dangerous Lover*, Deborah Lutz writes, "The power differential between the hero and the heroine and his violent control over her drives the plot, which is essentially a slow movement of power passing from the hero to the heroine" (5). While Lutz speaks of Gothic lovers generally, her principles apply to Carmilla in that the vampire mythos is ultimately founded upon the victim's consent. Vampires, in many instances, can only enter a person's home

[21] I recognize that this argument sits at the top of a slippery slope that ends in victim blaming, but I believe that victim blaming comes built in to some aspects of vampire mythos. For example, the notion that a vampire cannot enter into your house without your consent implies that should you be stupid enough to grant the vampire access to you, you deserve what comes next.

with explicit permission. This dynamic allows the victim the power to turn the vampire away, thus denying the vampire its prey. Carmilla's entrance into Laura life similarly relies on Laura's explicit permission to enter, thus granting her some power over Carmilla. The General explains to Laura, "[The vampire] will, in these cases, husband and protract its murderous enjoyment with the refinement of an epicure, and heighten it by the gradual approaches of courtship. In these cases it seems to yearn for something like sympathy and *consent*" (LeFanu 337).[22] According to the General, Carmilla wants and, to an extent, needs Laura to consent.

9. Absentee Fathers

Victorian fathers were expected to embody contemporary ideals of masculinity. They were protectors, providers, brokers, and heads of their families. In her essay, "Gender and the Victorian Novel," Nancy Armstrong writes, "Victorian masculinity assumed that it took a fundamentally asocial desire to acquire wealth and rise in the social world. Unless he satisfied this drive, a man was not qualified to be head of household and reproduce his kind" (108). So what then of Laura's father? Content to live in isolation from others, barely social, and an invalid, Laura's father appears far from the Victorian ideal.

Laura's father constantly fails to inform her of dangerous situations, emphasizing his incompetence as a father. Laura's father keeps news of Bertha's death from her saying, "I quite forgot I had not told you," which indicates that his failure to communicate arose from his sheer incompetence (279). However, when Laura falls ill from a vampire bite, he outright refuses to answer her questions regarding her own diagnosis saying, "[there is] Nothing [wrong]; you must not plague me with questions… you are not to trouble your head about it" (315). In this instance, his failure to communicate is rooted in his desire to keep Laura in a state of blissful ignorance.

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[22] Italics added by me.

He does this knowing that when the General did the very same to Bertha, she died (280). Additionally, his characterization of Laura's questions as "plague[ing]" him serves a condemnation of Laura's attempt to understand her own body (LeFanu 315). If her father had told her that the doctor believed Laura had been bitten by a vampire, he could have provided her with the information she needed to catch Carmilla out and put a stop to her schemes earlier. But, because of his gross incompetence, he fails to do so. His failure embodies the fear that without competent men around them at all times, women will be helpless against any and all threats because they are naturally incapable of fending for themselves.

Both Laura's father and the General are emasculated by their failure to protect their daughters, thus gendering their incompetence as feminine. Laura describes her father as an "invalid" and explains that she does not want to tell him about her encounter with Carmilla because she "was afraid of alarming him," which links his physical state to his incompetence in protecting his daughter (LeFanu 305). Additionally, having to take her father's invalidism into account puts Laura in the position of protector, reversing the Victorian standard of women as fragile and men having to accommodate them. The consequences of her failure as a protector emphasize her natural unsuitedness to the role because of her gender. The General also fails twice to protect his charge and slay Carmilla: once as she preys on Bertha and once as she preys on Laura (LeFanu, 332). Veeder writes of this failure, "The male agent is only an onlooker, cut off from his manly sword, circumscribed by the vaginal crevice, impotent before the phallically swelling vampire" (205). The General's failure to perform his protective duties not only emasculates him but also emphasizes Carmilla's ability to take on a masculine role. In this schema, the General, like Laura's father, becomes an invalid and his incompetence becomes feminized.

Despite performing her femininity to a Victorian standard, Laura receives blame for her circumstances. This highlights that, as fearful as Victorians were of female agency, they were just as afraid of female passivity. Laura's femininity is dangerous because it makes her the weakest link in her social chain and forces others to bear the responsibility for her safety.

10. Conclusion

While Carmilla and Laura represent diametrically opposing versions of femininity, the narrative punishes both of them simultaneously for existing as women. Carmilla's deviancy matters less than her female status and Laura's innocence matters less than hers. *Carmilla* is a story about the threats womanhood poses to the woman herself and her family. Whether passive or active, a woman always threatens the safety of those around her. Active women corrupt where passive women allow for corruption. The vampire in *Carmilla* allows LeFanu to exaggerate the sins of active women. The association between vampirism and sexual desire, deception, queerness, and "nativeness" places those concepts firmly in the realm of the monstrous.

The connections between Carmilla and Harriet Brandt are numerous, but the more interesting point of comparison is that of intent. Carmilla intends to kill while Harriet does not. Carmilla knows of her vampirism while Harriet does not. What can we make of these differences? Ultimately, LeFanu's male point of view limits the sympathy with which he can regard Carmilla. He, like many male authors of the Gothic, writes female monsters out of anxiety. Carmilla represents a genuine fear that a woman could be autonomous, sexual, and—worst of all—more powerful than any man. She is the ultimate boogeyman for the Victorian misogynist. Harriet Brandt, on the other hand, was created by a woman for a primarily female audience. Marryat infuses some of herself into Harriet and speaks to women about the

judgements they face through Harriet's actions. Thus, Harriet becomes somewhat sympathetic in the narrative where Carmilla remains irredeemably evil.

Part Four: Conclusion

We have explored how Victorian authors used the vampire to vocalize cultural anxieties regarding women and their sexuality, but where does that leave contemporary vampire fiction? In his essay, "PARASITES AND PERVERTS: An Introduction to Gothic Monstrosity," Jack Halberstam argues, "Where the monsters of the nineteenth century metaphorized modern subjectivity as a balancing act between inside—outside, female—male, body—mind, native—foreign, proletarian—aristocrat, monstrosity in postmodern horror films finds its place in what Baudrillard has called the obscenity of 'immediate visibility' and what Linda Williams has dubbed 'the frenzy of the visible'" (148-9). In a post-film landscape, monsters and their meanings have become simplified. By presenting visible subjects to an audience, filmmakers present monsters that must necessarily be simpler. I believe that monster literature, particularly Young Adult dark fantasy and supernatural romance, retranslates this simplicity back into a literary form.

What then can be said of the moral panic in *Twilight*? How does modern literature use the Gothic form to express anxieties about femininity? What functionally happens to the vampire when it becomes a symbol of romantic, heteronormative love? Though these questions cover an entire book worth of material, I will present a very brief answer. In her essay, "*Twilight*'s Heteronormative Reversal of the Monstrous: Utopia and the Gothic Design," Kelly Budruweit writes, "In the Gothic of *Twilight*, the most abject and frightening situation is one in which a woman has no love relationship with which to identify" (270). Where LeFanu and Marryat posit uninhibited feminine sexual desire as the monstrosity, Meyer posits female singleness as the most undesirable. To Meyer, a woman needs a relationship with a man in order to have an identity. Bella, notoriously devoid of a personality, is defined by her relationship with Edward;

thus, when he leaves her in *New Moon* and we see Bella wasting away, Meyer's ideology becomes clear. Edward defines Bella, male romantic partners define women, and the notion of a woman existing outside this dynamic is horrifying.

Twilight uses the aesthetic trappings of the Gothic to masquerade as a subversive narrative about female desire, but ultimately succumbs to the status quo. Budruweit continues, "The series' disavowal of the abject, dark side of the Gothic in its main characters corresponds with an essentialist gender politics that simultaneously works to mask and to alleviate guilt over the adverse effects of consumerism. Twilight seduces the reader with promises of a supposedly alternative lifestyle, but the focus on self-control reveals the former 'monster' as a glamorous mask" (272). Carmilla and Harriet each represent the power of female sexuality and sexual desire, and that corresponds to the ways their vampirism manifests. Edward, on the other hand, values Bella's prudish virginity and, because the novel portrays him as desirable, the narrative rewards Bella for her purity. In chapter fourteen of *Twilight*, when Edward sneaks into Bella's room, they discuss marriage and, without ever outright saying it, sex. "Sex" in *Twilight* remains an unspeakable word and can only even be implied in the context of marriage. When Edward evasively asks Bella if she's ever had sex, she answers, "Of course not" as if having sex as an unmarried seventeen-year-old is a completely unfathomable concept (311).

When *Twilight* attempts to come up with a reason why staying human is the better choice, the only point the narrative presents is that vampires cannot have children and humans can. After Alice has a vision that Bella will become a vampire, the Cullens discuss when and who will be the one to carry out the conversion. Rosalie expresses disgust for Bella's desire to become a vampire by telling Bella about how she feels cursed to not be able to bear children and that, in choosing to become a vampire, Bella is "choosing wrong" because she would be giving up her

ability to conceive (Slade 44:00-48:00). The implication being that for a woman to give up her ability to conceive means to give up her chance at happiness. Additionally, throughout Bella's pregnancy during *Breaking Dawn*, the fetus slowly drains Bella's life but she refuses to be turned into a vampire because doing so would kill her child. One might argue that introducing abortion into a YA series would be inappropriate, but it would be no less appropriate than teaching young women that they should sooner sacrifice their lives for an unborn fetus than consider saving themselves.

Turning away from the aggressive heterosexuality of *Twilight*, let us examine an even more recent entry into the vampire romance genre.

Netflix's *First Kill*, based upon a short story by V.E. Schwabb, tells the Sapphic love story of vampire Juliette and vampire hunter Calliope. Based solely on that pitch alone, and the fact that Calliope is portrayed by a young Black actress, one might assume that the inclusion of vampires in this story does *something*; but going into *First Kill* with any expectation of valuable social commentary will leave one sorely disappointed. The only attempt at social commentary the show makes is when "the show eventually establishes that humans are fully aware of the existence of monsters, and makes an ill-advised attempt to turn monster-related panic into a metaphor for right-wing bigotry (one monster-hating character talks about the 'lamestream media' and is referred to as a 'monsterphobe'), even though the show's non-vampire monsters are clearly less than human" (Hassenger). Unlike Marryat's, LeFanu's, and even Meyer's vampires to some extent, Schwabb's do not embody some fear or uncomfortable truth the author sees in the world. Juliette and her family are vampires simply because Schwabb thinks vampires are sexy.

The show's focus on a vampire/human romance is purely an aesthetic choice, and, unlike *Carmilla*, it fails to sell the steamy lesbian dynamic between the two leads. Caroline Framke writes for *Variety Magazine*, "The worst offense *First Kill* commits, though, is that it never sells the central romance that should by all rights be its beating heart. Without letting Juliette and Cal have a single conversation about anything other than their natures and families for half the season, the show needs to make their immediate connection so palpable that it hurts." Despite trying for a story about a same-sex romance between young girls who are, respectively, a vampire and a vampire hunter, the show ended up being about everything going on around the two leads as they awkwardly and implausibly fall in love. This fraught attempt at a story along with impossibly cheap-looking production lead to lower-than-anticipated viewership, which ultimately lead to the show's cancellation only two weeks after release.

As bad as *First Kill* was, and it was indeed bad, at least it continued the long-standing tradition of lesbian vampire love stories. In losing *First Kill*, audiences lost a rare representation of women loving women on television. Olivia Truffaut-Wong writes for Polygon,

> In the era of prestige television, it can be easy to dismiss a show like *First Kill*. Shows about supernatural teenagers rarely get the respect they deserve, especially if they don't have the budget of *Stranger Things*. But they can be formative for the teens that watch them. The fandoms that develop around television shows can create a community that viewers lack at home. No matter how uneven some aspects of *First Kill* are, with an epic love story at its center it has the potential to give audiences, specifically young people who identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community, a show that validates them. There's no downside to that.

Most mainstream vampire media today focuses on a heterosexual relationship between the male vampire and female victim. *First Kill* gave voice to a female-centric story written by and for women. Losing that is significant as it is unlikely Netflix will seek to replace the show with

another Sapphic vampire romance. On the contrary, Netflix could write the genre off as a failure entirely.

The vampire as a literary figure has evolved since the Victorian era. Vampire romance, now an established genre, posits the vampire as a sex symbol for both men and women without the need to read between the lines. Returning to Cohen's seven theses on monstrosity, I am left wondering if our modern vampires are even monsters at all. Monsters represent harbingers, difference, the Other, threats to the status quo; but our vampires have become high school students, boyfriends, girlfriends, best friends, and even doctors. These vampires have families and (after)lives that allow them to contribute to society. Why? What changed between *Carmilla* and *First Kill*? My best answer is that we did. Nina Auerbach writes, "As a species vampires have been our companions for so long that it is hard to imagine living without them. They promise escape from our dull lives and the pressure of our times, but they matter because when properly understood, they make us see that our lives are implicated in theirs and our times are inescapable" (*Our Vampires, Ourselves* 8-9). Vampires were born of a desire to label the taboo: sexual desire, homosexuality, race mixing, and gender non-conformity. While in many places these things remain unspeakable, most Western societies have grown to recognize these former taboos as natural phenomena or even as positive attributes. Thus, our vampires change to reflect our changed society. *First Kill* presents a toothless lesbian romance because it has no need to argue for or against lesbianism. *Twilight* uses its vampires to criticize feminism to an extent, but they mostly exist for the young female reader to admire.

We will never be rid of the vampire because the vampire is whatever we need it to be. Victorians needed a scapegoat onto which authors could place their fears and anxieties about society. Twenty-first century vampires, on the other hand, provide a desirable Gothic aesthetic

catered to a female gaze. Where Harriet and Carmilla emerged as products of a fear of female desire, Edward and Juliette exist as acceptances and celebrations of female desire.

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