“Man is not truly one, but truly two”:

Victorian Repression of Feminine Monsters in the Gothic Closet

by

Sara Snoddy

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Sara Snoddy

APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Rebecca King

Thesis Advisor

Department of English

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Jimmie Cain

Second Reader

Department of English

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Maria Bachman

English Department Chair

Department of English

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Philip Phillips

Associate Dean

University Honors College

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Abstract

This thesis examines how, through penetrating social critique, Victorian Gothic writers both commented on and exposed the threats to patriarchal control represented by lesbianism, homosexuality, and the New Woman, three constructs at the center of nineteenth-century sexual anxieties. In *Carmilla*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Dracula*, Gothic monsters represent the threat that homosexuals and the New Woman—the Others—posed to masculinity*.* This thesis argues that nineteenth-century patriarchal norms constructed homosexuals as dangerous because their sexuality suggested that men could be effeminate and therefore weak. Furthermore, these norms construct aggressive lesbians as threats to men’s social supremacy. By their utilization of vampires and monstrous queer doubles in the primary texts that this study analyzes, it argues that Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Bram Stoker also critiqued and illuminated dangerous effects of Victorian repression.

Chapter I

Making Monsters

*“[T]he term ‘Victorian’ quickly became one of abuse. To be modern was to disdain the overpowering world of the Victorians with its fussy furniture, stiff upper lips, lengthy sermons, and inward-looking, repressed lives.”*

Kelly Boyd and Rohan McWilliam*, The Victorian Studies Reader*, p. 2

Queen Victoria’s reign from 1837 to 1901 established the Victorian era, a time of immense change and consequent restrictions. A variety of historical events brought about shifts in basic cultural and social categories, giving rise to tremendous anxieties that were registered by the famous Gothic literature that the age produced. At this tumultuous time in Victorian Europe, gender lines were being erased and redefined, as patriarchal figures fought against the re-emergence of the notion that masculinity and femininity were not ordered by sex alone. The Gothic, as a vehicle for change in this unstable nineteenth century, revealed cultural anxieties about the destabilizing effects that the “New Woman” and homosexuals had on traditional patriarchal values. Using them as corporeal warnings of culturally perceived vices and follies, Gothic writers created monsters to reflect the destabilization of Victorian gender norms and the challenges to patriarchal control that followed the growing awareness of and demands by homosexuals and New Women. With the vampires and monstrous queer doubles portrayed in *Dracula*, *Carmilla*, and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, these Gothic texts critique and illuminate dangerous effects of Victorian repression.

Beginning in the mid 1700s, the cultural changes caused by the Industrial Revolution resulted in massive social problems. The early to mid-nineteenth century was marked by social changes that began with the eighteenth-century advent of industrialization in Manchester’s textile industry. In the early part of Queen Victoria’s reign, the railways were created and would eventually unite the two different worlds that existed in her time: the rural, conservative world ordered around traditional, that is quasi-feudal, agrarian values and practices against the growing urban centers, which became the sites of unrest and demands for progressive social change to alleviate poverty and unemployment. The more progressive-minded Victorians “investigated, criticized and reformed the condition of the people and institutions of the State as no one before had ever dreamt of doing” (Reader 3-4). On the other hand, these changes frightened many others, who were appalled at the problems the new industrial society was creating and at some of the changes installed by progressives.

Some of these fears were founded on threats to aristocracy and middle class prosperity represented by the working class, which was becoming increasingly radicalized, as evidenced by the Chartist Movement for political reform that took place throughout the years from 1808 to the mid century. At a time in which home life and the work place played key roles in this power struggle, the upper and middle classes resisted increasing the rights given to those they deemed beneath them, among other things the right to vote. Meanwhile, the *status quo* also faced opposition from women, deemed the “lesser” sex, the growing unrest among them spurred by their lack of access to education and remunerative work, as well as resistance to oppressive feminine ideals that were particularly important to social status in the Victorian era. These push backs would eventually lead to more rights for women in the early-twentieth century, just after the Queen’s death, with all women in the United Kingdom finally earning the right to vote by 1928.

The Chartist Movement galvanized the working class in the nineteenth century, turning the factory into a battleground and marking it as a symbol for attacks on traditional home life and clearly defined gender roles. Before the Industrial Revolution, classes were separated by wealth, as has always been the case, into categories of nobles and peasants. By the nineteenth century, the middle class had evolved and become economically dominant while the working class, freed from feudal limitations, still relied on their own labor for sustenance, rarely rising above the conditions into which they were born. This class structure echoed the feudal past until the “lesser” working Victorians rose up and fought against their oppressors. Around 1808, the working classes who formed the Chartist Movement began advocating for political reform, which was at first largely about factory reform. Women and children worked in factories during this time when kinship relations were being replaced by the modern nuclear family structure and ideals were predicated on a feminine domestic sphere and masculine economic and political spheres (Clark 199). For women, Chartism provided an escape from familial confinement, but Chartist men saw no more than an opportunity to marginalize them in their own way, using women for their resources and cheap labor while denying them basic rights just as their non-Chartist brethren had already done.

Domestic life for Victorians was based on the ideal of the woman as the “angel in the house,” a phrase taken from a narrative poem by Coventry Patmore in 1854, which reflects a cultural ideal whereby women represent the spiritual and moral center of the family and are suited by nature to marry, have children, and maintain a nurturing home (qtd. in Davidoff and Hall 307). Thus, Victorian women were not to be educated beyond the learning necessary to allow them to function in the home. They were also deemed to be too feeble physically and mentally to function independently. As part of Chartism, Scottish working class women, especially, began encouraging other women to broaden their horizons beyond that sphere in order to work alongside men and earn their living, removing the necessity to rely on the stronger sex. However, factory work deprived them of the time to gain an education, and they faced patriarchal pressure to return to the home; even within this movement, men who believed that “[women] had no right to claim agency” still subordinated women (Clark 199). Feminist allies and female members of this movement felt insignificant to their male counterparts, who wanted to exclude women from factory life all together and bring them back into the home, in order to protect them from the terrors of wage labor. Women were thought to be delicate and feeble-minded, but this was less of a concern for men than it was a justification.

In 1817 and 1838, the radical figures of the movement rallied working-class people to demand the People’s Charter to allow them more rights, although women’s suffrage was not on their agenda. As theorist Anna Clark explains, the Chartist men, specifically Reverend J.R. Stephens from Greater Manchester, presented a “lurid” picture of female mill workers “who [did not] care whether their children [lived] or not . . . or whether they [had] husbands or not” (199). During this same period, in the 1830s and 40s, socialists and feminists sought new forms of marriage and new kinds of “relations between men and women” (Davidoff and Hall 309). They fought the patriarchal idea that women should strive to be the best wives and mothers that they could possibly be, and that loving was a woman’s natural state and also duty, wherein reciprocated affection was simply her reward for falling in line. Factory life affected women’s purity and hindered their domestic education. Female education itself was “unladylike” and “bad for their health,” while too much education ruined marriage prospects, illustrating perhaps how fragile the male ego really was that men should be put off by educated women (Reader 121). Since women were deemed inferior in mind and body and thus dependent on more capable men, neither a middle nor working class woman could ever achieve the same agency in the sense that a man could. Women’s rights movements in the 1880s, however, began to dissolve these rigidly held beliefs.

The three converging social movements—socialist, feminist, and Chartist—in the mid 1800s prompted analysis of women’s roles through a discussion of sexual difference; essentially, participants came to define women as being similar in abilities but different anatomically from men. Victorians, a word most generally associated with the increasingly hegemonic middle class, would eventually settle on anatomical difference as gender markers, but this presumption was built on a shaky foundation that required fairly sophisticated psychological dynamics involving repression of qualities associated with the supposedly opposite gender. In fact, controlling sexual desire—both male and female—became one of the most problematic issues for Victorians, as witnessed by the increase in prostitution and criminal activity that grew in the cities early on in Queen Victoria’s reign. The Royal Commission claimed that “sexual vice” was one of the most prominent “existing evils” in 1852 (Reader 141). Sexual pleasure, especially for women, was held to be sinful, while male sexual desire actually became a mark of masculinity, and its control a mark of class.

At this time more so than others in the past, sexual behavior became more and more prescribed according to Christian ideals as a means of social control, resulting in the repressive psychodynamics that Freud described in the later part of the century. Authorities had been cracking down on sexual vice for years, especially since the religious revivals of the late-eighteenth century. The Christian basis of sexual norms meant that female sexual desire was considered to be a monstrous deviation from the domestic angel, whose only desire was for a husband and children. This form of demonization of female sexuality thus reflects Victorian panic and anxiety rooted in the fear that dominant women would destroy families and that “queer” men, associated with the faceless, unreliable working classes, placed men in vulnerable positions through their feminine form of sexual desire.

In Victorian Britain, men of all classes felt that they were losing the very power that, ironically, they created by subjugating women. During the Industrial Revolution, working class women were considered to be cheap labor “that could be discarded as the market contracted or shifted,” since they could always go back home (Joyce 131). When women workers began demanding rights that patriarchal society considered to be appropriate only for men, this attitude shifted and women were seen as a threatening force. Pressure was mounting to take women out of the workforce because men needed those jobs; without work, men fell into ruin and lost their social position. As society became more politically egalitarian, the concepts of manliness and masculinity were more important than ever in distinguishing them from women, who agitated for equal rights. Biological sex thus became the most important marker for Victorian gender identification. Victorians thought that sex was the ultimate guarantor of difference between men and women, so a person’s gender determined their social roles. Therefore, Victorians often saw women and children as dutiful servants in the comfortable, upper middle-class home ruled by a *pater familias*. But not all Victorian women accepted this patriarchal paradigm, and, using the term coined by Sarah Grand in 1894, the “New Woman” was born. Those women were persecuted, their sexuality demonized, and their character defaced during the latter part of the century, as they agitated for and attempted to live in new ways.

Victorians were thus responsible for the basis of modern sexual culture with its “reticence and codes of silence about the body” (Boyd and McWilliam 21). They found certainty in restricting women on the basis of sexual difference, their rigid notions of the “right ordering of society and individual behavior” backed up by established authority (Reader 5). Most Victorians, even including the working classes, were content with this repressive social order. Clark says that while Chartism had egalitarian potential, it, too, adopted the restrictive rhetoric of domesticity because it helped them resolve “sexual antagonism” among working people and refuted claims by the middle class that working people were immoral (192). The source of this immorality was usually restricted to the slums of the cities, where prostitutes and drunks prevailed. There, a certain male type was born, the homosexual whom patriarchy could not stomach; and, without the ability to speak of sexuality, *per se*, writers could only describe these men in coded terms such as “deformed,” “strange,” and “queer.”

Debates over femininity and domesticity were constructed around the argument of a biological version of sexual difference, but the questions Victorians asked themselves about women inadvertently applied to both sexes: “Were women naturally subordinate to men? If so, what did spiritual equality really mean? Could women be equal to men? Did this mean that they had to behave like men?” (Davidoff and Hall 309). If women had to behave like men in order to be equal to men, then the opposite could also be true; thus, equality among the sexes would mean that men’s responsibilities and social roles were not as stable and fixed as presumed. In fact, the city bred male types that did not conform to patriarchal gender norms. Some of these men, whose behaviors failed to live up to masculine ideals of power and control, were derided for their meticulous appearance and fashion sense, others simply for their apparent lack of desire for family life (Gunn 159). Called “swells,” “mashers,” “cads,” and “counterjumpers”—extensions of the pejorative seventeenth-century terms “fops” and “dandies”—these young men were associated with a marginalized status. By their appearance and behavior, they “forfeited” their right to be called men: “He is the man who during the week consents to appear in the seediest and most threadbare garments, but on Sunday he emerges in all the glories” (qtd. in Gunn 159). Those men who expressed a feminine disposition were the subjects of ridicule in Victorian journals, nearly replacing the New Woman as the most transgressive figure thought to be taking over the cities and upending home life.

Victorian anxiety over the sexual, as well as social, identities of young men in the late-nineteenth century was a repeated motif in the periodical press of the of the 1880s (Gunn 159). Some of this anxiety arose from assumptions that mashers, just one term for a flamboyant man about town, spent time with prostitutes, which compromised not only their moral standing but also their masculinity by virtue of their acting out abnormal sexual desires. William Lovett stressed that masculinity among the middle classes was based on rationality and self-control, rather than “pugilistic skill,” which defined working-class masculinity; thus, men forgetful of their duties as husband, father, and brother were not real men (qtd. in Clark 196). In a period when conventional systems of identification were disintegrating, specifically during the 1860s and 1880s, visual signs such as clothes were becoming more important. Anxiety arose since swells and mashers could masquerade as gentleman by appearance alone, ultimately showing them to be “contemptible creature[s]” through their behavior (Gunn 158). Whereas a clear gender binary existed in rural areas, the city center was characterized by a certain kind of anonymity in social relationships, thus giving rise to new “social actors,” the New Woman and the swell in the 1880s. These ambivalent forms of identification, associated with morally ambiguous men and women, presented those who claimed middle-class status the task of establishing recognizable demarcations between these social types and themselves that, ultimately, reaffirmed the traditional gender paradigm.

Freudian psychoanalysis, specifically Freud’s work on the subconscious, popularized the notion that Victorians lived repressed, double lives, tormented by the “demands of the libido” (Boyd and McWilliam 8). Up until the late 1800s, most claims of “alternative” sexuality were swept aside and never brought to light. Homosexual and queer artists and creative geniuses were able to have lovers on the side while maintaining a gentlemanly appearance, which suited the patriarchy fine as long as it did not interfere with their roles as husbands and fathers. In the 1700s, the term “homosexuality” was not yet coined, so references to that state had to be coded. Generally what we now term homosexuality only meant a different sexual preference and not an identity, a lifestyle that one could adopt or leave. Before the cultural shift in the late 1800s, the Gothic began to include veiled references to male homosexuality through thematic concerns with patriarchal power struggles and the degeneration found in cities. At this time when the Gothic was flourishing, homosexual meeting places or “underworlds” were acknowledged in Europe (Benshoff 18). By the 1880s, the Victorian homosexual world had evolved into a secret but “active subculture,” with its own language, styles, practices, and meeting places (Showalter, “Closet” 191). For most middle-class inhabitants of this world, homosexuality represented a double life, in which a “respectable daytime world often involving marriage and family, existed alongside a night world of homoeroticism.”

In this unstable period, the Gothic transcribed these cultural upheavals into texts that represent a “queer,” or unspeakable, sexuality in some of its characters. In the late-nineteenth century, scientists were developing theories to describe sexuality and gender in anatomical terms, as literary critic Cyndy Hendershot notes in her book *The Animal Within*. Gender was becoming an important element of identity rather than simply being an attribute so obvious to be deemed invisible. If men and women were not separated this way, thus delineating their position in society, then it signified a return to the ancient past. The threat of the ancient, often Greek, powerful matriarch frightened Victorians more than the possibility of equality between men and women. But Victorians unconsciously railed against their own ideas that men and women could be separated so simply, a factor that Hendershot attributes to the Gothic’s ability to return Gothic bodies to the one-sex state, most commonly recognized in the form of the vampire.

Robert Mighall argues that Victorian Gothic is “obsessed with identifying and depicting threatening reminders or scandalous vestiges of an age from which the present is relieved to have distanced itself” (29). Hendershot theorizes that these reminders are the subversive natures of Gothic bodies, which “disrupt stable notions of what it means to be human” within, in our case, patriarchal Victorian England (9). From her research, she outlines findings that some cultures, specifically the ancient Greeks, believed in a one-sex body in which both men and women essentially have the same physical form, and that their biological difference meant less then their individual characteristics. Therefore, since masculinity was the desired gender expression and women were thought to be unable to exist on their own as completely separate beings, men still dominated women but with less rigid authority. Women were at least capable of being seen as strong individuals, and this strength meant that their masculine traits had simply won out over their “natural” feminine inclinations. Thus, Hendershot concludes that it is in fact social, not biological, difference that differentiates the one-sex body from the Victorian two-sex model, which saw men and women split to explain marginalizing the lesser sex. Therefore, if the Gothic is a return to a one-sex past, Victorian Gothic registers a fear that men are not in complete control of their own safety and social status.

The figures of the homosexual and the New Woman, known for their violation of ideal masculinity and femininity, were threatening precisely because they represented forces that drove men and women out of the home and thus disrupted the family unit. However, their abnormal sexuality was necessary to mark Victorian distinctions between normal and monstrous. What truly made them monstrous was not their preference for the same sex, *per se*, but rather their ability to blur the gender binary. For instance, masculine lesbians were demonized for their aggressive sexuality because they could usurp the male role. Likewise, effeminate gay men and masculine lesbians proved that men could be controlled by other stronger men and, possibly more frightening, have their power usurped by aggressive women. Of course, this fear of lost control was a natural part of patriarchal society for it to be in working order, because, ultimately, heterosexual men needed women and homosexuals to construct the boundaries necessary for their own identification. Diana Fuss puts the relationship this way: “Heterosexuality can never fully ignore the close psychical proximity of its terrifying (homo)sexual other, any more than homosexuality can entirely escape the equally insistent social pressures of (hetero)sexual conformity. Each is haunted by the other” (qtd. in Gelder 187). Like Gothic monsters, woman and homosexuals marked the difference between the Other and the patriarchal male.

Two artistic and literary movements of the late-nineteenth century reflected and influenced Gothic stories: Decadence and Aestheticism. Derived from the word ‘*decline*,’ Decadence literally refers to the moral and spiritual decay of a culture pressured by forces of change that has been identified throughout cultural history (Merriam-Webster). The *fin de siècle* Decadent era arose in France, where texts depicting lesbian relationships were being censored at the time, before becoming popular in Victorian Britain. This was no coincidence, as the name of the movement originally developed as an abusive term to mark these texts—and the movement in general—as encouraging what the patriarchy perceived to be immoral dabblings. Glennis Byron and David Punter explain that the idea of Decadence, specifically, sums up Victorian attitudes toward the movement and Gothic texts of this period as the idea that texts in these decades were linked through their focus on “degeneration” (39). Aestheticism operated alongside Decadence in abjuring any moral quality of art or beauty. With its emphasis on creating art for art’s sake, Aesthetic works focused on unabashedly celebrating beauty for its pleasurable effects. Late-century Decadence and Aestheticism, thus, came to represent vice and sin by definition.

Victorian Gothic fiction, then, introduces an intense fear concerning “national, social, and psychic decay” (Byron and Punter 39). This decay, the amount of crime and disease found in the city centers, has always been intrinsically linked to the emergence of Decadence and, by extension, Aestheticism.During this time of cultural crisis, the New Woman figure and the homosexual emerge in Gothic fiction as narrative expressions of these anxieties in forms that enact the displacements and repressions resulting from pressures to conform to narrowly constructed ideals. Texts were colored not only by the effects of these social and psychic pressures on society, but from the effects of repression that the authors suffered themselves.

Thus, Victorian Gothic differs from late-eighteenth century Gothic fiction particularly in terms of the gendered nature of early Gothic narratives, based on whether they were written by men or women. This distinction reflects gendered experiences and anxieties concerning sexuality, power, and socio-political themes. Female Gothic, Ann Radcliffe’s *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) for instance, often features a victimized, virginal, powerless, and sexually repressed woman locked in an inescapable fortress—either physical or metaphorical—who is pursued by villainous men. These figures tend to represent monstrous power as a threat to a fragile middle class and emerging representational political arrangements. Male Gothic, on the other hand, such as Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Ontranto* (1764), is often seen as the more transgressive of the two types, typically disrupting normative gender patterns and using women to make cultural, sexual, and emotional statements. Less so than a reflection of the political changes surrounding this period, these authors used women as a vehicle for their own sexual and emotional expression. Victorian Gothic, with its construction of ambiguously gendered figures, reflects fundamental psychic and cultural anxieties arising from more stringent sexual ideals and social policing, themselves symptoms of perceived cultural and psychic Decadence.

The struggle against infectious forces marks these texts, registering Victorian discursive preoccupations with the infectious nature of vice, sin, and disease. *The Strange Case of Jr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Dracula* both register these anxieties through the symbolism of civilized individuals harboring a queer “Other.” In one case, Jekyll’s repression actually causes Hyde, his monstrous double, to lash out at society and make himself a legitimate criminal, as a murderer, although the real sexual vice he is suspected of is sodomy, either past or present. *Dracula* features the threat of a foreign Other invading and infecting the pure, heteronormative bodies of the Victorian middle class. Decadence in these types of Gothic texts ensures that patriarchal society has a set of figures readily available to carry the weight of the societal transgressions that they have displaced upon them to keep the upper classes safe. Thus, what we have come to call Gothic monsters function in a sense as patriarchal tools not only to use as an aid in preserving Victorian heterosexual identity, but also to provide the patriarchy with scapegoats to evade the results of their own criminality.

In fact, by fictionalizing these forces, Gothic texts also serve as means of critique of this ideology. The Gothic as a whole re-emerges at times of cultural crisis reflecting some powerful “psychological disturbance” while also functioning as a “penetrating social critique” (Byron and Punter 30). However, as Byron and Punter note of Victorian Gothic, “the real problem is not the existence of some more primitive and passionate internal self, but the force with which that half must be repressed in accordance with social conventions” (41). Thus, these narratives enact the repressive forces and anxieties that their normative characters fight against. The transgressive characters of Carmilla, Dracula, Lucy, Mina, and Hyde thus represent more than just the “horror of dissolution” of society, the family, gender norms, and the human subject (43). The Gothic novels that feature these characters, published in each of the last three decades of the nineteenth century, suggest repression harms society precisely in the form of the monsters created by repressive forces. As cultural representations of the socio-political landscape, the primary texts in this study—*Carmilla*, *The Strange Case of Jr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Dracula*—feature the destruction of the Other created in terms of patriarchal anxieties and concomitant male homosexual panic.

Published in 1871, Irish ghost story writer Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* bridged the gap between the sex-less Romantic era monsters, such as Frankenstein, and the aggressively sexual Victorian monsters of that era’s Gothic fiction. Published twenty-five years before Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, the novella celebrates pure female friendships and expresses the patriarchy’s repressive effects in the form of forbidden female agency. Isolated in a “schloss,” or manor, in Eastern Europe, Laura awaits the day when she can finally meet a female friend to cure her loneliness and fill the void left by the death of her mother, whom she lost as a newborn. However, the arrival of Carmilla, an ancient vampire disguised as a vulnerable young girl, turns this desire for female companionship into something more perverse, as Carmilla begins seducing Laura through a combination of girlish charms and masculine sexual seduction. The story’s lesbian quality differs little from other representations of sexual desire in Victorian literature in that it is suppressed and coded, but not so much that the meaning behind Carmilla’s embraces and affection for Laura can be misunderstood. Although she is a socially marked female, Carmilla’s bodily femininity is at odds with her masculine mind and intense sexual desire. Her masculine qualities, specifically her aggressiveness, mark her as a danger to the men around her because she threatens to take their women away and usurp the men’s role in society. In the presence of lesbian sexuality, no family unit can be stable or safe, so she must be destroyed to protect patriarchal norms.

The historical significance of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is that the novella was published in 1886, just a year after the Labouchère Amendment was passed in Britain’s House of Commons. This amendment, which put Oscar Wilde in jail for “gross indecency,” sparked a panic among Victorian homosexual men, who feared their own imprisonment and shame. Dr. Henry Jekyll and his beneficiary Mr. Edward Hyde embody these anxieties. The narrative begins with a lawyer named Gabriel Utterson, who hears about Hyde from his cousin Richard Enfield. When pointing out the part of London’s Soho district where Hyde lives, Enfield offers a description rife with imagery and symbolism of homosexual sex. After learning that the brutish and abhorred Hyde is somehow connected to Jekyll, a respected gentleman, Enfield and Utterson suspect them of a homosexual relationship that is either ongoing or based in their youthful past. In truth, Hyde is merely the separated half of Jekyll, providing the doctor with an escape from repressive sexual and moral norms in the form of a body capable of living out his perverse fantasies. Utterson’s journey to discover the truth and Jekyll’s consequent suicide reflects the deadly aspect of modern Victorian sexual repression, which always ends in criminalization and/or death of the homosexual. Themes of the double, moral vice, and blackmail mark Stevenson’s novella as one that deals with homosexuality in blatant, yet coded terms so that only those knowledgeable of the shadowy, underground worlds would recognize the truth.

*Dracula* was published in 1897, four years before the death of Queen Victoria, timely enough to reflect the instability of the late-nineteenth century. Combining themes from earlier major Gothic works, Stoker’s novel features ambiguous genders and sexualities that register sexual anxieties in the form of a regression to a one-sex gender model. At the start of the novel, Jonathan Harker is an English solicitor traveling to Transylvania to meet the mysterious Count Dracula, who resides in Castle Dracula in the remote location of Eastern Europe. Here, he immediately notices several physical differences between himself and his host, which mark the latter as androgynous. Just as Harker begins to panic at this thought, he is confronted by Dracula’s three vampire wives, or sisters as he refers to them, in an encounter that enacts the androgynous vampiric body’s ability to elicit and illuminate hidden transgressive desires; in this case, his desire to be penetrated by their phallic fangs represents his unconscious desire for Dracula, a lust that frightens him. Through a series of feminine displacements, Dracula is able to have homosexual intercourse with both Jonathan and all members of the “Crew of Light”—Abraham Van Helsing, Arthur Holmwood, and Quincey Morris—as they seek to remove threats to heterosexual normality and patriarchy represented by vampires. Thus, desire between anatomical men in the novel can be concealed through “interposition[s] of an invisible femininity” in relation to Mina and Lucy’s female bodies as well as to Dracula and the feminized Jonathan (Craft 224).

The Victorian Gothic horror genre thus re-emerged to textualize Victorian obsessions with threatening reminders of a history marked by questions of identity and transgressions of borders, both geographic and psychosexual. Ironically, Victorians constructed their differences from the squalors of humanity only through the unceasing presence of those whom they detested. For instance, Jekyll cannot know he is only Jekyll and not Hyde, too, unless he can look at his hands and tell himself apart from the othered Hyde. Self-definition was an achievement dependent on this symbiotic relationship. Besides providing a means for patriarchal identification,late-Victorian Gothic sought to displace the immorality of the age onto monsters, evading punishment for patriarchal crimes and protecting their social positions. Beyond criminal deflection, these three texts reflect the fragility of patriarchal society and the male ego through the demonization of effeminate men and masculine women, who operate outside of their assigned gender roles.

Chapter II

*Carmilla*: The Aggressive Lesbian and the Masochistic “Angel”

*“After all these dreams there remained on waking a remembrance of having been in a place very nearly dark. . . . Sometimes there came a sensation as if a hand was drawn softly along my cheek and neck. Sometimes it was as if warm lips kissed me, and longer and longer and more lovingly as they reached my throat, but there the caress fixed itself.”*

Laura, *Carmilla*, p. 45

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu’s novella *Carmilla*, an influential yet lesser-known piece of vampire fiction, bridged the gap between early nineteenth-century Romantic vampires and Stoker’s Victorian spawns. As a true product of the Victorian era, the pages of *Carmilla* drip with sexual imagery and unresolved tension without ever explicitly stating the fact that the vampire Carmilla and her prey are lesbian tropes. Female intimacy often seemed innocent in Victorian Europe, but evidence suggests that Victorians were aware “that women [could] feel passion for each other” (Putzell-Korab 180). Thus, the “silent possibility” of lesbian activity can explain ambiguous female relationships in Gothic fiction. Sheridan, however, leaves almost nothing to the imagination in his lesbian-themed narrative. Carmilla’s destabilizing vampiric body, possessing both masculine and feminine characteristics, represents the threat posed by the New Woman and her complicit Other, the homosexual, specifically their ability to undermine gender identity. Furthermore, the demonization of her aggressive sexuality and glorification of Laura’s passive femininity critiques the masculine agency characterized by New Women. Carmilla’s sexuality does not make her a Gothic monster because of its lesbian quality but specifically for its aggressive masculine nature, represented through her sadomasochistic relationship with Laura, which casts them as the dominant male and female, respectively.

*Carmilla* was originally published in 1871, twenty-five years before *Dracula*, as a serialized story in the literary magazine *The Dark Blue*. Sheridan, a ghost story writer, employs one of the most recognizable and traditional elements known to female Gothic, which is that of the motherless, vulnerable woman isolated in a prisonlike manor. Sitting on Eastern European land, Laura’s pastoral “schloss” is carefully located in the “lonely and primitive” Austrian state of Styria (Le Fanu 5). Completing the oppressive atmosphere are authoritarian figures in charge of Laura’s future, specifically her father, who stifles Laura’s development by keeping her there as the angel in the house. The lonely nineteen year old’s wish for a companion is born from isolation, although it is not masculine company she desires. Because the Victorian ideal required a feminine passivity, friendships between women provided affections that did not rival their duties as wife and mother. Therefore, Laura could be contained to her schloss and still allowed a female companion. Loneliness emerges as a driving force behind Laura’s feminine desires, but that explanation does not explain Carmilla’s magnetism or the meaning of Laura’s attachment.

At this time in England, Laura’s father’s home country, “girlhood crushes” were tolerated as natural by some, while being considered a “cause for English concern” by others (Putzell-Korab 181-2). The theme of female relationships was a popular topic for many Victorian women writers, such as Dinah Craik. Her novel *A Woman’s Thoughts About Women*, published in 1858, addresses the possibility of romantic developments, imploring the public not to underestimate girlhood friendships: “This girlhood friendship, however fleeting in its character, and romantic, even silly, in its manifestations, let us take heed how we make light of it, lest we be mocking at things more sacred than we are aware” (qtd. in Putzell-Korab 182). If Craik thought that these friendships were “almost as passionate as first love,” her opinion of love between mature women is more equivocal:

It is the unmarried, the solitary, who are the most prone to that sort of “sentimental” friendship with their own or the opposite sex, which, though often most noble, unselfish, and true, is in some forms ludicrous, in others dangerous. For two women, past earliest girlhood, to be completely absorbed in one another, and make public demonstration of the fact, by caresses or quarrels, is so repugnant to common sense, that where it ceases to be silly it becomes wrong. (182)

Sexualized behavior of any kind between members of the same sex was labeled as perverse and even abusive, prompting the invention of “supplements” to cure the sexual aberrations of “misplaced or hopeless love” (183). This source of Victorian anxiety but not quite primal fear stemmed from the homosexual’s ability to evade and thus threaten the “natural” quality of the heteronormative social order. If the nature of feminine sexuality was to attract males through their passivity and its purpose to procreate, and not to seek pleasure, those indulging in same-sex relations threatened the gendered foundations of society.

The ambiguous nature of these textual relationships, ranging from girlhood friendship to youthful infatuation to mature love, which marked them for Victorian concern, was subject to demonization and ridicule. Undoubtedly Carmilla and Laura’s relationship takes a similar path, with Carmilla’s lavish affections and flamboyant language as the most obvious indicators, to the degree that Victorians would have had a hard time ignoring the story’s lesbian subtext. In her essay “Passion Between Women in the Victorian Novel,” Sara Putzell-Korab insists that lesbianism was prevalent in old French texts in no uncertain terms, and that British Victorians were certainly aware of them (181). In fact, it concerned them enough to ban suspect French texts from production in England. Therefore, fictional expressions of disguised connubial bliss often took seemingly natural but subdued forms of feminine touching, such as the grasping and squeezing of hands, the domestic intimacy of hair combing and stroking, and facial caresses—all of which occur between Carmilla and Laura. Thus, without depicting the act of sex or the girl’s sexual desire in certain terms,Le Fanu’s narrative remains within the bounds of respectability. Through a strategy of naturalized terms, Carmilla is able to seduce Laura without scaring the naïve girl away by aggressive action, making their relationship seem harmless by preying upon the young woman’s loneliness and craving for a surrogate mother.

With its beginnings in late nineteenth-century Europe, early psychoanalysis claimed that deficient mothering caused a so-called sexual inversion. Sigmund Freud described female erotic maturation as passing through psychic stages, which normally involved “transferring the love the little girl felt first for her mother to her father” (de Beauvoir 418). However, he noted that certain factors might hinder this development, resulting in the possible situation of a daughter remaining fixated on her mother. Later thinkers claimed that women’s maternal relationships themselves played a key role in the emergence of latent homosexuality, particularly through early parenting skills; both overprotective and “bad” mothers may drive their daughters to the arms of another woman, forcing them to seek either solace or the “same pleasure in new arms” (427).

According to such theories, then, Laura’s desire for a female companion and her lack of interest in men can be attributed to one important developmental event: her mother dying in her infancy. For unknown reasons, Laura develops no significant bond with her two female caretakers. Instead, she craves nothing more than the embrace of young, smooth skin and soft feminine flesh, resembling the kind of contact she has been denied since birth. Laura ignores the older, “motherly” women and seeks these experiences in the arms of younger women.

Thus, in Laura’s first meeting with Carmilla at the age of six, the lonely little girl finally feels the mothering touch she craves, when the vampire visits her bedroom at night. Ignoring the startling nature of the encounter, Laura welcomes the young woman’s caresses and drifts off comfortably in her presence:

I saw a solemn, but very pretty face looking at me from the side of the bed. It was that of a young lady who was kneeling, with her hands under the coverlet. I looked at her with a kind of pleased wonder, and ceased whimpering. 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. (7)

Laura initially enjoys the young woman’s company, but she recoils when a moment of maternal bonding becomes painful as the ghostly girl transforms into a succubus, a female supernatural entity appearing in dreams. Feeding on Laura and reversing the act of breastfeeding, Carmilla becomes a monstrous mother and terrorizes the little girl: “I was wakened by a sensation as if two needles ran into my breast very deep at the same moment, and I cried loudly” (7). Furthermore, this encounter initiates their sadomasochistic relationship and frames Laura’s rejection of heterosexuality through Carmilla’s forceful rape-like penetration.

In *The Second Sex,* social theorist and feminist Simone de Beauvoir speaks of sexual intercourse as a bodily trauma that always constitutes a form of rape. Thereby, vaginal sex becomes a brutal but entirely necessary process that changes a girl into a woman once she is “snatched from her childhood universe and thrown into her life as a wife by a real or simulated rape” (384). Carmilla shows no mercy toward her prey and pierces her with phallic fangs, a male intervention constituting a kind of rape that defines a woman’s sexual initiation. By claiming Laura through masculine force, Carmilla establishes her ownership over the young girl, which will manifest once Laura reaches the age of social and sexual maturity.

Carmilla’s one-sex body, marked by both male and female genitalia with the mouth of all vampires, makes her the “invader” encroaching upon the “occupied territory” of the female body through fanged intercourse and a sharing of blood in the place of semen (Meyers 11). As a theory of female victimization, intercourse turns all women into “Gothic heroines” awaiting defilement. Substituting feminine power for masculine power would result in the “same economy of social difference,” wherein the passive female is still dominated by the aggressive female in a lesbian embrace. Penetration, of any kind, is a victimization associated with “violation” and an “erosion of female integrity,” and we see this plainly in the way Laura reacts to the rape in her childhood and at the end of her journey, when it is clear that her experience with Carmilla has inevitably left her in declining health (41).

Laura’s first sexual encounter, traumatic as it is, frightens her into a perpetual state of nervousness and borderline hysterics, as she begins to fear heterosexual intercourse. Deflowering, in this story, does not constitute the harmonious outcome of Freud’s continuous development of female sexuality, but rather it is a Beauvoirian moment that severs present from past. Under this theory, penetration signals the beginning of a new identity, wherein a woman chooses either to continue heterosexual relations or remain as she had been. Frightened for the first time in her life, Laura remains “nervous for a long time after this” (8). A subsequent visit from an old priest with a “sweet and gentle” face is comforting to her because his age nullifies him as a possible threat: “I remembered so well the thoughtful sweet face of that white-haired old man, in his black cassock, as he stood in that rude, lofty, brown room” (9). In fact, his passivity contrasts with the later aggressiveness of her father, the doctors, and General Spielsdorf. The cruel juxtaposition of his kindness and Carmilla’s painful masculine embraces supports Laura’s fear that masculinity equates to aggressiveness. Masculine touch becomes aggressive once ownership of the passive female has been solidified through penetrative sex. Fear of a union marked by violence, a result of her youthful rape, signals Laura’s later rejection of heterosexual identity.

Until her reunion with Carmilla, Laura’s desires a socially acceptable friendship with General Spielsdorf’s niece, Bertha, who consumes Laura’s constant anticipative “day dream[s]” for weeks (10). When sudden and disheartening news of Bertha’s death reaches the schloss, it crushes Laura’s hopes for a meaningful acquaintance: “Though I had never seen Bertha Rheinfeldt my eyes filled with tears at the sudden intelligence; I was startled, as well as profoundly disappointed” (12). However, the loss of what might have been strengthens her longing for female companionship, the disappointment priming her to welcome the new girl who now enters her life. Both Laura’s fearfulness of masculine embraces and the void left by Bertha leaves her vulnerable.

Laura’s complete lack of desire for masculine caresses also leaves her open to feminine seduction, which is exactly what happens when Carmilla re-enters the scene. On the night in question, Laura, her father, and her maids watch as Carmilla’s carriage races with a wild abandon through the road leading to the hidden mansion. Once it crashes, Laura waits in “silence” as her caretakers advance in “curiosity and horror” at the sight of the overturned carriage, a matter of good will prompting them all to help (14). The curious situation rationalizes the otherwise unlikely circumstance of welcoming a total stranger into their household, serving perhaps as a cautionary note about such practices. While Carmilla’s so-called “mother” implores Laura’s father to let her daughter stay with them, Laura is delighted at the possibility and wants nothing more than to see the young girl at the center of the spectacle. She tries to do so once the austere woman leaves, yet Mademoiselle De Lafontaine stops her before she can overexcite the other girl. “As soon as she is comfortably in bed,” Laura thinks, she will run up to Carmilla’s room and see her, and so she does (17). Here, she again finds herself alone with Carmilla in the closed, private sanctuary of a bedroom, her pale face the one Laura recognizes as that which has haunted her dreams since childhood. Thus begins the seduction.

The Freudian uncanniness of this familiarity sets Laura on edge, but in the darkness of the stately candlelit room, taking in Carmilla’s “slender pretty figure,” she finds reciprocating desire in the alluring quality of the other woman’s dark eyes (20). Linda Williams’s theory of the female gaze in narrative cinema, particularly horror films, provides a context for understanding Laura’s response to Carmilla’s intense gaze. This theory suggests that a woman, hypnotically locking eyes with the object of her desire or horror, empathizes and connects with the monster staring back at her. This “identification between monster and woman,” since they both share the status of the “object of the viewer’s scopophilia,” can situate sexuality within this monstrous form of looking, because the “monster’s power is one of sexual difference from the normal male; thus, the monster functions like woman” (Case 206). Laura is so terrified by this shared gaze and the climax of her desire that Carmilla must break the spell by claiming to have seen Laura in a dream years ago. Although Laura fancies something strange in Carmilla’s gaze, she gives in to her affectionate and pretty personality:

I took her hand as I spoke. I was a little shy, as lonely people are, but the situation made me eloquent, and even bold. She pressed my hand, she laid hers upon it, and her eyes glowed, as, looking hastily into mine, she smiled again, and blushed. (21)

William’s theory of the female gaze suggests that Carmilla is a monstrous Other who poses a threat to Laura’s Victorian feminine ideal, thus acting as the masculine agent that would destroy the girl’s sexual purity. Coded as a vulnerable young woman, however, Carmilla at first neutralizes her own threat by insinuating that her attraction to Laura is not sexual in nature.

Carmilla’s expression of her desires ranges first from a careful naturalization of affection to a more sensual, romantic language whenever speaking to Laura as the novella progresses. This seems perfectly natural, considering their circumstances of isolation, loneliness, and the link to each other through their supposed shared dream. However, the vampire is acutely aware of Laura’s hesitance, and thus acts accordingly. Since passion between women is “limited in its physical expression . . . preparing for and reminding the women of heterosexual passion,” Carmilla must at first naturalize her attraction to Laura as a response to her youth and beauty so as to keep Laura at ease and not remind her of their painful first encounter (Putzell-Korab 186). In this way, Carmilla disguises her sexual interest when telling Laura about a fictitious nightmare she once had involving the younger girl:

“[W]hile I was still upon my knees, I saw you—most assuredly you—as I see you now; a beautiful young lady, with golden hair and large blue eyes, and lips—your lips—you as you are here. Your looks won me; I climbed on the bed and put my arms about you. I was aroused by a scream; you were sitting up screaming.” (22).

Because of their meeting twelve years prior, the vampire claims that she already has a “right to [Laura’s] intimacy” (22). This declaration perturbs the human girl, and she feels “unaccountably towards the beautiful stranger,” put off by but also drawn to her intensity, which suggests a forbidden sexual desire in an equally foreign form of masculine domination. However, Carmilla has already “won” her: “I did feel, as she said, ‘drawn towards her,’ but there was also something of repulsion. In this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed” (21). Desperate for affectionate contact, and vulnerable in her loneliness and lack of maternal nurturing, Laura falls under the spell of the “most beautiful creature,” as she admits young people often do who “like, and even love, on impulse” (23).

Laura’s search for a feminine substitute for lost affection makes her vulnerable to a perverse form of control and domination, one rooted in patriarchy and resulting from female rejection of the feminine submissive role. The distinction between girlhood and maturity, a predominant theme in *Carmilla,* takes the form of Laura’s seduction by Carmilla, through which she gains control over the young girl. Laura, assuming the traditional female, that is passive, role, submits to the aggressive Carmilla. The uncanniness of their sexual play lies in Carmilla’s socially marked female body and its juxtaposition with her aggressive masculine sexuality. Not only is she an emasculating figure because of her toothed vagina—a mouth set off by sharp teeth—but also because of her usurpation of masculine authority. Instead of allowing a man to deflower Laura, Carmilla assumes that role and continues to do as their relationship progresses. Thus, in her female embodiment of masculine forms of power, Carmilla becomes an emasculating monster representing a double threat to patriarchy, from her power to usurp masculine control over women and her power to castrate.

Traditional Freudian psychoanalysis of sexuality focuses on the fear of castration that men feel from gazing at women, who anatomically embody this grotesque concept with the absence of a penis, largely ignoring women’s effect on other women. In his seminal paper, “The Uncanny,” Freud employs the words *heimlich* to signify that which is familiar and yet terrifying, concealed and kept out of sight; its opposite, *unheimlich*, refers to that which should have remained hidden but has come to light (Wolstonholme 10). From the standpoint of the male’sgaze, a woman’s sexuality is uncanny because it represents a “return” and a reminder of his “origins,” and thus a woman’s gaze and sex are “uncanny, terrifying,” suggesting “terrible power over men.” To support these theories, feminist psychoanalytic film theorist Barbara Creed presents the idea of the Medusa’s head, which expands upon our ideas of women as the objects of desire in the male gaze. In her book *The Monstrous-Feminine*, the myth of the woman as the castrator centers on the concept of the *vagina dentata*, or toothed vagina, in which a woman’s sex transforms into a Venus flytrap type of “black hole which threatens to swallow [men’s penises] up and cut them into pieces” (106). The *vagina dentata* implies that women’s duplicitous nature promises paradise in order to snare her victims, meaning that female sexuality, either deriving from pleasure or the necessities of procreation, is both demonic and dangerous. Carmilla destabilizes gender binaries as she straddles the border between masculinity and femininity, gendered norms, and social order between the sexes. Furthermore, her vampiric body represents the dual threat of the phallic, penetrating male and the castrating, emasculating female with her anatomical genitalia.

Because of heraggressive sexuality, Carmilla has a roving masculine gaze that objectifies women, but she also engages in the promiscuous behavior that marks patriarchal views of autonomous New Women.Although Laura does not realize this until the end of her journey, General Spielsdorf warns her and her father of this threat before their fateful meeting. After Bertha’s tragic death, the General writes a letter to her father, distractedly telling of things he “scarce dare put upon paper”:

I thought I was receiving into my house innocence, gaiety, a charming companion for my lost Bertha. Heavens! What a fool have I been! . . . I thank God my child died without a suspicion of the cause of her sufferings. She is gone without so much as conjecturing the *nature* of her illness, and the accursed passion of the agent of all this misery. I devote my remaining days to tracking and extinguishing a monster. . . . I curse my conceited incredulity, my despicable affectation of superiority, my blindness, my obstinacy—all—too late. (11)

At the end of the story, Spielsdorf confides in Laura and her father the exact manner in which this “monster” killed Bertha. In an act of perceived strangulation that reveals a more sinister and devious mode of destruction, the woman known to the General and his niece as “Millarca” steals into Bertha’s bedroom at night. There, the General witnesses her becoming a figureless blackness seizing the girl’s throat with the sexual symbolism of forced fellatio: “I saw a large black object, very *ill-defined*, crawl, as it seemed to me, over the foot of the bed, and swiftly spread itself up to the poor girl’s throat, where it swelled, in a moment, into a great, palpitating mass” (77). In the same scene, Carmilla is metaphorically a raping, penetrating man with the phallic symbols of her fangs and her black, strangling, chasm, devouring innocent women. Neither men nor women are safe from her sexuality.

In her queer female relationships, Carmilla’s possessive passion and lesbian sexuality, Victorian obstacles obstructing the possibility of heterosexuality and thus her victim’s happiness, manifests many times throughout the novella. She expresses her desire for Laura through touch and through passionate expressions in her dark eyes, often gazing at Laura with longing and a “fond and melancholy gaze” that ultimately controls the younger girl, who often finds the vampire’s eyes on her (23). Speaking with passionate language and trapping Laura in “trembling embrace[s],” Carmilla slowly dilutes the disguise of natural feminine affection:

She used to place her pretty arms about my neck, draw me to her, and laying her cheek to mine, murmur with her lips near my ear, “Dearest, your little heart is wounded; think me not cruel because I obey the irresistible law of my strength and weakness; if your dear heart is wounded, my wild heart bleeds with yours. In the rapture of my enormous humiliation I live in your warm life, and you shall die—die, sweetly die—into mine. I cannot help it; as I draw near to you, you, in your turn, will draw near to others, and learn the rapture of that cruelty, which yet is love . . .” (25)

But the reality of sexual maturation and the death of purity along with violation of social norms frighten Laura, who wishes to extricate herself from these ardent embraces. She experiences a “strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasurable” but that which is mingled with a “vague sense of fear and disgust” (26). Her affection for Carmilla grows into a love of adoration but also abhorrence, representing her struggle against patriarchal expectations and the desire to give in to her lusts.

To Laura’s equal dismay and pleasure, Carmilla frequently acts upon her feelings, making the girl uneasy with her displays of affection. Freudian and Beauvoirian analysis says that the source of this discomfort is that her feminine caresses remind Laura of her brutal sexual initiation. By holding Laura’s hands with “fond pressure,” “blushing softly,” and gazing at her face with “languid and burning eyes,” Carmilla works herself up into a state of tumultuous respiration (26). The sexual connotation of this orgasmic exertion was not lost on Victorian readers, who were well aware of the meaning from Le Fanu’s undisguised diction. Indeed, Laura is agitated and disquieted by her displays:

It was like the ardor of a lover; it embarrassed me; it was hateful and yet overpowering; and with gloating eyes she drew me to her, and her hot lips traveled along my cheek in kisses; and she would whisper, almost in sobs, ‘You are mine, you shall be mine, you and I are one for ever.’ Then she had thrown herself back in her chair . . . leaving me trembling. (26)

Laura at first thinks of these dogmatic articulations of affection as just that, saying to herself that these declarations must be the “momentary breaking out of suppressed instinct and emotion” (27).

Masculine domination and feminine submission set Carmilla and Laura apart as open and hesitant lesbians, respectively, as Carmilla’s one-sex body complicates this power play. Laura remains fond of Carmilla, notwithstanding the older woman’s masculine aggressions, mostly because of her intense desire for female companionship. She wonders for a brief moment if her mysterious friend is but a boy in disguise, for that would be the only explanation for such romance to exist in her naïve, inexperienced mind. Laura’s uncertainty is furthered by Carmilla’s fluctuating moods, which range from girlish gaiety to brooding melancholy. In this state, in which her “eyes so full of melancholy fire” follow Laura, her languorous femininity is essentially her feminine form warring against her active, masculine mind (27). Carmilla seeks to control the more feminine Laura through an assertion of misplaced patriarchal authority and her vampiric gaze, which becomes masculine by objectifying the younger girl. As the story progresses, Carmilla’s treatment of Laura becomes more blatantly sexual, possessive, and aggressive in turn as her frustration and anger grow due to the masculine forces around her keeping Carmilla from what she desires.

Usurping the sadistic masculine role yet again, Carmilla’s first real display of anger and dominance presents itself when she is confronted with the funeral procession of a girl whom she has presumably killed. When Laura begins singing a hymn, Carmilla shakes her roughly and demands that she stop: “I resumed, therefore, instantly, and was again interrupted. ‘You pierce my ears,’ said Carmilla, almost angrily, and stopping her ears with her tiny fingers” (28). Once the procession has passed, Carmilla admits that it had made her “nervous,” and she reaffirms her love for Laura: “Sit down here, beside me; sit close; hold my hand; press it hard-hard-harder” (29). In the face of her own promiscuity, which symbolizes a form of cheating on Laura, Carmilla is distraught and panics by forcing unwanted contact on her love, who is horrified by this exchange:

[Carmilla’s] face underwent a change that alarmed and even terrified me for a moment. It darkened, and became horribly livid; her teeth and hands were clenched, and she frowned and compressed her lips, while she stared down upon the ground at her feet, and trembled all over with a continued shudder as irrepressible as ague. All her energies seemed trained to suppress a fit, with which she was then breathlessly tugging; and at length a low convulsive cry of suffering broke from her, and gradually the hysteria subsided. ‘There! That comes of strangling people with hymns!’ she said at last. ‘Hold me, hold me still. It is passing away.’ (29)

Carmilla’s anger, derived from fear, manifests itself once again when a hunchback with lean features and “white fangs” visits the schloss. Doubling as the physical Other, the “monster” as Laura describes him, mirrors Carmilla’s own nature. The vagabond sells amulets and trinkets to ward off the roaming *oupire*, another term for *vampire*. Seeing Carmilla’s sharp tooth, “long, thin, pointed, like an awl, like a needle,” he offers to file it down for her, much to Carmilla’s horror (31). Here, like the female vampire, the hunchback represents a castration threat and is likewise dangerous.

Laura increasingly chooses to ignore the signs of Carmilla’s aberrance, revealing her own masochistic tendencies and her willingness to submit to a masculinized sexuality in feminine form. Thus, by the time that paintings from her mother’s Hungarian family are brought to the schloss, Laura welcomes this feminine love with a deeper understanding and acceptance of it. When she sees the portrait of her family’s matriarch, Mircalla, Countess of Karnstein in A.D. 1698, she immediately notices that it is Carmilla’s effigy and requests to hang it in her room. She and Carmilla ramble outside afterward and openly display their affection for one another, where Laura admits that “there is, at this moment, an affair of the heart going on” (36). They walk and talk like two lovers:

“And so you were thinking of the night I came here?” she almost whispered. “Are you glad I came?”

“Delighted, dear Carmilla,” I answered.

“And you asked for the picture you think like me, to hang in your room,” she murmured with a sigh, as she drew her arm closer about my waist, and let her pretty head sink upon my shoulder.

“How romantic you are, Carmilla,” I said. “Whenever you tell me your story, it will be made up chiefly of some one great romance.”

She kissed me silently.

“I am sure, Carmilla, you have been in love; that there is, at this moment, an affair of the heart going on.”

“I have been in love with no one, and never shall,” she whispered, “unless it should be with you.”

How beautiful she looked in the moonlight! (36)

However, Laura starts away from her companion after a more sinister admission from Carmilla interrupts this tender moment:

Shy and strange was the look with which she quickly hid her face in my neck and hair, with tumultuous sighs, that seemed almost to sob, and pressed in mine a hand that trembled. Her soft cheek was glowing against mine. “Darling, darling,” she murmured, “I live in you; and you would die for me, I love you so.” (36)

Perhaps spurred by Laura’s boldness this night, it is from this moment on that Carmilla no longer disguises her desires in natural terms.

Sexual attraction and love spurred not by conscious thought but by instinct and passion doom the naïve, still maturing Laura to a state of flux in which she is uncertain how to feel about Carmilla. It is, after all, with instinct that she initially walks in silence to the overturned carriage and her passionate affection that prompts her to desire Carmilla’s beauty for her and her alone. However, Carmilla is not in the category of homosexual women who “lose themselves passively in feminine arms” (de Beauvoir 420). Instead, she assumes the male’s functions of “tyrannical protector” and “respected lord,” setting up a power hierarchy between her and Laura (432). Since Carmilla’s sexuality is not determined by anatomical destiny, as she is the ghost of the ancient one-sex model, her gender is undoubtedly androgynous, as all vampiric bodies are (417). Because of this, Laura’s situation requires no simple choice between heterosexual and homosexual, as Beauvoir describes, since her vampire lover is both man and woman, feminine passivity and languidness coinciding with masculine aggression and exuberance. Thus, as an unwitting masochistic victim of her lover’s sadistic whims, Laura does not know how to save herself nor does she fully understand whether she even desires to extricate herself.

A vampire’s “kiss,” by nature, is inherently sadistic because power is in the hands of the penetrator, situating vampires in the same position as men since they are meant to dominate in heterosexual relationships. Carmilla herself explains to Laura that a vampire’s affection equates to “a cruel . . . strange love” that requires a sacrifice of blood (40). In her discourse on sadomasochistic Gothic couples in *Femicidal Fears*, Helene Meyers purports that male villains and the young, attractive females whom they cause to suffer are “muted versions of sadists and masochists” and that sadomasochism is where “Gothic, in a certain sense, wants to go” (60). To belong to the Victorian feminine ideal means to acknowledge that feminine passivity is directly linked to masochistic tendencies and that social conformity will require one to be masochistic. Hegemonic definitions of masculinity and femininity consequently lead to femicide, or the destruction of unnatural female sexual desire for other women. Thus, normalization of female desire involves sadomasochism, read as the “*script* of sexual difference” (63).

Carmilla’s display of her sadistic tendencies and sexual possession of Laura intensifies through power struggles with Laura’s father, escalating in violence as he increasingly limits her agency. The night after Laura’s father forbids Carmilla from leaving the schloss, Laura has a nightmare that begins “a very strange agony” (41). Lying in her bed, she convinces herself that she merely dreamed of a “sooty-black animal” resembling a “monstrous cat” creeping along beside her bed like a “beast,” until it approaches her and pierces her breast. In these dreams, she imagines some unclear figure kissing and caressing her body, continuing until she feels herself “a changed girl” (44):

Sometimes there came a sensation as if a hand was drawn softly along my cheek and neck. Sometimes it was as if warm lips kissed me, and longer and longer and more lovingly as they reached my throat, but there the caress fixed itself. My heart beat faster, my breathing rose and fell rapidly and full drawn; a sobbing, that rose into a sense of strangulation, supervened, and turned into a dreadful convulsion, in which my senses left me and I became unconscious. (45)

This lightly disguised sexual assault persists until Carmilla reveals herself momentarily as her attacker: “At the same time a light unexpectedly sprang up, and I saw Carmilla, standing, near the foot of my bed, in her white nightdress, bathed, from her chin to her feet, in one great stain of blood” (46). Here, Carmilla is the antithesis of the good Victorian woman, with her pure white nightdress soiled in the bodily fluid of blood, here a metaphorical female ejaculate and representation of lost virginity, equating to promiscuity. Out of fear and humiliation, Laura refuses to tell her father what happened. This attack begins a descent into failing health, in response to which Carmilla lavishes more affection on Laura as her own strength swells, Laura’s sense of “sinking” into death becoming a “not unwelcome” state (44).

Notwithstanding all the evidence of her abusive behavior, Laura still loves Carmilla with a fierce affection. Laura willingly succumbs and becomes the passive masochist because of her need to be “dominated, protected, rocked, and caressed like a child” by a woman who keeps her as a sexual “prisoner” (de Beauvoir 428). A sapphic embrace is the most satisfying because her femininity is worshipped by Carmilla, whereas there is no hope for such satisfaction in a purely heterosexual union. In a brief departure from her sadism, Carmilla reveals that she is aware of her abuse, and she expresses some regret at not giving Laura a normal and respectable life, or being able to marry her. However, she is finally committed to satisfying her greedy love, which also desires and requires domination.

The truth comes out in the ruined chapel near the Karnstein burial site, soon after General Spielsdorf tells Laura his account of his niece’s seduction and subsequent death by the vampire. But, even after hearing the General’s story, Laura gladly looks with love upon Carmilla’s beautiful face and figure as she enters the chapel, reflecting the strength of her desire. However, when Carmilla and the General recognize each other, the two lash out at one another, revealing her masculine strength and her ability to weaken men with a numbness that will only be “slowly, if ever, recovered from” (87). Following her exposure, the men engage in the traditional ritual of vampire killing. They locate Carmilla’s body, lying prostrate in a coffin filled with blood, and desecrate it by driving a “sharp stake” through her heart, before her head is “struck off” amidst a torrent of blood (82-3). Thus, the castrating threat is itself castrated and emasculated by removing the source of her uncanniness and anatomical hermaphroditism. In the wake of this shocking scene, Laura lives in the “shadow of unspeakable horror” until her own death, the experience acting as a catalyst for an imposed solitude (84).

As a monster seeking “artful courtship[s]” with women, Carmilla could have achieved acceptance, sympathy, and consent from her female victims, a need stemming from the brutal assault in which she herself was adopted into the shadowy realm of the vampire (85). Yet, her insistence on replicating masculine violence and vehemence destroys the love Laura has for her and facilitates the girl’s final rejection of heterosexuality, which leads to a failed life and early death. Feeling no sadness for her former lover, Laura faces her life as a changed woman unable either to accept masculine embraces or to forget her lesbian experience. The memory of pleasurably succumbing to a masochistic yet feminine embrace forever unsettles Laura, who, despite the passage of time, remains haunted by the memory of Carmilla and of a lost affection: “[T]o 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” (87). Thus, a lesbian’s most threatening quality finds proof when Laura never marries and reproduces, unable to fulfill her God-given role in the patriarchal system.

Chapter III

*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde:* Repression and Homosexual Anxiety Inside Stevenson’s Cabinet

*“I not only recognized my natural body for the mere aura and effulgence of certain of the powers that made up my spirit, but managed to compound a drug by which these powers should be dethroned from their supremacy, and a second form and countenance substituted, none the less natural to me because they were the expression, and bore the stamp, of lower elements in my soul.”*

Dr. Henry Jekyll, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, p. 69

Under the 1885 Labouchère Amendment, proposed by politician Henry Labouchère in late-Victorian Britain, sex between men constituted a gross indecency with a punishment of imprisonment and hard labor, if found convicted. Since “certain intense male bonds” were not readily distinguishable from “perverse” embraces during that time, anxiety became the “normal condition of the male heterosexual entitlement” (Sedgwick, “Beast”245). Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, published only a year later,explores this condition. In this state of Victorian anxiety, patriarchs fear the loss of control and homosexuals fear shame, the two types of fear embodied at different times within the sexually ambiguous Gabriel Utterson. However, more than being a treatise on Victorian paranoia and homosexual anxiety, the novella’sending warns us of sexual repression’s dangerous effects. As a Gothic monster, Hyde’s body represents a “collaboration between the masculine and feminine that subverts the identity of each” (Doane and Hodges 63). The threatening effeminacy of Jekyll’s sexually ambiguous half implies that all men are susceptible to having their patriarchal control subverted by the beast concealed inside all of us. Because Hyde is the conjured double of Jekyll’s perverse fantasies, the doctor is forced to kill the monstrous representation of his inner divided self in order to preserve his social status and avoid the shame and criminalization—the ultimately result of homosexual “outings.”

Published a year after the Labouchère Amendment passed in the House of Commons, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* thus invites attention to the dual themes of the double and of secrecy among men. Read in these terms,Edward Hyde embodies these very cultural fears as Jekyll’s monstrous creation. At that time,Gothic monsters were, etymologically speaking, meant to demonstrate or warn the public of something dire, and Hyde’s physical appearance and inhumane actions provide a visible warning of the results of “vice and folly,” coded as sexual transgression (Byron and Punter 263). Hyde is thus the displaced embodiment of repressed perverse tendencies, on display as a warning to society as a whole. By situating monsters against heterosexuals within a story, Victorian authors used their differences to police the boundaries of the human, pointing to those lines that must not be crossed. They, the displaced embodiment of perverse tendencies, were repressed as an example to show society how nonconformity could ruin lives. These tools of patriarchy, displacement, and repression arose with the advent of the Industrial Age, when traditional social, political, and economic systems were replaced by democratic, industrial, and capitalist systems that generated new forms (20).

During this time in Victorian Gothic literature, the castles of the eighteenth century gave way to the stench of the squalid slums. Modern criminality was “Gothicized” and linked to the past by associating transgression and deviance with ancient, often Eastern, influences, while new sciences sought to theorize deviance (Byron and Punter 22). Sexual transgression and the collapse of social structure in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* reveals Victorian anxieties about homosexuals and the New Woman and a regression to a primitive and threatening world under a fragile, weakening patriarchy. Thus, the problem of maintaining physical and social boundaries is “at the heart of Stevenson’s story and of patriarchy itself” (Doane and Hodges 66).

Critics have suggested that the “cultural ambivalence” about sexual difference and the lack of cohesiveness apparent in Stevenson’s novella can be traced to his unconventional marriage to Fanny Vandegrift (Doane and Hodges 63). Stephenson actually thought of marriage as a doubtful enterprise that caused a “dangerous blurring of two people,” reflecting his personal concerns with boundaries (64). Many critics, as well as Stevenson’s colleagues and friends of the time, note that his own marriage was marked by an “unsettling” reversal of gender roles in which Fanny, a quintessential American gun-slinging, cigarette-smoking “New Woman,” invaded and appropriated male prerogatives and discourse (65). Labeled a “disturbing and challenging” woman herself, Fanny was embarrassed by her husband, who she claimed was prone to emotional outbursts and hysterics (67). These traits greatly feminized him in her perspective and in turn made her uncomfortable. She noted that “when his feelings [were] touched, he [threw] himself headlong on the floor and bursts into tears; and you never [knew] when either thing [was] going to happen” (qtd. in Doane and Hodges 65). Biographies of both Fanny and Stevenson express the couple’s uneasiness about the opposing roles they played.

As critics Janice Doane and Devon Hodges suggest, Fanny’s ambivalent effects on others parallels Jekyll and Hyde’s ability to attract or repulse, as well as the reversal of traditional masculine mastery and feminine submission that characterizes their relationship (68).Socially marked as a New Woman and known for her “violent femininity,” Fanny essentially functioned in a masculine role within the marriage (67). Stevenson himself described her as an “infinitely little” woman with a “Hellish energy” that was only relieved by “fortnights of entire hibernation” (qtd. in Doane and Hodges 68). This “violent fiend” was either adored or abhorred by society, not unlike Henry Jekyll and Edward Hyde. Critics thus assume that Stevenson modeled Hyde to some extent after his own wife. Like Fanny and her monstrous New Woman feminism, Hyde represents a perverse meshing of gender traits, which is the source of his off-putting nature.

Hyde’s narrative is controlled and sublimated through other men’s descriptions of his physical appearance and behavior. Jekyll’s lawyer and friend, Gabriel Utterson, is the primary narrator of *The Strange Case of* *Dr.* *Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Describing himself as a clumsy yet “austere” man of “rugged countenance,” he keeps his innermost thoughts private, never letting them find their way “into his talk” (5). Utterson is, in fact, one of the male characters whose sexuality is ambivalently depicted. A self-denying Calvinist who, on the other hand, would let his brother “go to the devil in his own way,” Utterson describes himself as the kind of man likely to be the last “reputable acquaintance” of “down-going” men because of his empathy for those in moral peril. While the lawyer’s own sexuality is never explicitly conveyed, Utterson’s relationship with his friend and distant cousin Richard Enfield, a “well-known man about town,” surprises those around him and causes gossip and rumors:

It was a nut to crack for many, what these two could see in each other, or what subject they could find in common. . . . The two men put the greatest store by these excursions, counted them the chief jewel of each week, and not only set aside occasions of pleasure, but even resisted the calls of business, that they might enjoy them uninterrupted. (6)

Without even having met Hyde, Utterson forms his own opinion from his friend’s description and takes his word as law. However, after Enfield relates his meeting with Hyde, their relationship is forever altered through the repression of Hyde and Jekyll’s supposed sexual transgression. Together, they avoid mentioning names and agree never to mention the incident again, as though the mere sharing of secret knowledge marks them as complicit in Hyde’s transgression.

The novella’s first chapter, entitled “Story of the Door,” features prominent homosexual imagery and narrates Enfield and Utterson’s discovery of their shared knowledge by way of introducing Edward Hyde to the story. Furthermore, Enfield’s queer language and description when telling the story of his first meeting with Hyde colors the way the Hyde is seen in the rest of the story. Hyde’s residence lies in the slums of London’s Soho district, within a “sinister” building and behind a “door on the lower story” equipped with “neither bell nor knocker,” imagery that suggests both the disreputable character of the neighborhood and the secrecy necessary to a transgressive lifestyle (7). Enfield, spotting the “blistered” door of sordid neglect on a walk with Utterson one day, remarks upon a strange encounter with the “little man” who lives here, saying that he was “like a man” but more that of a “damned Juggernaut,” a term that Stephenson’s readers would associate with foreign fanaticism and primitive passions (8). As he begins telling the story of his encounter with Hyde, one marked by violence, his narrative sets the bias against Hyde.

Enfield primarily describes Hyde through his effect on other spectators, who cannot describe him directly, suggesting his unspeakable character. After witnessing Hyde trampling a young girl to the ground, Enfield remarks upon the “Juggernaut’s” passivity as he makes no resistance to being held for the police, even as the mob around him express their loathing of him. Turning white with the desire to kill him, they threaten to humiliate and “out” him in the public sphere: “We told the man we could and would make such a scandal out of this, as should make his name stink from one end of London to the other” (8). Essentially blackmailing him, a key queer Gothic theme in the story, they force him to pay ten pounds and write out a check, which bears the name of a well-known man, later revealed to be Jekyll. Perturbed by this, Enfield almost refuses to believe that a man can “walk into a cellar door at four in the morning and come out with another man’s cheque,” because it immediately suggests the presence of homosexuality (9). “Blackmail,” says Enfield, is presumed to be the only reasonable explanation for the extortion of a respectable man from someone such as Hyde. The only other alternative implies a willing complicity in an intimate relationship, a situation that would mean imprisonment for unlawful acts and death of his social standing, prompting Jekyll’s friends to remain silent.

Their denial and refusal to articulate the implications of the check is significant in that it reveals that both Enfield and Utterson were well aware of what it was most likely for. To Utterson, Enfield’s use of the term blackmail would have immediately suggested sexual liaisons between men. Originating in sixteenth-century Scotland, the word was associated with accusations of “buggery,” or anal intercourse (Showalter, “Closet” 195). We see this mutual understanding in his quick response to Enfield’s assumption that the blackmail was payment for some “capers” of Jekyll’s youth: “From this he was recalled by Mr. Utterson asking rather suddenly: ‘And you don't know if the drawer of the cheque lives there?’” (10). Utterson’s question suggests that he suspects Jekyll of being in danger of becoming one of the “downgoing” men that he is accustomed to helping. Scholar Eve Sedgwick explains that blackmail was a crucial component of the “leverage of homophobia,” and fear of this “blackmailability” led many gay men to hysterics and suicide, which ultimately becomes Jekyll’s fate (*Between Men* 88). This crucial moment in the story gives Enfield and Utterson concrete information to suggest that something criminal either has transpired in the past or is currently taking place. Thus, they are in full control of Jekyll’s situation.

Consequently, Enfield and Utterson both collude as queer sympathizers in their agreement to keep the matter quiet. Utterson’s ambiguous nature, the result of his self-repression, is itself significant. In terms of a queer reading, he becomes a closeted patriarchal figure who tries to rationalize Hyde and Jekyll’s relationship. He suffers paranoia that he, too, will endure shame and blackmail if he comes out; thus, his self-repression and denial is born from fear. Enfield, on the other hand, would rather not know if someone in his social circle is indulging in such perverse, and now criminal, desires. Perhaps to protect himself from the scrutiny of his own secret transgressions, or perhaps simply to avoid association with criminality, he steers away from controversy: “No sir, I make it a rule of mine: the more it looks like Queer Street, the less I ask” (10). He seems to be a neutral figure to opposing sides, having no direct business with either the dark world of the homosexual or the safe realm of heteronormative behavior. While the phrase “Queer Street” was for Stephenson’s readership associated with financial difficulties, the remark reinforces the importance of maintaining secrecy among men who wanted to hide any sort of transgressions.

Through Utterson and Enfield’s observations, Hyde’s physical characteristics are described as being congruent with cultural descriptions of femininity, despite his demonstration of superhuman strength (Doane and Hodges 70). In addition to representing the New Woman, these feminine traits characterize him as monstrous and mark him as a homosexual since, in patriarchal culture, the male homosexual is monstrous “precisely because he embodies characteristics of the feminine” (Benshoff 6). Enfield has trouble pinpointing exactly what is “wrong” with Hyde’s appearance, but knows that his body is “displeasing” and “down-right detestable,” evoking a strong feeling of “deformity” that must exist “somewhere” unseen (11). This “dwarfish” and plainly dressed man with an odd, “light footstep” is prone to hissing, weeping “like a woman or a lost soul,” and skulking about (53). Many times Hyde is caught wearing Jekyll’s larger clothes, thus appearing physically like a woman trying to be a man, a description associated with the transgressive figure of the New Woman, who may choose to dress more like men.

Hyde’s hands are another signifier of his dual gender, which ironically are entirely masculine, while Jekyll’s are effeminized. Waking up one morning to find himself still in Hyde’s body, Jekyll analyzes the difference between the two men’s hands, which are finally shared by both. He describes this startling moment in the final account that he leaves for Utterson:

I was still so engaged when, in one of my more wakeful moments, my eyes fell upon my hand. Now the hand of Henry Jekyll (as you have often remarked) was professional in shape and size: it was large, firm, white, and comely. But the hand which I now saw, clearly enough, in the yellow light of a mid-London morning, lying half shut on the bed-clothes, was lean, corded, knuckly, of a dusky pallor and thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair. It was the hand of Edward Hyde. (75)

The feminine “white and comely” hands contrast with Hyde’s “corded” hands, which are marked with the masculine presence of hair.

Hands become another symbol for the duality of the self through the cultural meanings of right and left. Without a mirror to see, Jekyll must first identify himself by his hands. Handedness in the late-nineteenth century was related to brain dominance, so it was important to Victorians that their children were taught to use only their right hands, since some experts concluded that “normal, heterosexual” people were right-handed and “effeminate men and masculine women” were entirely or partially left-handed (qtd. in Showalter, “Closet” 197). Hyde’s handwriting, the focus of extra scrutiny by Utterson as he attempts to discover Hyde’s identity, comes to be associated with left-handedness, signifying his transgressive sexuality. Utterson’s analysis reveals that Hyde and Jekyll share similar handwriting, only that Hyde’s features a different slant. This reading is further supported by Stevenson’s compatriot Frederic W. H. Myers, who commented that “Hyde’s writing might look like Jekyll’s, done *with the left hand*.” The Victorian trope of the left hand connoted illicit sexuality and effeminacy, and Hyde’s is not the only reference to this association. In his letter to Dr. Lanyon, Jekyll tells his friend that in the young days of their Damon and Pythias friendship, he would have sacrificed his “left hand” to help Lanyon (58). Ultimately, he is confiding his double life to a friend as well as expressing his willingness to sublimate his animalistic desires if it benefitted someone whom he loved.

Hyde’s effect on those around him also points to a bodily response that associates him with both disease and, by extension, sexual transgression. Because of their outward displays of depravity, Victorian society transformed homosexuals into monsters or “figures of deformity” who threatened heteronormative culture with the “dark, unknown otherness of sexual transgression” (Haggerty, *Queer Gothic* 47). As theorist George Haggerty notes, the early-nineteenth century witnessed society’s vilification of homosexuals during sodomy trials and printed accusations, when the public physically attacked and covered the accused with filth, all manner of mud, rotten food, blood, and “dung” (46-7). In the novel, the public looks upon Hyde with disgust, a reaction resulting in nausea and loathing. The etymology of the word ‘*disgust*’means that basic physical responses to his appearance are bodily in terms (45). Therefore, coded terms such as “deformity,” “unspeakable,” “strange,” and the responses of loathing and disgust must suggest the presence of disease and the notion of sexual transgression because of the “ways in which [homosexuality] threatens to invade the cultural body” (46). These reactions are related to the concept of abjection, or the psychic rejection of the unacceptable, which Julia Kristeva adapted from Freudian psychoanalysis to describe the physical reaction to the horror of a breakdown in distinction between the self and the Other and, in Hyde’s case, masculine and feminine (47). Thus, Hyde’s socially constructed monstrosity produces a separate identity that, in its abjection, ceases to be human.

As a Victorian sodomite, Hyde is Jekyll’s abject other, and as such embodies a threat that exists from within and without, requiring Jekyll to separate Hyde from his acceptable half, just as Hyde is finally threatened with execution. Therefore, Hyde must be identified by patriarchal society to preserve both their safety and their identification, lest they be susceptible to criminalization. Labeling Hyde as the Other reaffirms patriarchal men’s undisputed masculine identity and identifies them as heterosexual men by demarcating the differences between Hyde and themselves.This ruthless process “born out of fear” promises that Hyde will become the figure of abjection for the culture at large (Haggerty, *Queer Gothic* 60). Haggerty describes this as a necessary event for Victorian identification, the need to separate heterosexuals from homosexuals to maintain clear boundaries:

The anger and exuberance of the attack on [homosexuals] depended to a certain extent on the fact that they had been hidden, lurking as it were in the midst of an unsuspecting urban population. Sodomites must be dealt with so severely, the public seems to say, because otherwise we might not know who they are. We might mistake them for our friends. (49)

“Story of the Door” exposes this last point through Enfield and Utterson’s insistence that Jekyll, a well-regarded colleague and friend of many who has much to lose from an inquisition, could not possibly be keeping a man on the side. Jekyll, by extension of his symbiotic relationship with Hyde, is dangerous precisely because he is one of them and yet also a closeted homosexual, or so his friends suspect.

Victorian sexual anxiety is also registered in the treatment of space in *The Strange Case of* *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, specifically the abject realm that Hyde occupies.During the latter half of the nineteenth century, European cities acknowledged the existence of homosexual “underworlds” (Benshoff 18). The squalor of Soho where Hyde lives, a hub of entertainment and the sex industry in recent history, was certainly known as one of those so-called underworlds. In descriptions of this district where debauchery ran rampant, series of images suggest associations with the male homosexual body and homosexual sex beyond Enfield’s description of the house and door of Hyde’s residence. The man in question only reveals himself at night amidst the “chocolate-colored” fog that hangs over the “dismal” streets of Soho, where the “back-end of evening” glows with a “rich, lurid brown” (28). Henry Jekyll’s “favorite” enters the blistered door of his home, which Utterson and Enfield discover is merely a back way to Jekyll’s residence. These observations are collected as damning evidence that leads to more suspicion and frustration, the strain of which puts pressure on Jekyll, who is, at this point, still believed to be the victim of blackmail.

The entire basis for Enfield and Utterson’s false assumption of Jekyll being blackmailed is the idea that the doctor is paying for a youthful vice, or “some old sin” in which he once indulged, at a period when sex could only be discussed in coded terms (21). This suspicion heightens after an unsuccessful trip to Jekyll’s home following Enfield’s story, after he hears of Hyde trampling the young girl. A conversation with Jekyll’s butler, Mr. Poole, alerts Utterson to the fact that Hyde comes to see the master of the house through the back door of the library. Thus, this information sends Utterson’s mind spinning down a dangerous trajectory:

“Poor Harry Jekyll,” he thought, “my mind misgives me he is in deep waters! He was wild when he was young; a long while ago to be sure; but in the law of God, there is no statute of limitations. Ay, it must be that; the ghost of some old sin, the cancer of some concealed disgrace: punishment coming, *pede claudo*, years after memory has forgotten and self-love condoned the fault.” (21)

Utterson sees Hyde as a haunting apparition of some sinful past business, most likely sexual in nature, and even envisions rape fantasies. He imagines Hyde as a “creature stealing like a thief to Harry’s bedside,” pulling back the curtain and forcing him to do his bidding, a description that suggests the form of Utterson’s fears (22).

At this point, Utterson still thinks of Jekyll as a victim who is paying a penance for his indiscretions, but another meeting with Jekyll forces him to confront the possibility of Jekyll’s real affection for Hyde. Once again, he visits Jekyll, who he now knows has named Hyde as the sole beneficiary in his will. As Jekyll’s lawyer, Utterson had known Edward Hyde’s name from the document, but he had assumed no queer relationship. While Jekyll’s face grows pale at the mention of Hyde, he assures Utterson that their relationship isn’t what he “fancies” (24). Instead, he rejects Utterson’s fears and claims that he can “be rid of Mr. Hyde” at any moment he chooses. This admission proves to Utterson that Jekyll is in control of his situation and that Jekyll is not keeping Hyde close simply out of obligation. Utterson and Enfield then fear that Hyde, who carries Jekyll’s checks and has full access to Jekyll’s laboratory and private spaces, is essentially a kept man.

Since Jekyll’s favor of Hyde supports Utterson’s criminal supposition, Utterson rationalizes Jekyll’s acceptability by locating his sin in his youthful past. Jekyll’s defense of Hyde and his admission that he can be rid of the man whenever he pleases works for a time to pacify Utterson, who does not really want to know details about others’ shameful actions. While Utterson has been obsessed to know the nature of their relationship, claiming that he will “be Mr. Seek” to “Mr. Hyde,” he now feels that he must allow Jekyll to go to the devil in his own way (17). A year of peaceful time passes between this meeting and the next major incident involving Hyde, at which time Utterson’s paranoia resurfaces.

Until this point, Jekyll has successfully concealed his duplicitous nature, casting the illusive Hyde as the only Other who is acting perversely. However, events occurring a year after his meeting with Utterson change this arrangement. After the brutal murder of Sir Danvers Carew, Utterson immediately suspects Hyde and visits Jekyll in his private laboratory. Description of the environment evokes imagery of Jekyll’s repression. Here, the lawyer marvels at the “dingy, windowless structure” and gazes around the theatre with a “distasteful sense of strangeness” before entering the cabinet, which featured three dusty windows barred with iron (32). The area is marked with signs of decay that, to the Calvinistic Utterson, suggest a concomitant moral degeneration. Jekyll has become increasingly trapped inside his home, which is traditionally the wife’s place as the angel in the house and thus coded feminine, but also represents psychic interiority. Following Hyde’s murder of Carew, the “deathly sick” looking doctor realizes that the “hateful business” with Hyde implicates his own character in the commission of the profoundly anti-social acts (33). Jekyll presents Utterson with a letter supposedly from Hyde, who assures Jekyll of his safety, and wordlessly agrees with the lawyer’s insistence that he had been forced to include Hyde in his will. This admittance at first calms Utterson since it “puts a better color on the intimacy [Utterson] had looked for,” and he blames himself for his past “suspicions” (34). When he learns that Jekyll has forged a letter for the murderer, however, he comes to the dark realization that Jekyll is covering for Hyde, and this time he believes it to be out of devotion and not obligation or fear.

After Carew’s murder, Jekyll’s anxiety resurfaces as Hyde’s behavior becomes more public and intrusive, enacting what Freud terms the *return of the repressed*, or the resurfacing of unacceptable, thus repressed, material in the form of acting out. Sigmund Freud believed that paranoia in men results from the repression of their homosexual desires. More recently, Sedgwick coined the phrase *male homosexual panic* to describe male fears arising from their vulnerability to social shaming and violence from other men (“Beast”246). If we are to think of the early events in the story as occurring in the year of its publication, then the event with Carew occurs a year after the important historical moment when homosexuals were being imprisoned. Thus, the story enacts Freudian events related to paranoia arising from the repression of homosexual desires. Utterson’s rising paranoia coincides with the increasing presence of Hyde and the very public expressions of his criminality. According to these terms, Jekyll suffers from homosexual anxiety because of his recognition that he is, in fact, what he fears and because he understands the social consequences of his transgressions. Utterson is one step behind him, still too paranoid to act on his own repressed lusts, and now witnessing the return of the repressed. Until he gained intimate knowledge of Hyde, Utterson had led a quiet, respectful life with a “fairly blameless” past (21). His bond with Jekyll forces him to confront Hyde’s monstrous nature and the shadowy, undefined world in which they all now live.

Since the Victorian ideal claimed that the body was the “ultimate guarantor of sexual difference,” Jekyll and Hyde’s shifting masculine and feminine qualities disturb the heteronormative categories that construct Utterson’s identity (Hendershot 11). Unlike the Victorian two-sex model in which men and women were separated by anatomy, one-sex bodies assume that social, not biological, difference separates men and women. Utterson’s obsession with Jekyll’s situation reflects the understanding of Gothic texts that only “casual contact” with a queer, one-sex body can contaminate a man or a woman, because the mere presence of the queer Other is so powerfully destabilizing (25). Although Utterson tries to lead his life accordingly, his friend Jekyll is himself the Other whom he tries to stow away in the closet in order to avoid contamination. Utterson’s fantasies take the form of “vicarious identification” with the down-going men to whom he remains loyal (Showalter, “Closet” 193). His obsessions with a one-sex body highlights his own inability to lead the life about which he fantasizes and which he must experience only through his fantasies about the relationship between the cultured Dr. Jekyll and the brutish, yet feminine Mr. Hyde results.

*Fin de siècle* images of forced penetration through locked doors into private cabinets, rooms, and closets permeate Stephenson’s novella as reminders of the repressed. Feminist literary critic Elaine Showalter explains that Stephen Heath believed “the organizing image for this narrative [to be] the breaking down of doors, learning the secret behind them” (qtd. in “Closet” 193). All along, Utterson attempts to force a confession from Jekyll, urging him to “make a clean breast” in confidence concerning his relationship with Hyde (24). While Hyde has a key to Jekyll’s house, the site of his intellect, bed, and secrets, Utterson can only make violent entries upon that space, a sign of his diminishing patriarchal influence. To save his friend, he breaks the door down with an axe in the book’s final pages. In his attempts to uncover Jekyll’s secrets and verify that Jekyll is a homosexual masquerading as a friend, Utterson becomes the homosexual himself by having metaphorical sex with a man. He forces his way into Jekyll’s private cabinet, where he finds a cheval-glass into which he sees his own “pale and fearful countenance” gazing with involuntary horror, an image of Utterson’s painfully repressed desires, reflecting his new identification as one of those monstrous homosexuals (56).

Finally, however, *The Strange Case of* *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* warns less of the dangerous repercussions of Victorian repression for the repressed individual than the repercussions for the patriarchal culture that constructs repression. Queer film analyst Harry Benshoff writes that an “Evil Hyde,” a gay or lesbian, lies inside everyone, striving to get out (1). These monster queers must be locked away in some closet to protect their secret, repressed and silenced by code terms: “strange,” “odd,” “deformed,” “unspeakable.” Jekyll represses his urges, caging the “roaring” beast, but freeing Hyde to enact them, thus leading to the death Sir Carew (78). As Hyde, Jekyll tastes “delight from each blow,” satisfied by the persecution of the patriarchal figure who represents the laws that force Hyde to hide—the laws that essentially call him into being (78).Some scholars interpret the act of Hyde killing Sir Carew as the act of a male prostitute robbing his client, certainly a theory with some support from a queer Gothic reading. Others, however, see Carew as a masculine heterosexual, and Hyde’s vicious attack as not just on one man but on patriarchal society as a whole. When facing this obstruction, the beast has no choice but to strike down that which seeks to destroy him. In this reading, repression and violence against the Other directly results in violence against the establishment.

The end of the story recounts Jekyll’s suicide, a not uncommon result of Victorian homosexual panic. After Sir Danver’s murder, there is no safe place in London for Hyde, and Jekyll loses access to the substance that transforms him. He has furthermore begun to lose control over the process as Hyde gains in strength and exerts his own control. Jekyll has confined himself within his isolated cabinet with barred windows and, over time, attempted to live an austere life and to abstain from transforming into Hyde, although he knows that this means to give up his alter ego. Jekyll is unable to comply with his decision, however. Before the experimentation with dual selves began, Jekyll stood already committed to a “profound duplicity of life,” in which he concealed his pleasures by assuming an ability to fragment himself into two, which gave him an out, allowing one half to “[plunge] in shame” and the other half to retain the respect of his society (67). His decision reflects his ongoing ambivalence and constructs both his choices as deadly in one way or other:

Between these two, I now felt I had to choose. . . . To cast in my lot with Jekyll, was to die to those appetites, which I had long secretly indulged and had of late begun to pamper. To cast it in with Hyde, was to die to a thousand interests and aspirations, and to become, at a blow and for ever, despised and friendless Hyde. . . . Yes, I preferred the elderly and discontented doctor, surrounded by friends and cherishing honest hopes; and bade a resolute farewell to the liberty, the comparative youth, the light step, leaping impulses and secret pleasures, that I had enjoyed in the disguise of Hyde. (77)

Despite his choice to abstain, the doctor still suffers some “unconscious reservation” and cannot bring himself to give up the house in Soho or to destroy Hyde’s clothes. However, Jekyll eventually is unable to quell the roaring beast inside him due to circumstances outside his control—the loss of the chemical that had allowed him to transform. To be sure, Jekyll had been losing control over the transformation as Hyde began to take over, suggesting the power of the repressed to enact the “throes and longings” of perverse desires (78).

As Hyde’s body and Jekyll’s mind have slowly morphed into one, Jekyll realizes his responsibility for Hyde’s actions and his continuing threat to society. Thus, his suicide letter reflects his fear that Hyde will endure and even that he will find the confession and tear it up, preventing his own extinction. At the end, Utterson hears a voice coming from inside the doctor’s locked cabinet begging him to have mercy. He recognizes that it is not Jekyll’s voice but Hyde’s. Hyde’s plea, begging the lawyer to have mercy, comes from his selfish desire to live (53). Toward the end of his life, Jekyll had been wrestling with the realization that Hyde was an irremovable part of him that, in the act of indulgence, now demands ownership of his body and soul. The “lower side” of Jekyll, that which was so long indulged and only recently “chained down,” now growls for license and paces the cage of repression that has become Jekyll’s body, as the drugs to no longer allow Jekyll to transform out of Hyde’s primitive state (80).

Jekyll’s final act, however, is to kill the monster by consuming a deadly concoction that ends both of their lives, thus enacting the most dangerous effect of Victorian repression: death. Faced with a formal outing, Jekyll ends their lives by consuming poison, traditionally seen as a woman’s method of killing. At this point, Jekyll is trapped within Hyde’s body; thus, the rational mind of Jekyll acts in a “spasm of homophobic guilt” to destroy them before Hyde can take complete control (Showalter, “Closet” 195). Hyde had become a miserable being who loathed the “despondency” into which Jekyll had fallen and “resented the dislike with which he was himself regarded,” which ultimately meant to Jekyll that Hyde would not have the “courage” to kill himself (84). To unleash Hyde onto the world would mean his further criminalization, which Jekyll had accepted as his own by this point. Destroying both of them protects Jekyll from the shame that would come following the revelation of their identity that surely would have happened. Faced with an impossible future in an era of persecution and imprisonment for homosexuals, neither had the energy left to continue playing the dangerous game of hide and seek. As a testament to the destructive power of 1880s homosexual panic, these “self-destroyer[s],” as Utterson calls Hyde, are among the countless victims of Victorian repression (54).

Chapter IV

*Dracula*: Threatening Vampiric Bodies, Emasculating Women, and Heterosexual Displacements of Queer Desire

*“And you, their best beloved one, are now to me, flesh of my flesh; blood of my blood; kin of my kin; my bountiful wine-press for a while; and shall be later on my companion and my helper. You shall be avenged in turn; for not one of them but shall minister to your needs. But as yet you are to be punished for what you have done.”*

Count Dracula, *Dracula*, p. 306

Published in 1897, Bram Stoker birthed *Dracula* amid the social and moral upheaval of a trial that signaled the coming end of the Aesthetic movement and the Victorian age. Many modern literary critics concur that the defamed life and career of Irish playwright and author Oscar Wilde, Stoker’s friend, compatriot, and romantic rival, influenced the sexual repression in the famously transgressive novel. At this crucial time in Victorian England, the New Woman and aesthetes, another coded label for homosexuals, undermined the patriarchy and traditional gender alignments by revealing masculinity to be a social construct, a quality that both men and women could possess. Understanding Victorian anxieties and Stoker’s own personal apprehensions, we can ascertain that his “Un-Dead” bodies, devoid of sexual difference, create a space for homosocial behavior to flourish under pretense. Further, desire between anatomical men can be concealed through an “interposition of an invisible femininity” in relation to Mina and Lucy’s female bodies as well as Dracula and the feminized Jonathan (Craft 224). These androgynous vampiric bodies elicit and illuminate hidden transgressive desires of the “Crew of Light”—Abraham Van Helsing, Arthur Holmwood, Quincey Morris, and Jonathan Harker—as they remove threats to heterosexual normality and patriarchy, while denying their own transgressive urges.

As literary critic Cyndy Hendershot claims in her seminal book *The Animal Within,* Gothic bodies are the ghosts of the one-sex gender model that assumes that social, not biological, differences distinguish men from women. By the Victorian era, scientists had established the two-sex model, in which biological sex is the marker of difference between male and female bodies. Therefore, Hendershot asserts, if the body is the “ultimate guarantor of sexual difference,” then Stoker’s one-sex vampiric body disrupts and disturbs Victorian assumptions about gender and sexuality (11). Without adequate anatomical difference, the biological features that distinguish the sexes collapse as markers of gender difference. The New Woman and the aesthete, replicated in these vampiric bodies, unhinge gender from biological sex and undermine male-dominated society.

Vampiric bodies threaten the Victorian two-sex model in numerous ways. For one, they allow both men and women the ability to fulfill the social roles of either sex regardless of anatomical difference. More significantly, however, they allow both men and women to exercise control over others, thus threatening the foundation of patriarchy. Van Helsing, a predominant patriarchal figure in the story, articulates this threat when he speaks of Count Dracula as the “father” or “furtherer of a new order of beings,” acknowledging the masculine aspect of Dracula’s power (321). However, Dracula also perverts “the holiest love” between man and woman for his own purposes, using it as a “recruiting sergeant for [his] ghastly ranks” (315). Dracula, an anatomical male, cannot give birth through “natural” means, but he can become a succubus taking the blood—symbolizing semen—and “creating” a new vampire, thus acting as both male and female in a perverse reproductive cycle. Without a physical birthing process, the multiplication of the Un-Dead by sharing blood-semen symbolizes a homosexual adoption in which there is no biological connection between parents and progeny. That heterosexual males in *Dracula* can neither preserve nor control their women as dutiful Victorian wives, nor protect their own roles as providers, mirrors Victorian panic over the disruption of normative masculine dominance. Furthermore, this perversion of the laws of human nature affects Victorian women just as well, as it usurps their cultural role as child-bearers.

*Dracula* illuminates gender ambiguity in sexual and social roles through a number of means, one of which involves the geographical and cultural binaries that are established during Jonathan’s trip to Transylvania. The novel immediately distinguishes between the Western European world, which is England and the “fairly well-known place”of Bistritz that Jonathan leaves (6), and the obscure Eastern realm, which “waste of desolation” that Castle Dracula represents (400). The symbolism of East and West echoes associations of primitive life versus civilization and even the symbolism of left versus right. Social order in Great Britain, where most of the story takes place, is juxtaposed to the androgyny and sexual deviance associated in *Dracula*, associating with the East in the same way that femininity and masculinity connote left and right with weakness and dominance.

The effects of the vampiric, Eastern Other on the heteronormative Victorian male are first registered by Jonathan as he crosses the threshold between the West and East, the known and the unknown. Later, imprisoned like a Gothic heroine in Castle Dracula, he likens himself to Scheherazade from *The Arabian Nights*, who herself is imprisoned and at the will of her male captor, when he notes that his diary seems “horribly like the beginning of the ‘Arabian Nights’” (35). Dracula’s eventual claim that Jonathan belongs to him is predicated on the assumption that Jonathan has become a part of Dracula’s “harem” and one of his “women,” a situation that Jonathan feels acutely whenever the Count directs anger at him (Hendershot 26). Supported by the Eastern location of the room that he occupies in the castle, Jonathan’s feminization assures that he becomes “the doubly Other as Dracula casts him in the role of the Eastern woman.” Insinuating that vampirism is a threat to his manhood, Jonathan will choose to risk dying as a man in an escape plot and later attempts to save what vestiges of masculinity he has preserved by marrying a woman. But even a heterosexual marriage, at this time, cannot restore his traditional role; in fact, his weakness implies an inability to have relations with his wife. Specifically, heterosexual relations among the key players cannot resume until all vampiric bodies are destroyed, thus marking the Crew of Light’s staunch position as a necessary factor in the preservation of the Victorian two-sex model (Craft 226).

Jonathan’s feminine coding, developed through an association with Eastern culture in light of Victorian ideals, begins as he prepares for his journey to Transylvania. His meetings with superstitious villagers sparks a small flame of panic that grows inside him as his control over his situation diminishes, at first surfacing when he is unable to “light on any map or work giving the exact locality of Castle Dracula” (6). This unease increases when he meets a man whom he immediately notices is much stronger than he: “Again I could not but notice his prodigious strength. His hand actually seemed like a steel vice that could have crushed mine if he had chosen” (19). Jonathan can never see the man’s face, merely the gleam of “very bright eyes” (14). Suspecting that the man was Dracula in disguise, Harker later realizes with horror that the Count, whose pallid and almost sexless body bears a weak physical appearance, can masquerade as a physically dominant man while possessing feminine traits. Exposure to his vampiric body slowly shatters Jonathan’s conventional Victorian beliefs regarding socially defined gender roles, thus beginning his own downward progression into a passive feminine sexuality when he eventually loses full control over his circumstance.

Dracula’s illegibility also threatens Harker’s masculine need to control. The vampire’s strength strikes Jonathan as odd because it contrasts with his appearance as a “tall old man” with skin so pale as to be bloodless (20). Once he begins spending more time with Dracula, Harker notices more disturbing effects that the “man’s” ambiguous appearance elicits:

Hitherto I had noticed the backs of his hands as they lay on his knees in the firelight, and they had seemed rather white and fine. . . . As the Count leaned over me and his hands touched me, I could not repress a shudder. It may have been that his breath was rank, but a horrible feeling of nausea came over me, which, do what I would, I could not conceal. The Count, evidently noticing it, drew back; and with a grim sort of smile, which showed more than he had yet done his protuberant teeth, sat himself down. (23)

Jonathan senses a problem with Dracula, beginning with the peculiarity of his fine, white feminine hands. That he cannot put his finger on the precise source of his anxiety causes him distress: “I doubt; I fear; I think strange things which I dare not confess to my own soul” (23). These disturbing effects are reinforced when Jonathan and Dracula speak about ancient undiscovered treasure in Transylvania, and their discussion suggests dangerous aspects of Dracula’s character:

“But how,” said I, “can it have remained so long undiscovered, when there is surely an index to it if men will but take the trouble to look?”

The Count smiled, and as his lips ran back over his gums, the long, sharp, canine teeth showed out strangely; he answered:—“Because your peasant is at heart a coward and a fool!” (27)

Harker’s discomfort grows when Dracula comes to visit his room, and he discovers that the vampire casts no image in the mirror, increasing the “vague sense of uneasiness which [he always has] when the Count is near” (31).

Fear, specifically of the unknown, drives Jonathan’s patriarchal need for control and his desire to sort Dracula as either man or woman. His inability to define the Count’s attributes—anatomical gender, age, intent—frightens him and threatens the thin grasp he has over his own safety and social role as a dominant male. Patriarchal society claims that he must view Dracula as the separate Other, because only then can Jonathan dominate him. Subversive vampiric bodies easily threaten masculine control without physical contact because, as critic WilliamHughes notes, Gothic Others are “potentially infectious” (“Terrors,” 94). Though unbitten, Dracula’s male victims are infected by his “progressive degeneration through contact,” as he turns them into the sort of feminine hysterics resembling the aesthetes who are both “degenerate” and “hysteric” (94-5). Jonathan, an impressionable young man, experiences the full force of masculine anxiety when he realizes that the castle is a “veritable prison” and he a “prisoner” (31). His predicament robs him of the patriarchal control he once possessed, the bedrock of his masculinity.

After he witnesses Dracula transforming himself into an androgynous beast, Jonathan realizes he can no longer control even his safety:

What I saw was the Count’s head coming out from the window. I did not see his face, but I knew the man by the neck and the movement of his back and arms. In any case I could not mistake the hands, which I had had so many opportunities of studying. (39)

Jonathan’s feelings change to “repulsion and terror” when he sees the Count assume feminine, inhuman qualities as he emerges from the window and “begin[s] to crawl down the castle wall over that dreadful abyss, *face down*” (39). Here, the lord of Castle Dracula assumes a submissive positioning of the body, blurring masculine and feminine, human and animalistic. Jonathan experiences the throes of terror and panic at the disintegration of supposedly solid categories, and he wonders aloud, “[W]hat manner of man is this, or what manner of creature is it in the semblance of a man?” (40). He feels an “awful fear” and thinks there is “no escape” for himself beyond some divine intervention saving him from a terrible fate. Jonathan becomes the female Gothic stereotype of the woman trapped in an inescapable fortress, not unlike Ann Radcliffe’s persecuted heroines. At this moment, Jonathan experiences the gender fluidity he fears, when his human body, which heretofore has engaged in only “casual contact” with a vampiric body, is feminized (Hendershot 25). Furthermore, after experiencing hysteria, Jonathan represses the “terrors that [he] dare not think of” by way of shoring up the illusions of his masculinity (39).

However, several subsequent episodes enforce his new gender fluidity: his secret visit to the Count’s private quarters, his meeting with Dracula’s daughters, and his emulation of Dracula by scaling the Castle walls when he attempts to escape. In an effort to regain masculine agency through uncovering Dracula’s secret, Jonathan clandestinely enters the Count’s quarters, his private sphere. This penetrative act would otherwise affirm his masculine dominance, but the act of secrecy and the fear attached to it place him in a feminine role. Furthermore, when he returns to his own quarters, significantly in the left wing of Castle Dracula, Jonathan likens himself while writing in his diary to a “fair lady” who “sat to pen, with much thought and many blushes, her ill-spelt love-letter,” once again describing himself in feminine terms (41).

After he falls asleep, three young ladies identified by their “dress and manner” visit Jonathan, but their masculine bearing and sexual control over him thrust Jonathan into a submissive role (42). With piercing eyes and “voluptuous lips,” they inspire longing and a deadly fear in him, and he feels a “wicked, burning desire” that they would “kiss [him] with those red lips.” The fair-headed vampire fastens her lips onto his throat and Jonathan basks in a “languorous ecstasy,” feeling the “soft, shivering touch” of lips on his “super-sensitive” skin and the “hard dents of two sharp teeth, just touching and pausing there” (43). These apparent women, in fact, possess the dual visual markers of male and female genitalia that all vampiric bodies possess, with their “white sharp teeth” set off by “scarlet lips.” When they accost him, Jonathan awaits a “delicious penetration” with bated breath, and his desire for such an act reveals his own hidden lusts (Craft 218).

By the time that he meets these women, the kind of sexually aggressive female vampires represented in nineteenth-century texts such as *Carmilla*, Dracula has already destroyed the symbol of Jonathan’s manhood: his patriarchal control. In this vulnerable position, Jonathan embodies Stoker’s notion of dual personalities and “unconscious cerebrations” when he responds to his surroundings and to the dominant women with a feminine passivity (Stoker 288). Essentially, if the vampiric Others are the double of Jonathan’s subconscious homoerotic desires, then his feminine response to events reflects a sexual inversion characterized by the vampiric bodies to which he has been exposed. For Jonathan, the dominant “weird sisters” represent his own failed masculinity as he becomes the feminized target of the vampires’ lust (55).

According to literary critic Christopher Craft, the scene with Dracula’s daughters, or wives, enacts “a displacement typical both of this text and the gender-anxious culture from which it arose,” whereby “an implicitly homoerotic desire achieves representation as a monstrous heterosexuality, as a demonic inversion of normal gender relations. . . . Dracula’s daughters offer Harker a feminine form but a masculine penetration” (219). A Victorian audience would not have tolerated penetration involving Dracula and Jonathan; thus, the vampire cannot act directly without openly revealing himself as a sexual deviant. Through the “feminine” interposition of the weird sisters, Dracula satisfies his own homoerotic tendencies with the aid of socially marked female bodies.

However, despite his wish to couple with Jonathan, Dracula forcefully removes the vampire who is about to penetrate Jonathan with her phallic teeth. Here, the Count chooses to protect his own queer status and preserve the Victorian status quo of heterosexual coupling, effectively saving Jonathan from masculine penetration. Instead, he keeps Jonathan for his own needs, simultaneously asserting his dominance over his daughters and further feminizing Jonathan as a woman to be fought over:

“How dare you touch him, any of you? How dare you cast eyes on him when I had forbidden it? Back, I tell you all! This man belongs to me!”

The fair girl, with a laugh of ribald coquetry, turned to answer him:—“You yourself never loved; you never love!” On this the other women joined, and such a mirthless, hard, soulless laughter rang through the room that it almost made me faint to hear; it seemed like the pleasure of fiends.

Then the Count turned, after looking at my face attentively, and said in a soft whisper:—“Yes, I too can love; you yourselves can tell it from the past. Is it not so? Well, now I promise you that when I am done with him you shall kiss him at your will.” (44-5)

The sexual nature of the Count’s desire is thus deflected into his desire to drink Jonathan’s blood, a monstrous desire that is, however, not fully represented as erotic. The daughters’ anatomical femininity masks the homoerotic embrace between Dracula and Jonathan, which could not take place without the interposition of a socially marked “female” body. In the stead of sexual unions with Harker and the rest of the Crew of Light, Dracula continues to satisfy his lusts by finding “evasive fulfillment in an important series of heterosexual displacements” involving Mina and Lucy (Craft 219).

Even Jonathan’s attempts at escape from Castle Dracula are associated with his feminization. After he faints like a damsel following his first try, Jonathan’s second attempt is represented through symbolism that is both sexual and Decadent. In a series of suggestive images that reflect the male homosexual body and homosexual sex, he descends onto the “circular stairway, which went steeply down” towards a “dark, tunnel-like passage, through which came a deathly, sickly odor” (54). Jonathan attempts to regain his masculinity by escaping, but what he finds is the Count’s body with a mouth that is “redder than ever,” a simulacrum of the daughters’ red lips as well as the blood that he and the Count had almost shared (58). Realizing that he can no longer ignore the danger of his own perverse desires or the “terrors” he dare not think of, Jonathan finally escapes to the safety of a Catholic hospital in Budapest (39). There, he collapses under the strain of a “terrible shock,” suffering a symbolic death of his masculinity as Mina arrives to care for him (116).

Ironically, Mina’s presence and intelligence further undermines Jonathan’s lost patriarchal control, as she assumes the markings of the New Woman, another threat to heteronormative masculinity. After her arrival, she writes to her friend Lucy Westenra back at home in England, speaking of her poor husband and her fears that remembering his experiences at Castle Dracula would “tax his poor brain” beyond his ability to recover (116). Later, once they are married, Mina feels “solemn” but “happy,” pleased to be fulfilling her role in the Victorian marriage narrative (117). However, she acknowledges that Jonathan might not be able to live up to her Victorian notions of a man and a husband since he cannot work or provide for his family. Therefore, Jonathan’s feminization now places Mina in both the role of feminine caretaker and masculine authoritarian breadwinner.

Mina is often admired for her caring affection and feminine sympathies, seemingly projecting the Victorian feminine ideal in juxtaposition against the New Woman, who functioned in Victorian society as a modern threat to passive femininity. She notes that the New Woman would not be content to wait for a proposal from a man but would rather “do the proposing herself,” a masculine trait coupled with the feminine promiscuity (100). Despite her complaints, she herself is a workingwoman and knows how to type shorthand, a useful skill. However, after her husbands journey, Mina finds herself in an even more masculine position than she occupies as a career woman preparing to start life in a “very simple way” without letting her husband shoulder the responsibilities of providing (81). Through her usefulness, first to her husband and then to the male collective, Mina becomes the symbol of her husband’s lost masculinity, as she controls the men in a less lurid way then the vampire Lucy tries to.

In the introduction of a 2003 reprint of *Dracula,* literary critic Brooke Allen writes that Mina represents the New Woman whereas Lucy represents the Victorian feminine ideal of the angel in the house. However, while this observation sees Mina as a subversive influence, it does not account for her continued role as dutiful wife and mother after the novel’s end, her Victorian femininity acting as a catalyst for Dracula’s destruction. It also ignores Lucy’s promiscuity and her fate as the one who is dispatched by a corrective stake. In fact, Lucy’s role as a New Woman is a necessary component of Dracula’s process, since he requires women who are dissatisfied with their condition and are thus vulnerable to his seduction. Both women find themselves in this position at different points of time, with first Lucy desiring more men, followed by Mina, who feels solemn in her lifeless marriage. In order for Dracula to pursue his male victims through the interposition of socially marked feminine bodies, women like Mina and Lucy must somehow be vulnerable to his influence and also sexually available. The dissatisfaction Mina and Lucy feel leaves them open to Dracula’s attacks, as he resembles the “symbolic double of each women’s rebellious egoism” (A.P. Johnson 26). The story is an ironic and cautionary tale for female sexuality since only Lucy, the vamped monstrosity of a Victorian woman, is killed and not Mina, despite her own influence being far more subversive than Lucy’s. Mina criticizes the New Woman and ends the narrative as her antithesis, but her tendency for controlling masculinity, at odds with her need for male oversight and approval, flourishes under her pretense of being a feminine helpmate to the male collective.

*Dracula* alsoexpresses a sense of masculine anxiety through its portrayal of the female usurpation of the male voice (Schoch 7). A characteristic of the Victorian New Woman was her masculine agency, a trait that Mina embodies through her mastery of shorthand, a manner of typing in which words are systematically abbreviated. Mina was the only one present to record Dracula’s seduction of Lucy, but when Van Helsing reads her diary he is unable to decipher the shorthand. Mina admits that she could not resist the “temptation of mystifying [Helsing] a bit,” purposefully making him come to her in request of a typewritten copy, which she gives him while feeling ashamed of her little joke (197). Later, Dr. Jack Seward experiences anxiety and lapses into a “deathly pallor” at the thought of letting Mina listen to his phonographic journal, possibly revealing unbidden secrets, but he ultimately relinquishes complete control to her (236). Mina’s reaction afterward suggests that she may have heard some things that the doctor wished to conceal: “I think that the cylinders which you gave me contained more than you intended me to know” (282). Ultimately, her assumption of masculine knowledge becomes more threatening than useful. Whereby the Count is drawn to the virginal Lucy’s poorly concealed sexual desire, Mina’s frustration with Jonathan and her masculine tendencies are what attracts Dracula to her. Thus, it is only after Mina’s expression of masculinity, specifically her exercise of control through her intelligence, that he visits her and sparks her transformation by their blood sharing.

In her introduction, Allen expands upon Alan P. Johnson’s idea that Mina is the New Woman figure to Lucy’s Victorian ideal by stating that the “married and sexually experienced” Mina is able to defeat Dracula in the way that the virginal Lucy is not (xxvii). From this perspective, *Dracula* could be seen as a feminist novel. However, the demonization of Lucy’s sexuality, which begins even before her vampirism and acts as the catalyst for her change into a vampire, reveals that the novel considers women to be abhorrent who attempt to take ownership of their bodies. Even Mina’s approximation of the New Woman stereotype is not entirely accurate, not only because of her own negative attitude toward progressive behavior, but because she ends the novel in the role of dutiful wife and mother, hardly the masculine figure she represents throughout the book.

The Victorian feminine ideal considered female sexual desire to be demonic, which marks Lucy as a fitting target for Dracula’s lusts and his method of sexual relations through blood sharing, symbolic of promiscuous sexual desire.Lucy’s one grave error is her desire to be the object of more than one man’s affections, and, ultimately, to be the wife of many. She agonizes over the reason why Victorian society “can’t let a girl marry three men,” since at the start of the novel she has received three proposals (66). While visiting the town of Whitby with Mina, Lucy grows more languid by the day as Dracula secretly violates her each night. After drawing Van Helsing into the mix, Seward, one of the three suitors, finds himself in the dilemma of offering Lucy his blood to restore her health. Meanwhile, Lucy is Arthur Holmwood’s fiancé, one of Seward’s closest confidants, which would constitute a gross injustice between friends should he help her. However, once he “copulates” with her in this way, Lucy’s body is restored to a “normal” state of health. Although, it is not enough to protect her from the inevitable result of vampirism, which is death of the human body, the biological marker for gendered social order, and, thus, of the Victorian distinction between masculinity and femininity.

Like the weird sisters, who are shown to feed on children, Lucy has no biological means and faces no societal pressure to bear offspring of her own, instead preying upon them as a monstrous mother figure: “With a careless motion, she flung to the ground, callous as a devil, the child that up to now she had clutched strenuously to her breast, growling over it as a dog growls over a bone” (226). Lucy need not marry, but she still shows love to Arthur, and, as Mina suggests a New Woman might do, propositions him, saying “Come to me, Arthur. . . . Come, and we can rest together” (227). Others have interpreted this action as a return to the heteronormative Victorian ideal, with Lucy choosing to engage in a heterosexual union as an affirmation of her role as the representative Victorian feminine ideal. However, her clear intention is to control Arthur in a purely masculine way. Such a union, with Lucy as the penetrative force and Arthur playing the passive woman, cannot be allowed.

In order for the men to justify extinguishing Lucy’s female sexuality, she must be seen as demonic, unfit for motherhood, and a perversion of the Victorian feminine ideal. Seeking to restore order and gain control, the band of men brought together by Lucy’s new demonic state—Helsing, Seward, Holmwood, and the American, Quincey Morris—develop a plan to free her. On the night of her liberation, they encounter a predatory, animalistic version of their Lucy, whereupon Seward expresses extreme distress and disgust:

[B]y the concentrated light that fell on Lucy’s face we could see that the lips were crimson with fresh blood, and that the stream had trickled over her chin and stained the purity of her lawn death-robe. . . . When Lucy—I call the thing that was before us Lucy because it bore her shape—saw us she drew back with an angry snarl, such as a cat gives when taken unawares. . . . At that moment the remnant of my love passed into hate and loathing; had she then to be killed, I could have done it with savage delight. (226)

Lucy’s promiscuous premarital sex via transfusions of blood-semen is symbolized through the blood on her clothing, resembling a virgin who bleeds after intercourse. Her aggressive sexuality and “voluptuous smile” are only present once she becomes a vampire (226). Crossing the gender threshold that unleashes her masculine power, thus vampire Lucy casts off the Victorian feminine ideal and, like the New Woman, refuses to play the role of passive wife and loving mother.

The way in which men control women and vampires in *Dracula* reflects the patriarchal need to preserve social order and normative heterosexuality and the anxiety they feel to repress subversive presences. To protect themselves from the threat of her hungering feminine sexuality and phallic fangs, the Crew of Light set out to correct Lucy and counter the “homoeroticism latent in the vampiric threat” (Craft 231). They do this by driving a phallic wooden stake “some two and a half or three inches thick and about three feet long” into her chest, in a scene that often been described as a gang rape (230):

The Thing in the coffin writhed; and a hideous, blood-curdling screech came from the opened red lips. The body shook and quivered and twisted in wild contortions; the sharp white teeth champed together till the lips were cut, and the mouth was smeared with a crimson foam. But Arthur never faltered. He looked like a figure of Thor as his untrembling arm rose and fell, driving deeper and deeper the mercy-bearing stake, whilst the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it. (231)

Thus, a symbolical act of heterosexual penetration corrects Lucy’s sexuality and restores her to the Victorian feminine ideal. The masculine aggression with which Lucy is dispatched reflects the strength of the men’s anxiety and their fear of disclosure as they eradicate the evidence of her transgressions and their own forbidden desires.

At the time of Lucy’s destruction, the men have already experienced a symbolic homosexual union with each other by sharing their blood with her. The oscillation between Lucy’s blood transfusions and her periods of weakness result in not three but four transfusions of blood before her death, the first of which comes from Jack, followed by Van Helsing, Quincey, and Arthur. Quincey, another of Lucy’s suitors and a dear friend of Arthur and Jack, offers to share his blood after he overhears a clandestine meeting between Jack and Van Helsing, where the latter “medical men” discuss Lucy’s case in a secluded room (164-5). When confronted with the unspeakable problem with Lucy, Quincey explains that medical men “speak *in camera*” and that other men must not “expect to know what they consult about in private.” The secrecy of these meetings and the nature in which they initially attempt to save Lucy carries sexual connotations and symbolism, but the collective blood-semen pooling within the woman they all claim to love specifically represents a heterosexual displacement. As Dracula’s daughters allow for a masculine penetration of Jonathan, the blood transfusions allow the men’s essence to mingle together in a female body, replicating a homosexual union. Furthermore, it gives the Count a chance to couple with the Crew of Light by drinking their blood through Lucy.

According to queer Gothic expert George Haggerty, the patriarchal urge to identify a sodomite is “born out of fear,” “identification seems a phobic enterprise,” and “to identify oneself in these [trials], or to accept the identifications made publicly, is to admit the kind of monstrosity” that has been made public (*Queer Gothic* 60). But hiding one’s homosexuality, covering up other’s transgressions, even staunchly defending heterosexuality, was an act of self-preservation in nineteenth-century Victorian England. For a Victorian man to admit involvement in subversive sexual activities was not only to incur the wrath of society but also to face dangers from other men in heteronormative society, who could validate their heterosexuality by attacking the subversive Other. An outing would mean the loss of their society-given right of patriarchal control. Thus, the Crew of Light destroy the byproduct of Dracula’s perversion, the demonic Lucy, and remove physical evidence of their union through her, thus regaining control. Failing to do so would be to suffer Jonathan’s feminization and to surrender to Dracula, and masculine women, their ultimate fear.

In his essay “Kiss Me with Those Red Lips,” Christopher Craft describes the fluidity of desire in *Dracula* and the anxiety that the Crew of Light feels to correct it, but also how they form homosocial bonds and achieve a union through women. During the novel’s middle portion, Dracula exists in the shadows as the myth of gender inversion present in Lucy’s changes, something the Crew cannot immediately name or discover. To Craft, Helsing stands as the “protector of the patriarchal institutions he so emphatically represents,” but Helsing is perhaps not the best guarantor of heteronormative hegemony (225). The aged doctor doubles for Dracula, not in the sense that his body defies gender norms, but rather that he can cause others to transgress. It is, after all, on his suggestion that Lucy is given the blood transfusions that transform her into a symbolic harlot. Giving Lucy what she wants not only allows her to copulate with multiple men, but it also forces a homosexual union with their essence pooling inside Lucy’s veins and mingling, illuminating the men’s homosexual lusts.

In light of Van Helsing’s role as a transgressor, we might also consider the borderline incestuous tone of the relationship between Van Helsing and Arthur Holmwood. Van Helsing immediately latches on to Arthur and treats him affectionately, and this only begins to make sense once Helsing reveals that the younger man reminds him of his deceased son: “And yet . . . he say things that touch my husband-heart to the quick, and make my father-heart yearn to him as to no other man—not even to you, friend John, for we are more level in experiences than father and son” (189). This disclosure is meant to be touching, but the line between father and son here is blurred and perverted. Helsing continues to keep Arthur physically close to him as his unnatural attachment to the younger man grows in the final chapters.

The three suitors—Seward, Holmwood, and Morris—stand on the surface as the socially marked antitheses to the “weird sisters,” yet Arthur and Quincey’s behavior reveals the same sexual underpinnings that exist within the vampires. Little information is offered about their lives outside of how they react to Lucy’s situation, and this is in part due to the novel’s epistolary format, designed to keep the authentic documents from being seen as they were. What we do know is that, in response to their social surroundings, Arthur and Quincey’s unconscious cerebration reveals their own improprieties; although, the American’s behavior is more speculative and less analyzed by critics. On the one hand, Lucy’s vampiric body produces the same effect on Arthur as Dracula’s had on Jonathan, causing him to cry and wail like a woman frequently:

“Oh, Jack! Jack! What shall I do? The whole of life seems gone from me all at once, and there is nothing in the wide world for me to live for.” I comforted him as well as I could. In such cases men do not need much expression. (182)

Jack, a patriarchal figure, grows uncomfortable and uneasy in the sight of such weakness and what he senses as Arthur’s femininity.

At many times, Arthur’s friends comfort him as he eposes his latent feminine traits. In Victorian idealism, women were emotional creatures prone to hysterics, which is why the subversive male hysteria present in Gothic texts produced particular scorn by Victorian audiences. During his sob-filled encounter with her, Mina’s observations illuminate the homoerotic sphere that Arthur and the Crew of Light have come to inhabit: “I suppose there is something in a woman’s nature that makes a man free to break down before her and express his feelings on the tender or emotional side without feeling it derogatory to his manhood” (245). It is one of the most clarifying sentences in the entire text because it confesses that there is something about Arthur’s friends, rather than just being around women, that makes him free to express his feelings.

Quincey also doubles as an Other in the sight of Lucy’s vampiric body. The only background that we receive about the American, beyond his close friendship with Arthur and Jack, is his claim to love Lucy. The refutability of this claim is not for a lack of consistency but rather for a lack of belief in his infatuation with a woman whom he refers to as a “little girl,” albeit for charming affect (67). He calmly, even joyfully, accepts her rejection of his proposal with the promise of a friendship, whereas we are given the image of Jack’s hands trembling as Lucy explained that she would not have the doctor. As the only American, Quincey is already a socially marked Other, but the Europeans receive him well because of his outward display of rigid masculinity. Van Helsing constantly reinforces his masculinity by praising his manliness, his strong blood, and calling him a “fine young man,” as if hobbies as an outdoorsman are not enough alone to prove his masculinity (218). The fact that we know little about Quincey and Arthur is emphasized by the lack of journal entries from them, with only the inclusion of a few select telegrams. Although his masculinity is unquestionable, Quincey’s heterosexuality is not as easily defined, as much of his private life is left in the shadows. It is not until the end of the novel that the symbolism of his sexual orientation is effectively realized, when he and Jonathan destroy Dracula, eradicating the mirrored Other and restoring their own masculinity in the process.

The novel’s epistolary format serves a larger purpose by exposing the possibility of unreliable narration. At the end, Jonathan remarks that the remaining members of the band were “struck” with the fact that in all the “mass of material” which composed the record of their experience, there is “hardly one authentic document” (399-400). This fact tests the legitimacy of every word that is spoken, even the telegrams, after having all been transcribed from Dr. Seward’s phonographic diary entries, Mina and Lucy’s letters, and everyone else’s journals by the Harker couple. The novel has a consistent timeline but often leaves scenes out, such as the meeting between Arthur, Jack, and Quincey early on. These gaps in time open the door to question whether there might be more homosocial interaction occurring than we are privy to. Essentially, we are listening to Stoker telling the story of Mina and Jonathan telling the story of their friends who were telling their own stories of what happened throughout the course of the novel. This format does not allow overlapping entries for the same time, increasing the likelihood of alternative versions of events.

The subversive nature of the text pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable for Victorians through sexual imagery and Dracula’s positioning as a socially marked male usurping the female role of child-creator. After Jonathan’s narrow escape from penetration and Lucy’s heterosexual correction, the next seminal sexual act occurs when the Count reveals himself after months of acting from the shadows. Mina with her “man’s brain” and “woman’s heart,” who possesses an intelligence that makes her masculine in her own right, is desired by the Count and her friends for her masculine traits (251). In the Harker’s bedroom one night, the Crew of Light finds Dracula forcing her to drink from a wound on his chest, symbolizing acts of both breastfeeding and fellatio. Dracula flaunts the fact that “their best beloved” will be the means that he uses to trap the men in his perverse family of animalistic and androgynous beasts (306). Here, Dracula is a destabilizing presence for Mina at a time when she is struggling to regain her feminine passivity, as the Count situates her as the means of his union with Jonathan, even while claiming her as his newest child.

A vampire’s very presence functions as a troubling and destabilizing force in that its instinctual desire for promiscuous copulation and procreation threatens the bedrock of Victorian society. With no clear visual and behavioral distinction between male and female vampires, this gender ambiguity allows humans to fall victim to these perverse Others. Van Helsing declares to his young friends that they have on their side the “power of combination—a power denied to the vampire kind,” but this denial ignores a vampire’s desire for community (254). The men’s anxiety is a direct result of a growing realization that the collective Others—vampires, New Women, and aesthetes—are more numerous than perhaps first understood. While Dracula acts as a separate entity and leaves his daughters behind to pursue other pleasures, his desire for a union with Victorian men and to own them is realized through the blood he steals from Lucy and continued through his control over Mina: “‘Your girls that you all love are mine already; and through them you and others shall yet be mine—my creatures, to do my bidding and to be my jackals when I want to feed’” (325).

Dracula’s destabilizing influence and legacy carries on through the child that Mina and Jonathan have, in one last feminine displacement of homosexuality. Simply called Quincey, in honor of the American who dies in the final fight, Jonathan admits that his son’s “bundle of names links [their] little band of men together” (400). In the Count’s final act, the perversion of collective blood-semen in Lucy is displaced, yet again, in the socially marked feminine body of Mina, who has now accepted her role in heteronormative society. There, in a body that has already felt the effects of vampirism, a homosexual union can exist concealed within the appearance of Victorian heterosexuality. Despite the elimination of the vampires, the space for homosocial desire created by the Crew of Light continues to exist safe from persecution through feminine displacements.

Chapter V

Return of the Repressed

*“Characters become symbols in a world seeking to escape those very symbols, and through their own struggles, they become even more firmly entangled in them. This is one form of the Gothic.”*

Juliann Fleenor, *The Female Gothic*, p. 10

Women are always the ultimate divisive element in the patriarchal paradigm, and through a vicarious identification with them, the queer is cast as the Other and marginalized. Gothic monsters ultimately have androgynous bodies, and thus represent the “abject form of the human,” or the worst possible departure from civilization (Creed, “Kristeva, Femininity, Abjection” 65). One of the worst abject forms was the corpse, closely related in these texts to vampirism, which has long been associated with releasing sexual energy. All of the monsters in this study are demonized because their sexuality reverses their socially constructed gender markers. These three Gothic texts suggest a progressive demonization of their monstrous fusion of fear and desire, both appealing and repulsive, in which the monster is somehow invited into the text, followed be a period of time where they are either entertained or pursued, and ending in the expulsion and repudiation of the monster and the “disruption that he/she/it brings” (Craft 216). Feared not only for their sexuality itself, these monsters bear the burden of social shame and stigma for their attempts to dismantle the patriarchal paradigm by de-sexing heterosexual men through their perverse usurpation of control.

While the texts could be analyzed from many disciplinary approaches, queer readings highlight their psychosexual contexts and explain why representations of excessive desire among men and the needs of autonomous women undermine masculine identity. Haggerty believes that the Gothic-horror genre “anticipates the history of sexuality,” claiming that it is no coincidence that the genre reached popularity at “the very moment when gender and sexuality were beginning to be codified for modern culture” (qtd. in Rigby 48). In Gothic-horror fiction, the monster’s sexualized presence suggests that they represent social concerns because horror “arouses and exorcises latent fears” (Badley 1). Horror of the self and of female physiology, Juliann Fleenor writes, is closely tied to the patriarchal paradigm (7). In fact, the Gothic relates directly to a patriarchal paradigm in that women characters are often represented as motherless and as defective males. Queers are metaphorical women. Thus, queer theory allows analysis of these texts in terms of how they construct psychosexual Others as expressions of threats to sexual norms, whether queers exist in shadowy worlds—closets, coffins, castles—or if they just occupy a marginalized and oppressed position.

The power of narrative in *Carmilla*, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *Dracula*, lies in its ability to define the monsters in ways that allow readers to identify themselves. Narrative serves both as a way of seducing a listener, and as a means of displacing and sublimating desire that cannot be satisfied directly (Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form* 43). Queer readings suggest that reading sexuality between the lines is by nature transgressively homosexual if its every aspect must be displaced and repressed. Laura, for instance, yearns for female companionship, and thus desire is fiercely defended throughout *Carmilla.* However, the passionate lesbian quality of their relationship and the vampire’s seduction represents forms of sexual desire that were banned from texts during that time. Meanwhile, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* sublimates homosexual desire more effectively by silencing Hyde’s voice and filtering his experience though other men’s points of view. Utterson, specifically, finds himself vicariously identifying with Jekyll’s sexuality, and his pursuit of Hyde is a displacement of his own desire for a homosexual union, one that he is too afraid to acknowledge directly. The epistolary format of *Dracula* even more fully filters readers’ knowledge by insisting that the novel is a true account based on up-to-the moment reporting by participants in the narrative that have been carefully arranged to preserve the truth. Since the reader’s knowledge depends entirely on the Harkers’ screening of the diaries and letters that make up the narrative, the risk that latent homosexual content has been both purposefully suppressed and unconsciously repressed exists. The Gothic narrative might shout its resistance to an imposed silence or an assertion of an untruth to counteract a convenient prejudice—or, more subversively, it may “affirm a constraint while quietly transgressing it; however it responds, the Gothic experience grows out of prohibition” (Graham xiii).

Elizabeth Napier suggests that the Gothic novel features two opposed currents, which are a “tendency towards moral and structural stabilizing characteristic of much previous eighteenth-century fiction” and a “contrary inclination toward fragmentation, instability, and moral ambivalence” (qtd. in Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form* 2). The former marks the boundaries of acceptability, while the latter creates socially marked villains in terms of Victorian codes of “good and evil, virtue and sin” (Sanna 26). Next to the public, vampires Dracula, Lucy, and Carmilla, and the antisocial Hyde are abhorrent because they are deviant, constructing all other “Victorians” as morally upright, sensible, respectable citizens. In their abjection, monsters bear physical marks of sexual transgression and immorality, which the various narratives are quick to point out in an anxious shift of criminality.

Monsters are primarily marked as Decadent by their gender ambiguous anatomy and traits. A commonly shared anatomical factor linking them together is the significance of their hands, in terms of Victorians’ concepts of handedness as an extension of societal order. Jekyll is first able to tell the difference between himself and Hyde by the different appearance of their hands, but determining the destabilizing visual affect of their hands makes sense when it is known that Jekyll’s are feminine while Hyde’s are masculine. Jonathan notes as well that Dracula’s hands are feminine looking. The fact that the two men were intrinsically linked and a part of each other, not separate as Jekyll first suspected, reflects that a Gothic body can possess both masculine and feminine qualities. Likewise, Carmilla, Dracula, and Lucy share the same common characteristic of the red mouth parted by white, phallic fangs, a visual symbol of both female and male genitalia. Thus, the vampire’s mouth symbolizes an androgynous gender. Especially regarding the “weird sisters” who dominate Jonathan Harker, gender ambiguity is doubly threatening in its potential for both castration and penetration. Victorian Gothic representations of a woman’s gaze as uncanny and her sex as holding a terrible power over men gesture towards primitive matriarchal figures who held fate in their hands, thus marking the feminine itself as potentially monstrous. Indeed, patriarchal masculine subjectivity is “set against the feminine as either its identifying Other or its abjected self” (Barnes 19). In the latter case, women were consciously perceived as “deformed” or “imperfect men” who failed to meet the standards of excellence reflected by normative masculinity (Muravyeva and Toivo 2). This arrangement imports gender ambiguities that characterize these texts. For instance, although Mina is a woman, the men in her life find her useful due to her masculine traits: her mind and her intelligence. In doing so, the Crew of Light subconsciously reveal their acceptance and desire to be controlled, the very thing they are fighting against.

These texts reveal that a necessary step in demonizing monsters is to involve them in the normative realm, either consciously, unconsciously, or by chance. Here they are able to enact their monstrosity in the form of deviant sexual transactions that result in their destruction, even while they reveal their victims’ own transgressive desires. Lucy and Mina attract the vampire to themselves precisely through their own sexual dissatisfaction with the *status quo*, and his end is as much a demonstration of normative heterosexual masculinity saving their culture and their women as it is a furious attack on the Other, who elicits their own transgressive desires. In *Carmilla*, both Laura and her father desire female companionship for her, so long as it does not interfere with Laura’s ordained role as the dutiful daughter and future wife and mother. When Carmilla arrives, it is as if Laura’s prayers have simply conjured her, but, in fact, Carmilla’s monstrous desires justify her own violent demise. Lastly, Richard Enfield feels compelled by no obvious reason to recount the story of Hyde to Utterson, sparking a quest to uncover the truth behind Jekyll and Hyde’s relationship. For a man with a self-acknowledged blameless and boring past, the entrance of Hyde into his life offers some excitement. Enfield, here, functions as a patriarchal figure, including Hyde in the narrative in order to destroy him as a threat to his culture and to his heteronormative identity.

The act of destroying these monsters results directly from a compulsory identification with and eventual expulsion of the Other, who has no place in the patriarchal social order which these texts superficially reaffirm. Hyde and Dracula work in the dark, lurking in the shadows. Carmilla, however, remains the only one essentially “out” in the sense that she does not fully attempt to hide from Laura’s father, who can determine whether she stays or goes. Once Carmilla challenges his authority by asserting her own, he must authorize her destruction, which involves the usual vampire killing ritual of stabbing through the heart and decapitation. Dracula, likewise, dies a similar death from phallic weaponry, a fate faced by all vampires. Jekyll, on the other hand, decides it is better to kill himself before he lets Utterson “out” him. Taking poison, he dies and kills Hyde, by a popular feminine method of murder, further marking him as feminine.

To be feminine was to be a monster, since all monsters to an extent were like women. They were women in many ways, just not limited to their lack of rights, marginalized status, and uncanny anatomy. Their sexuality was the object of men’s fear, anxiety, disdain, and displaced criminal instincts. Freudian theories often describe feminine sublimation of sexual desire as a natural function of female socialization as wives and mothers. Instead, we can imagine that behind the feminine silence of Mina, Lucy, and Carmilla lurks the threat of “mystic powers of control,” registering male fears of what they have deemed the “lesser” sex (Auerbach 35). Nina Auerbach suggests that the “learned and crusading ‘New Woman’ may incarnate as well the awakened powers of the old, adored woman” of matriarchal culture (37). Thus the emergence of aggressive, independent women represents an uncanny return to a primitive state in which men and women were equally at the mercy of the old matriarch who meted out their fates to all, a pre-patriarchal arrangement that represented a regression for men. The New Woman thus represented a return to the egotistical monster at the center of female worship. The preternaturally endowed creature who “taunts conventional morality as angel and demon” was alien to the model of the womanhood that Victorians were bred to revere and that instituted male patriarchal power (185).

Middle-class Victorians occupied clearly defined spaces, so monsters, symbolizing immoral men and women, must exist in the dark, undefined corners. The pervading Victorian womanly ideal claimed that women were “relegated to the private or domestic sphere” while men inhabited the public sphere (Mellor 115). Lucy, Dracula, Carmilla, and Jekyll all challenge this notion in their own ways. Carmilla and Lucy do so by distancing themselves from the role of wives and mothers. Carmilla essentially creates a legion of female vampires, thus reproducing illicitly, and her blood drinking, symbolizing sex, paints her as a promiscuous woman. Lucy feeds on children in a blatant reversal of breastfeeding and roams the night not unlike a prostitute bearing the red mark of blood on her white gown, a symbol of her impurity. When we first see Dracula he is living comfortably “alone” inside his castle, far removed the male public sphere. We are told that he has no servants, and thus accomplishes all of the domestic duties himself. Even once he is free from these confines in the city, he hides in the shadows where he can remain safe from those who want to kill him. But Jekyll, perhaps, most closely resembles the “isolated heroine” the female Gothic in his imprisonment and control by Hyde.

Gothic textual symbolism and imagery thus reveal illegitimate forms of sexuality and gender, their location within the normative sphere, as well as the harmful effects of repression. These textual practices frequently convey the unspeakable and the unpublishable aspects of humanity that the author cannot put into words due to fear of censorship and ridicule. For instance, Stevenson and Stoker’s narratives feature imagery of homosexual sex, mostly when referring to doors. Their Gothic texts are full of “locked rooms, of one kind or another; locked rooms within its peculiar, involuted architectural space; locked rooms of the mind; locked rooms of history; locked rooms of secret sexual expression” (Madoff 49). When Utterson visits Jekyll for the last time, he finds his friend pale-faced and nervous behind barred windows inside a stifling room. He and Enfield witness Jekyll staring out his window in self-imposed isolation, as he is trapped inside an inescapable fortress in order to hide the fact that he can no longer control his own animalistic desires. The concept here is that sexuality must be repressed or locked away in these spaces, much like both Dracula’s secrets in the nearly unreachable parts of his sanctuary and Jekyll’s inability to compartmentalize his animalistic desires.

These Victorian Gothic monsters reflect their origins in an era when cultural anxieties resulting from challenges to traditional patriarchal power and privilege were displaced onto fears about sexual behavior. Victorian society considered homosexuality to be a shameful moral weakness, an “unruly behavior,” reflecting an inability to combat lust (Muravyeva and Toivo 15). If men and women continued to marry and have families, these unsanctioned relationships on the side posed no threat. However, as their numbers grew, homosexuality indeed began to threaten the foundations of social order, especially as sexuality became increasingly legitimized as a form of pleasure, and not simply the means of procreation. Victorian laws reflect cultural constructions of homosexuality in terms of communicable disease and decay, a condition that threatened existence itself:

[B]y favoring a heteronormative and patriarchal status quo, late-Victorian law described homosexuality as an unhealthy form of malady; it stated that homosexuality was unacceptable by contemporary society and threatened to punish its practitioners, commanding them not to indulge in any form of physical contact. (Sanna 23)

Homosexuality was not conceived as “part of the created order” at all, but as “part of its dissolution” (qtd. in Sedgwick, “Beast” 244). In this constant disorder and transitioning, when gender norms and social roles were being redefined, anxiety over sexual acting out became the commonly shared symptom of a gendered power struggle.

Masculine anxiety in the Victorian era can be linked to the belief that women and homosexuals wanted to create a world in which men were not needed. The three texts that this study analyzes provide glimpses of worlds that are in disrepair and shambles because men and women are working against each other. Juliann Fleenor writes that the “Gothic world is one of nightmare, and that nightmare is created by the individual in conflict with the values of [a woman’s] society and her prescribed role. . . . Ambiguity rules such a world” (10). Certainly, in these texts, the examples of what life could be without one or the other sex are frightening and lead to more problems. For instance, Carmilla creates a society only for women and is punished by death; Jekyll and Hyde create a society only for men, in which women play little to no role, and they, too, die; and Dracula and his wives all perish because they created a society in which men and women are reduced to animals, with no clear sexual distinctions but with a clear power hierarchy with the socially marked man still in the place of power. What these texts ultimately suggest is that men and women, together, were the only hope for a successful society, therefore mounting a strong argument that marriage and procreation were necessary to cultural survival, and, by extension, a strong argument for maintaining the heteronormative *status quo*.

Ultimately, the repressive effects of the patriarchal need to maintain increasingly restrictive sexual distinctions caused untold harm. Victorians have been accused of creating the modern repressive society: “[T]he reason why we know so much about what was wrong with Victorian society is that so many people . . . felt the need to put it right” (Boyd and McWilliam 5). This duty to correct and manage behavior, resulting in the harmful effects of repression that the texts in this study reveals, suggests how afraid men really were to lose their fragile power that the only way to protect themselves was to kill those they deemed the weaker sex, and their male conspirators. All their efforts would, eventually, go to waste. Carmilla, ruthlessly killed for challenging patriarchal control, still lives on in Laura’s memory, haunting her, preventing her from marriage and procreation. Utterson himself never shows interest in marriage after Jekyll’s death and ends his journey by staring into the cheval-glass, the face of an Other looking back, and he is changed by the self-knowledge that Jekyll’s ordeal has produced not but death and chaos. For Mina and the Crew of Light, the loss of Lucy and Quincey still bothers them, but their ending proves that homosexuality is not easily destroyed, as symbolized by the Harkers’ son, who represents the product of the men’s union with Lucy and, by extension, each other.

The endurance of queerness and patriarchal self-sabotage ultimately unite these Gothic texts. Laura’s father allows Carmilla to stay and encourages his daughter’s excited anticipation of a friendship that dooms her. Van Helsing forces the Crew to give Lucy their blood, transforming her from the pure angel into a promiscuous demon and inviting Dracula’s fangs with the sweet smell of the men’s essence, as he satisfies his own lusts. Enfield tells Utterson his story of Hyde when it is not truly his business to speak of such things; likewise, Utterson feels as if he must force a confession from Jekyll. Their very efforts to destroy that which they perceive to be threatening, either to their own safety or to the safety of their secrets, sets up their own destruction. With each demonization of women and homosexuals, men drive a stake into the heart of the monster called patriarchy; thus, the queer narrative endures.

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