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Reaffirming Victorian Patriarchy Through Gothic Vampire Fiction

Uncovering Male Fantasy and Misogyny in “Carmilla” and *Dracula*

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Abstract

This thesis aims to investigate Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmilla" (1872) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) with a focus on how each text deals with gender and sexuality issues considering their contemporary societal culture. The Victorian Era in the UK was a time when conservative traditions were promoted, celebrating the inherent superiority of Englishmen. All other groups of people were categorized as having a lower standing in the cultural hierarchy, including English women, whose place was in the home. In this period of strict social order, Gothic Fiction grew in popularity, using clearly fictionalized settings that enabled discussion of taboo issues without causing controversy. Critics have analysed the presentation of gender and sexuality issues in these novels previously, and in this thesis, I have chosen to question Elizabeth Signorotti's critique, which views *Dracula* as a novel that enforces Victorian patriarchal order as an answer to the older "Camilla", which she sees as a progressive novella regarding questions of both gender and sexuality politics. This thesis is in partial disagreement with Signorotti, and it claims that "Carmilla" and *Dracula* both contain progressive ideas, but ultimately, they reveal themselves to represent male fantasy and male superiority instead. The methods used will consist of close analyses of the novels, and particularly of the characters featured within them.

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1 Introduction

This thesis is an attempt to make a fresh enquiry into two already well-explored examples of Gothic literature and the ways in which they engage with questions of gender and sexuality. The texts that I have chosen to focus on are Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872) and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). These texts both cast vampires as mystifying factors and main antagonists. This use of supernatural, entirely fictional beings opens the novels up for a wide range of interpretations. My own interpretation will argue that despite presenting progressive elements within the given texts, "Carmilla" and *Dracula* both eventually end up enforcing patriarchal ideals and fulfilling male fantasy scenarios.

Neither "Carmilla" nor *Dracula* can be counted as the *first* vampire novel, but they both rank among the texts that put vampires on the popular culture map, where they have not only enjoyed an enduring presence as one of the main staples of monster horror, but also, to an ever-increasing degree since the invention of moving pictures, as intensely sexual romantic figures. This thesis will not involve any divergences into the landscape of what vampire fiction has developed into. It will stay firmly rooted in the chosen literature, and adaptations of the chosen stories as well as newer vampire fiction will be ignored.

1.1 The Victorian Era and its Patriarchal Ideals

The 1800s, in which Gothic fiction gained ever-growing popularity, were times of both great progress and growth under the umbrella of industrialization, but societal norms would prove still challenging when it came to further development. The 1859 publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* gave rise to Social Darwinism, an idea that tied Darwin's theories of the survival of the fittest to social elitist thinking: "Physical anthropologists became interested in the several human "races," some of which they considered might be "favored" in the Darwinian sense, that is, superior in inheritance and survival value." (Palmer et.al 623) To the English, who experienced enormous growth during the 19th century, first through scientific achievements and then through the great benefits of said achievements – a solid economy and a seemingly unstoppable navy – their own superiority only became more evident with this theory. The opposite side of the coin of their narcissistic hubris was prejudice against foreigners and downright xenophobia if the foreigners in question came from especially remote parts or were reputed as having evil, mystical qualities, like gypsies

and certain other eastern European peoples. The further one's point of origin was from England, the more unfortunate was one's social value.

The adjective *Victorian* came to become synonymous with values that HRM Queen Victoria (r. 1837-1901) herself encouraged her own identification with: "earnestness, moral responsibility, domestic propriety." (Greenblatt and Robson 5) It follows that under her rule, Britain was ensured stable traditions in which the patriarchy stood firm. Women were relegated to domestic responsibilities, and their rights were a non-issue unless they somehow inhibited their abilities to perform their duties to their husband and home. Under a female monarch whose rule had already lasted decades, women's rights had won little ground at the end of the century:

Until the passage of the Married Women's Property Acts (1870-1908), married women would not own or handle their own property. While men could divorce their wives for adultery, wives could divorce their husbands only if adultery were combined with cruelty, bigamy, incest, or bestiality. (Greenblatt and Robson 18)

The woman was considered a biproduct of humanity whose rights were little more than those of a child, and like a child, she needed an overseer, always a man, typically a father, guardian, or husband. It is patriarchal ideals like these that caused the tendency to brand humanity as Man, or as the feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti brands this rhetoric in her work *The Posthuman*: "'Man', the former measure of all things" (2329). She muses further about it a little later in the text: "Feminists like Luce Irigaray pointed out that the allegedly abstract ideal of Man as a symbol of classical Humanity is very much a male of the species: it is a he. Moreover, he is white, European, handsome and able-bodied" (2335). In Victorian Britain, at the time the most technologically progressed nation in the world, whose borders had spread further than any other through colonization, it became a given that the ideal became even narrower: he was also English, and he belonged to the middle or upper class. Braidotti expands on her views of otherness:

In so far as difference spells inferiority, it acquires both essentialist and lethal connotations for people who get branded as ‘others’. These are the sexualized, racialized, and naturalized others, who are reduced to the less than human status of disposable bodies. We are all humans, but some of us are just more mortal than others.” (2332)

We are to understand that all but the white, English man are “lesser than”. The English woman would also exemplify an ideal, but her power was entirely won through her male overseer, who left her to govern only what was thought beneath the man’s station; the home, or as Christine Stansell puts it:

“woman’s sphere”, that part of society Victorians deemed to be properly within women’s control – the home and its extensions, religious and charitable work. Out of the claustrophobic and oppressive aspects of woman’s sphere, long evident to writers and scholars, emerged the stereotype of the straitlaced, empty-headed, and repressed Victorian lady, who dominated most historical work before 1970. (467)

The strict inequality between the genders both in legal terms and in societal norm limited women’s lives from all but one way of living, while men were busy appropriating the world outside the home and moulding it to their liking. Not only should women not venture outside their sphere for knowledge or employment that was branded unfeminine, but they should also not *want* to. A woman should want to mother, take care of the home, feel safe under her husband’s roof and she could also want to indulge in frivolous vanities that men found silly or empty-headed. This is not to say that women were to be viewed as some sort of livestock: women’s relegation to the home was intended as a protective measure for the fairer sex and men felt both obligated and proud of their ability to provide for their women.

Unfortunately, the assumption of the right of the Patriarchy quickly involves delusions of grandeur, and the internalized “male fantasy” of conquering everything from the greater picture of the world to *others* in one’s everyday life. The prim and proper ways of the always

presentable middle-to-upper-class Englishmen were socially constricting. Everything, from the details of one's clothing to speech patterns, and correctness of keeping up acquaintances and appearances, in addition to providing for the home, placed great pressure on men. To justify this great responsibility, we have the psychological idea of the dominant male fantasy, self-aggrandizing ideas of superiority in every situation, even the most intimate and taboo ones: sexual superiority and domination. Though women were also supposed to behave and dress properly, the male fantasy imagined her without her clothes and in sexually compromising situations. In this respect, the male fantasy conflicts with what men wanted publicly: they demanded that women behaved according to rules of propriety, but fantasized about women breaking these rules, and also about what they themselves in turn could be allowed to do to them as punishment for their sins.

1.2 The Gothic Genre and the Vampire

In the Victorian age, the literary phenomenon of the Gothic genre arose not only as popular entertainment, but also as a safe space wherein societal expectations regarding such strictly monitored societal rules as gender and sexual identity norms could be subverted without truly breaking them. "In the popular texts of the day, many of which we would now identify as 'Gothic,' sexual identity and the cultural meaning attached to it appeared unstable, often monstrous, as bodies themselves refused their orthodox boundaries and became what Kelly Hurley has termed 'ab-human.'" (Horner & Zlosnik 2014, p. 55) With the acceptance of supernatural occurrences in the Gothic genre, many of which could appear shocking and unheard of but thrilling nonetheless, it would almost seem the natural choice for writers to involve the human body, as well as existing human proclivities to diverge from accepted gender and sexuality norms. It subverts the kind of binary thinking that has traditionally been enforced throughout the history of the modern world.

The rising popularity of Gothic fiction can be interpreted both as a quiet form of rebellion and as acceptance of "guilty pleasure" entertainment, as it challenges the rigid system in which one thought and even existed at the time. It dealt in thoughts, feelings, situations – and sometimes creatures - that the Victorian world was not explicitly made for. In *Contemporary women's Gothic fiction*, Gina Wisker presents her own take on the unique properties of Gothic literature that make us look closer at the way we view the world, for better and for worse:

Dis-ease and uncertainty are key coordinates in Gothic literature. Like bees and wasps fertilising the garden, its disturbance is, I argue, ultimately good for us because it shakes us out of blinkered complacencies and encourages questioning. Even the unpalatable insights the Gothic serves us can be fruitful. However, like wasps in particular, it can pack a cruel sting, since defamiliarization, instability and contradiction are often uncomfortable. (Wisker 2016, p. 2)

Supernatural beings, particularly ones that challenged the mortality of Man and the horrors that await us beyond the grave, became a mainstay within the genre, giving way for its own subgenre in which supernature becomes the thing that challenges nature (or what was perceived as the natural way of thinking). One of, if not the most popular supernatural creature that was put into frequent use in Gothic fiction was the vampire.

As an undead creature that consumes blood, our very lifeforce, the vampire was monstrous, but it also carried with it strong sexual undercurrents. When writing about vampires, it became convenient that the points on the human body at which our arteries are most accessible are also thought of as erogenous zones – the neck, wrist and groin. In order to access these points to draw blood from them without the victim putting up a messy struggle, the vampire would need to gain a physical level of intimacy with them, which it usually did through supernatural vampiric powers of hypnosis and/or plain seduction. These were all intriguing properties during the rigidly moralizing Victorian era, and physically intimate relationships between individuals who were not man and wife nor child and parent were unheard of. The vampire was often depicted as controlling, communicating with or transforming into animals, which added a beastly element to it. In addition, the physical flesh of the vampire had once belonged to a living, breathing person. It became an ideal creature for the Gothic genre to utilize as a device that in its subversion did not fit other genres. Its prevalent use both as horrific monster and as anti-heroic romantic interest still in modern times can be explained thus:

Vampires are the ultimate Gothic creatures, a living dead contradiction able to vehicle the angst, desires and fears of whatever time, place and cultural context produces them. Sexier, better dressed and more able to pass as romantic leads than zombies, their use as a measure of the gendered cultural concerns and contradictions of time and place is so varied as to enable a simultaneous fascination and repulsion. (Wisker 157)

The vampire was the embodiment of both fears and desires in a world in which it was a given that fears were fought and conquered by brave Englishmen. In order to form a nuanced and meaningful analysis of “Carmilla” and *Dracula*, it is imperative for me to look beyond these compelling vampires and draw contextual lines between the narrative and the world at the time of their publishing. In a fictional version of such a world, desires outside the marital bed were resisted bravely by men, while women were not expected to possess desires beyond pleasing her husband and raising children much like in the real world. The vampire was an effective predator, an undead, former human being whose motivation - its remaining desires in the world - caused it to leave only death and despair in its wake. The novels “Carmilla” and *Dracula* are both named after vampiric characters, and it follows that these vampires shape the stories told within. These novels both challenge and, ultimately, enforce the prevalent narrative of the heroic men’s ability to save their helpless women from the evil vampire in their own way, which will be central to this thesis.

1.3 “Carmilla” and *Dracula*

In 1872, one iteration of the vampire as a Gothic device came along in the form of the titular character of the novella “Carmilla” by the Irish writer Sheridan Le Fanu. Appearance-wise a young, beautiful woman, her story is that of a wolf in sheep’s clothing, inconspicuously feeding on young women in the vicinity of her hosts during her stay with Laura and her father. The story is narrated by young Laura, whom Carmilla proceeds to seduce and feed upon. The male characters of the story are kept “in the dark” so to speak, as they remain peripheral characters for the duration of the novella, and beyond killing Carmilla in the end, they are unusually inconsequential to its narrative for a publication from a time of such strong patriarchal societal standards. It can be discussed which of “Carmilla”’s

transgressions were the worst in the eyes of a Victorian. At the time of publishing “Carmilla”, the existence of supernatural creatures like the vampire was not universally thought of as pure fiction the way it is now, while lesbianism, ironically and transversely, was far less acknowledged as a valid form of sexuality then as opposed to now. Consequently, it is easy to see how Carmilla’s can be perceived as a progressive story. In this thesis, I intend to argue against this, however.

25 years later, Bram Stoker published *Dracula*, the story of another vampire, but this time the titular character was a very different monster. The ancient Count is a predator with a voracious appetite whose sights are set on London, England after learning of its massive population, which he sees as bountiful hunting grounds. He terrorizes men and women alike, but the victims most pointedly fed upon and then used to his advantage in the story are Mina and Lucy, both belonging to the same social circle as the solicitor (Jonathan Harker, Mina’s fiancé) who was previously Dracula’s house guest/hostage at his castle in Transylvania and also Dr John Seward, a psychologist at the insane asylum that neighbours one of Dracula’s London estates. Contrary to Le Fanu’s story, which openly deals with alternate sexuality and gender roles, Stoker presented a firmly heteronormative story in which the patriarchy stood strongly throughout. This has caused the critical consensus of these two stories to generally conclude that “Carmilla” is a progressive story, while *Dracula* is a strictly conservative story that preserves the patriarchal ideal of the Victorian Era. Like others before me, I find that these two texts warrant literary comparison, but in my case, it is not because they represent polar opposites (like they are posed as in Elizabeth Signorotti’s text, which I am about to describe in the next section) but because underneath the surface, they have only too much in common. It is tempting to believe that two male authors in the Victorian Era would have a solidary need to reaffirm the order of things after challenging it in their texts. My analysis will show that Le Fanu and Stoker both, ultimately, indeed reaffirm patriarchal and heteronormative Victorian values.

1.4 The Subject Matter from A Teacher’s Point of View

The landscape of gender politics has changed greatly in the time that has passed between the Victorian Era and today. Still, though laws have changed, and many taboos have been lifted since, patriarchal currents of traditions passed down to younger generations cause this to still be a contentious and sensitive issue today. The fact that we now live in a time

where one can publicly brand oneself proudly as belonging to what has been named the LGBTQIA+ community is a feat, but it does not come without danger. Risks of outer threats of judgement and even violence and excommunication from one's own family are only too common, which in turn cause inner threats to one's wellbeing and mental health. As a budding teacher to adolescents in ages ranging from early puberty to the time of legal emancipation in Norway (ages 12-19), this places a serious responsibility on me. It will be my role both to teach my students about individual rights to one's own identity, personal agency, and equal rights regardless of gender or sexuality. Based on the way I have shaped my central argument in this thesis, I expect to accumulate a great deal of new knowledge about how Western society was systemically built with a patriarchal bias through my research. I suspect that a perspective that takes into account the extreme origins of modernized misogynistic thoughts will help me as a teacher but also as a human being who recognizes that a good teacher can prevent future inequity.

1.5 Approach

Not everyone agrees with my argument concerning "Carmilla". In her text "Repossessing the Body: Transgressive Desire in "Carmilla" and *Dracula*, Elizabeth Signorotti poses damning evidence of Bram Stoker's patriarchal manipulation of the subject matter of gender rights and sexuality in *Dracula*, inspired by its counterpart in Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmilla". According to Signorotti, *Dracula* was written as a response to the older novella, reinstating male control in the exchange of women. In effect, *Dracula* seeks to repossess the female body for the purposes of male pleasure and exchange, and to correct the reckless unleashing of female desire in Le Fanu's "Carmilla". (Signorotti 607) Drawing ideas from theorists such as Claude Levi-Strauss, Gayle Rubin and Eve Sedgwick, she describes in her analysis the established customs regarding the treatment of women as objects whose importance lies solely in their value to men and their agendas. A woman's role is not as an active agent, but as an object of exchange between the actual partners in an exchange (such as the father of the bride and her husband to be), according to Levi-Strauss. Quoting Gayle Rubin's essay "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the "Political Economy" of Sex", Signorotti discusses: "Rubin further stresses that 'compulsory heterosexuality is a product of male kinship' because "women . . . can only be properly [valued] by someone 'with a penis' (phallus)." (Signorotti 608); (Rubin 1975) According to Sedgwick, the exchange of women

becomes a method for male bonding; a safe way for men to establish an intimate, but also unquestionably platonic relationship, or what Sedgwick labels a “homosocial” relationship between men. (Signorotti 607) Signorotti poses that the solitude in which Laura exists at the beginning of “Carmilla”, relatively isolated from the rest of the world, enables her father to be in complete control of her circumstances, and it also causes Laura’s existence to be a lonely one. When Carmilla arrives, she and Laura quickly bond and Laura’s father is “shut out”, and does not suspect anything to be wrong, never entertaining the idea that the intimacy between the girls to be anything beyond platonic friendship. Signorotti claims that this corresponds with the assertion that homophobia is something that solely extends itself to male-to-male relationships, making lesbianism non-threatening, as there is no phallus present to perform a penetration, and thereby a violation. Signorotti also theorizes that Bram Stoker wrote *Dracula* in response to “Carmilla”: “If Le Fanu frees his female characters from subject positions in the male kinship system, Stoker decidedly returns his to exchange status and reinstates them in that system.” (Signorotti 1996, p. 619)

It is in great part Signorotti’s critique that inspired this thesis. Her text implies that “Carmilla” is a progressive novella, one that uses gothic fiction as a device to grant women liberation from the strict demands of the patriarchy, while *Dracula* works within the confines of the same genre to “wrangle” women in danger of departing from the “woman’s sphere” back to their station in life (and in death). Although I in part agree with this highly enlightening analysis, I wish to offer a different perspective: “Carmilla” and *Dracula* both contain progressive ideas, but ultimately, they reveal themselves to represent male fantasy instead. “Carmilla” appears to celebrate an until now unthinkable lesbian sexuality, while *Dracula* confidently presents Mina Murray/Harker as a supremely able-bodied woman who, in the beginning, appears as a representative of the New Woman. These novels are both written by men, though; neither of which sought to thwart the traditional rule of men or sully men’s reading of their text. Hidden within vampiric horror we find battles for the souls of beloved, weak, potentially mothering women, which in both cases culminates in the reinstatement of traditional patriarchy, and a happy ending for all who follow the ideal of Victorian patriarchy.

2 Leading Ladies and Femmes Fatale

In this chapter we will look at the four central female characters of “Carmilla” and *Dracula* and explore parallels, oppositional properties and the relationships between these women. I will argue that the pattern that arises in the treatment of these women is that compliance with societal norms must be celebrated and guarded, while female rebellion against the woman’s lot in life must be punished and defeated by brave gentlemen. This narrative facilitates the preservation of patriarchal ideals.

Laura and Mina set out as idealized women. Laura is introduced as the narrator of “Carmilla”, an untouched upper middle-class maiden whose existence is a sheltered and dull one, though she enjoys the privileges of her station and the love of her father. It seems, however, that despite his obligatory love for his daughter, Laura’s father is not especially present in her life, and he primarily exists on the perimeter of it, taking for granted her safety and wellness due to the boundaries he has set in place for her. One of the consequences of these boundaries is that Laura has not yet had the chance to discover her own sexual drive. This causes the heteronormative outside world to assume that she has no sexual nature, something which Carmilla takes advantage of as she seduces the impressionable Laura. Laura’s parallel as an ideal woman in *Dracula* is Mina, although their differences outweigh their similarities. Mina appears to be a remarkably well adjusted and accomplished woman, with skills and interests that transcend the typical occupations that fit within the woman’s sphere. Stoker’s descriptions of her throughout the novel make her appear almost impossibly perfect, a theme we will revisit later in this thesis. One of the properties Mina is lauded for is her apparent asexuality, something that was sought after in good, Christian, English women at the time.

Each novel also contains their own version of the “condemned” woman: The woman that diverges so completely from societal norm that she must change and/or die. Carmilla is a female vampire whose appetites are for female victims only, and her sights are set on Laura, both as a target for seduction and consumption. Until she is revealed as a suspect of murder by a family friend in the end of the novella, Carmilla almost succeeds, undiscovered by Laura’s father and protector whose expectations of Laura are heteronormative and unsuspecting of female companions. Mina’s best friend Lucy is initially a frivolous young woman who appreciates her great popularity with men, and desires all of her three devoted

suitors in return. She is ultimately fed on and turned into a vampire by Count Dracula, which reveals what is deemed a detestably sexual side in her, something that the men must rectify.

Mina's section in this chapter will focus on Mina's character before she is married to Jonathan Harker and is therefore labelled as Mina Murray. She will be further discussed in the next chapter (3 *Mina Harker and the Men she Serves*), where the focus will shift to her character as the married woman Mina Harker. I have divided up my discussion of Carmilla in a similar manner: in this chapter she will be explored in the role she is assigned by Laura, as a romantic interest tinted with danger, while she will be further discussed in the final chapter (4 *Carmilla and Count Dracula*), but then as an antagonist.

2.1 Laura and Mina

2.1.1 Laura, The Maiden in The Schloss

Dracula and "Carmilla" both have their own designated female heroine: Mina and Laura. The narrator of "Carmilla", Laura, is a lonely girl. The setting in which she resides, with her father and servants as her only company, is one that not only signals negative connotations of loneliness and isolation, but also the romantic and dreamlike settings in which traditional fairy tales take place. The use of such fairy-tale tropes helps the reader distance themselves from the contents of the text, lending a clear fictionality to it, which makes it easier for the Gothic text to tell stories about taboo topics: we know now that this is fiction, so we need not worry that the lesbian relationship or the vampire within is real.

Like *Sleeping Beauty* encased in a remote castle overgrown with thorn bushes, Laura finds herself in a "schloss", complete with its own moat and drawbridge. Her mother is long dead, so her daily contact with other women consists of interactions with female servants. She is nineteen years old, which places her in her prime as a young, unattached lady, yet she is still attended by two governesses, which seems like a somewhat superfluous, or misplaced choice. Though a governess is someone that not only raises children for a living but also educates them, Laura is at the age where these two would more appropriately be replaced by a tutor and a lady's maid, but that would require her father to acknowledge her state of maturity and let go of a portion of the control that he wields over her. By keeping governesses as her main attendants, Laura's father maintains her in an infantilized, controlled state. She also enjoys the occasional company of other young girls:

there were two or three young lady friends besides, pretty nearly of my own age, who were occasional visitors, for longer or shorter terms; and these visits I sometimes returned. These were our regular social resources; but of course there were chance visits from “neighbours” of only five or six leagues distance. My life was, notwithstanding, rather a solitary one, I can assure you. (Le Fanu 12)

There is no explicit mention of any socializing with young men or boys, neither platonically nor as suitors. The implication is that she’s effectively isolated from any opportunity to encounter a romantic interest of her own accord, and that her father intends to control that side of her life entirely. Laura downplays both her father’s wealth as well as the control exerted over her by her governesses, which shows that she is not oblivious to the fact that she appears to be stuck in a gilded cage. Though her father dotes on Laura, providing a rudimentary form of protection by way of shutting Laura out from the world, he has also shut himself off from having a truly close relationship with Laura. His conversations with her are superficial, so he does not truly know her beyond surface level, and he also keeps a physical distance to her, which becomes distressing to Laura one night when she wakes up from a nightmare involving a warning from the ghost of her mother and a vision of Carmilla, drenched in blood: “If my father’s room had been at that side of the house, we would have called him up at once to our aid. But, alas! He was quite out of hearing, and to reach him involved an excursion for which we none of us had courage.” (Le Fanu 85) Laura’s father practices what he considers the distance a patriarch should have from his female ward, both physically and emotionally. Accepting the idea that men and women belong to separate spheres, he has grown to see her as a precious object for which he feels an obligatory fatherly love and duty to protect. The irony in “Carmilla” is that he might have been able to see the danger of their new house guest far earlier if he were more involved with Laura’s daily life. The societal gap between the genders becomes a hindrance to Laura’s safety, despite the great priority her father places on safeguarding her and her maidenhood.

If we disregard her isolation at the schloss, Laura’s personality resembles Lucy’s far more than it does Mina. They both have a less serious, more young-and-carefree outlook on life than the educated and responsible Mina. Their shared desire for companionship can

innocently be seen as a lust for life, but that is a modern interpretation – in the 1800s, the word “lust” should not proverbially exist in a woman’s vocabulary. One can speculate as to how Laura’s personality would have developed should the strict boundaries for her opportunities to socialize have been lifted, and a similar disposition to Lucy’s would seem credible in such a situation. Signorotti states that *Dracula* originated as a response to “Carmilla”(607), and if we read the novels that way, Lucy’s ruthless treatment can in extension be read as Stoker punishing Laura for her actions (or inaction) in “Carmilla” when she welcomes rather than rebuffs Carmilla’s advances. The naivety and loneliness that accompanies her solitude is, in that case, not taken into any kind of redemptive account.

At the end of “Carmilla”, Laura is alive and well, but she is haunted by memories of Carmilla, and the relationship between her and her still unnamed father is distant as ever. The ways in which Laura remembers Carmilla are ambiguous: “sometimes the playful, languid, beautiful girl; sometimes the writhing fiend I saw in the ruined church”. (Le Fanu 156) Laura still has feelings for Carmilla which she has yet to be free of, suggesting that she is growing ever further removed from her father. She did not succumb to the vampire, however, which may very well be owed to the fact that Carmilla was a mere woman and not a man, and thereby has not broken the rules of compulsory heterosexuality: she has not been violated by the only gender that can violate a woman, namely a man.

2.1.2 Mina Murray: Talented, Idealistic and Unmarried

Dracula’s Mina, on the other hand, enjoys an extended sense of freedom in comparison with Laura as a young, unmarried woman. Mina Murray is introduced to us via mentions by Jonathan, one of which compares her to the Count’s three vampire brides: “I am alone in the castle with those awful women. Faugh! Mina is a woman, and there is naught in common.” (Stoker 52) When Jonathan had his first encounter with these women, he was entranced, and his flattering description of them shows a clear sexual attraction: “There was something about them that made me uneasy, some longing and at the same time some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips.” (Stoker 38) The vampire brides suggest the anti-woman or women fallen from grace. Rather than conform to the moral, asexual, homemaking women that they should be according to social norms, they have become immoral creatures who have “allowed” a man to take possession over them outside of wedlock. These women who have been made into members

of Dracula's monstrous harem are metaphors for what would normally be an unmarried woman who had simply had intercourse with a man. Jonathan is the honourable, good, Christian Englishman, tempted by the devil, but luckily escaping unmarred by them and concluding that they are not even women, unlike his idealized Mina. By resisting these women to whom he feels an obvious attraction, Jonathan proves that an Englishman can resist even the irresistible.

In Mina's voice, Stoker discusses the New Woman openly as something she considers continuously. She reveals a certain recognition of their skills early on: "I shall try to do what I see lady journalists do: interviewing and writing descriptions and trying to remember conversations." (Stoker 53) In this instance, there is no particular need for her to specify "lady journalists", and the word "lady" could be left out, but its inclusion has a purpose: had Mina said that she should do what journalists do, then it could be interpreted as desire to behave like a man, because only men are journalists. Journalists of the female gender are specified as "lady journalists"; lower-ranking, and more accessible for Mina, or any other woman, to want to emulate. During a pleasant outing with Lucy, she reflects:

We had a capital 'severe tea' at Robin Hood's Bay in a sweet little old-fashioned inn, with a bow-window right over the seaweed-covered rocks of the strand. I believe we should have shocked the 'New Woman with our appetites. Men are more tolerant, bless them!" (Stoker 85)

This throwaway remark shows her regard for the New Women. They are people whom she would want to impress, whose standard for women is to be able to command self-discipline on par with a man, while men, being "more tolerant", view women as weaker and therefore more indulgent to their own impulses. It also strikes an ironic chord, as the very idea behind the New Woman was that women should not settle for what little society is willing to allow them to have. The New Woman fought for more bodily and fiscal autonomy, independence, and altogether equal rights, and she was not happy with what rights men were willing to allow her and the hierarchy of having to be allowed rights by the opposite gender in the first place. The hearty meal suggested by "severe tea" seems exactly the right meal for the New Woman. It should be noted, however, that she considers herself as a woman who does not fit under the

moniker “New Woman”, as she talks of them as someone looking at them from without, an outsider who sees herself as no more a New Woman than as one of what she labels “tolerant” men. Mina fits well into the standard of followers of the New Woman ideal as an educated, middle-class woman, though, as she also thinks to herself further down on the same page:

“Some of the ‘New Women’ writers will some day start an idea that men and women should be allowed to see each other asleep before proposing or accepting. But I suppose the ‘New Woman’ won’t condescend in future to accept. She will do the proposing herself. And a nice job she will make of it too! There’s some consolation in that.” (Stoker 85)

This reflection is an introspective train of thought in Mina. Having accepted Jonathan’s proposal, she has metaphorically signed a contract that she is going to lead the traditional life of a wife. She admires the New Woman movement’s lack of a tether to established rules and gender roles. She is resigned to the fact that the subversion of the established gender roles will only take place “some day”, which she also sees as perhaps a little too progressed for her liking, as she needs the “consolation” of the fact that women can perform traditionally male roles well, which is an indirect claim that there is no need to deny women opportunities and rights.

In Mina’s musings about New Women writers, she forgets that she herself – though not published – is also a New Woman writer. Mina works as an assistant schoolmistress, and practices writing in shorthand: “When we are married I shall be able to be useful to Jonathan, and if I can stenograph well enough I can take down what he wants to say in this way and write it out for him on the typewriter, at which I am also practising very hard.” (Stoker 53) Mina’s useful skills as a writer are here presented as though she has acquired them for the sole purpose of being useful to Jonathan, but it is still remarkable how her very possession of these skills is in opposition to the idea of the traditional Victorian woman. Signorotti’s assessment that Stoker aimed to “correct” the liberation of women in “Carmilla” initially comes across as a little exaggerated, as Mina seems to have no intention of becoming the typical, apathetic Victorian wife. Her writing skills are of no use as a homemaking lady, nor when bearing or rearing children. They are skills that are typically of great use for a middleclass working woman, not a homemaker. From a modern feminist point of view, her

aims may seem submissive and even sycophantic, as her dreams are to be useful to her husband and not “her own woman,” but viewed in light of how little freedom women had at the time in England, with the general consensus being that a married woman’s place was in the home, her ambitions to rather assist her husband in his profession is unconventionally progressive. Mina is also a resourceful woman who sheds her vanity if she needs to, such as when she finds Lucy entranced in a park and decides to give Lucy her shoes while she daubs her own feet with mud so their bareness shouldn’t attract attention. In the Victorian tradition, no self-respecting middle-class woman would stoop to such menial, undignified behaviour, and so, she does not want to be seen. Had she fully obeyed the rules of a middle-class Victorian woman, however, she would more likely have sent servants to look for Lucy rather than venture out herself in the first place, so she has already broken these rules to an extent by daring to be so self-sufficient.

Once she’s married, Mina Murray becomes Mina Harker, and while Jonathan has been high on her list of priorities up until now, he and her life with him now become her only priorities. When meeting with van Helsing, Mina purposefully hands him her journal written in shorthand because she “could not resist the temptation of mystifying him a bit – I suppose it is some of the taste of the original apple that remains still in our mouths” (Stoker 170-171) Mina still retains great pride in her skills to begin with, which shows that she has not given up on her ambitions to assist Jonathan. Her mention of the apple shows that she sees this as an opportunity to show off the skills she has because she knows it will subvert his expectations of her. It is one of many cases where Stoker takes care to highlight the binary thinking behind his work: the reader is often pointedly reminded of the gender of characters and the differences between the genders based on stereotypical, socially constructed gender properties.

As mentioned previously, Mina’s character will be revisited in the next chapter. We will then explore Mina as a married woman.

2.2 Carmilla and Lucy

2.2.1 Carmilla, The Ancient Seductress

When Carmilla arrives and it is decided that she will stay a while with Laura at the schloss, it is a grim form of wish fulfilment as Laura is joined not by the young lady she had

previously planned to welcome, but that girl's killer (unbeknownst to all, including the reader), whose appearance is one of a helpless, beautiful damsel in distress. While on an evening outing, Laura, her father and her governesses come upon Carmilla's travelling party, which at great speed crashes on the estate. What follows is a chaotic scene where the carriage has fallen on its side, and with "a young lady, who appeared to be lifeless." (Le Fanu 25) Laura gushes over the scene with fondness of her father and wonder at the new arrivals, particularly the two women at the forefront: "My dear old father was already beside the elder lady, with his hat in his hand, evidently tendering his aid and the resources of his schloss. The lady did not appear to hear him, or to have eyes for anything but the slender girl who was being placed against the slope of the bank." (Le Fanu 25) Laura has a slightly dismissive tone when she speaks about her father. He is dear and old, a typically condescending way for the young to speak of their elders. Additionally, he displays the same obliviousness he has with his daughter with the women of the arriving party, which is to his great disadvantage, as everyone but the servants appear to be female. As the only non-working-class man present, he concerns himself instead with playing the dashing hero to the beleaguered ladies. At Laura's behest, he almost seems to argue with Carmilla's "guardian" to let him take her in, showing that he has no qualms about letting in a female stranger at all: "If, as you say, you cannot suspend your journey, you must part with her tonight, and nowhere could you do so with more honest assurances of care and tenderness than here." (Le Fanu 27) He is then taken aside so that the guardian can whisper conditions for Carmilla's stay in his ear, and her countenance has now taken on a noticeable change, at which Laura speculates: "I was filled with wonder that my father did not seem to perceive the change". (Le Fanu 28) It is a mixture of good intentions, ignorance and his hero complex that makes Laura's father entirely indiscriminating towards these strangers on his land. Laura's father does want the best for his daughter, who has missed out on a visitor, but he neglects cautionary inspection of the strangers on his land because he cannot imagine any harm coming from women, who are to be considered helpless by default.

Carmilla's companion, the "elder lady", bears the appearance of a guardian, someone whose patronage Carmilla is subject to, but I suspect it is rather the other way around; a human servant to the undead "young lady". It is mentioned later that the "mother" expresses reluctance in allowing them to take in Carmilla: "saying she was in delicate health, and nervous, but not subject to any kind of seizure – she volunteered that – nor to any illusion; being, in fact, perfectly sane." (Le Fanu 35) This may have been a way to pre-empt any fears

of hysteria, which was a commonly diagnosed illness attributed to female emotional distress of various kinds in the 19th century. What's more likely, however, is that she is using men's preconceived image of the fragile woman to her advantage. The assumption of an innate fragility in women facilitates the patriarchal hierarchy as a benign institution from which women benefit by being relieved of the burden of autonomy. Laura's father and everyone else believe the charade only too willingly: the appearance of an injured, young lady and her frightened mother on his land appeals to the idealism of the woman who is helpless without a man, and the desire in men to play the gallant hero. The appearance of helplessness is Carmilla's prime mode, and her most efficient method of approaching people and making herself seem approachable. In the Victorian era, this was likely a common way for women to manipulate men to gain advantages in a world programmed towards being disadvantageous towards women. In Carmilla's case, it both helps her hide her identity as a predator and facilitates her in her hunt for prey.

Carmilla is repeatedly described as "languid" throughout the story, which can be interpreted both as an unconscious and a premeditated trait. The unconscious languor is a hint at her close, perverted relationship with death itself. She is supposed to be long-dead and, as a vampire, she is rendered a tangible spectre. She romanticizes death, murmuring to Laura in an intimate moment:

"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; so, for a while, seek to know no more of me and mine, but trust me with all your loving spirit." (Le Fanu 46)

Carmilla speaks as though Laura knows the truth of her circumstances, yet at the same time, she speaks in riddles so as not to reveal herself. This is because she is only half speaking to Laura; she is also speaking to herself. Carmilla is humiliated because she must keep her true

nature a secret and pretend to be what she is not – a mere girl enjoying the “warmth” of life. Judging by how none of the women in Carmilla’s travelling party were young, it seems safe to say that Carmilla does not “reproduce” vampires, meaning she does not make any of her victims into vampires. When she says that Laura “shall die into mine”, she does not mean that Laura will die and wake up in a vampiric life like Carmilla, but that Carmilla will consume Laura’s life force, and that is her version of love.

The intimacy between Carmilla and Laura is presented in a way that makes it evidently clear to the reader that this is not a platonic friendship. Through language wreathed in mystery and sensuality, Carmilla attempts to seduce Laura. The notion that Laura will “sweetly die” may suggest “la petite mort”; the little death that is the release and tranquillity that follows an orgasm. When she states that Laura will “draw near to others” as she draws near to Carmilla, it is suggested that Carmilla intends to, for once, pass on her vampiric curse to her victim rather than simply kill her, and she imagines Laura will feel the same inclination as her to become intimate with her victims. She embellishes on her view of death when she is annoyed by a passing funeral procession for one of her victims: “What a fuss! Why you must die – *everyone* must die; and all are happier when they do. Come home.” (Le Fanu 51) Carmilla is vexed not only at having the evidence of her nightly escapades paraded by her, but also at the fact that death is mourned rather than celebrated. In death, she sees freedom from the restricting social rules of life, and the freedom to be who or what you want to be, and thus, happier. It is a self-deception she has chosen to adopt in order to relieve her own guilty conscience, which she doesn’t entirely succeed in subduing, as the funeral party in question is for someone she has killed, and her guilt because of it is also a great part of her discomfort here. Carmilla even manages to turn Laura’s childhood trauma into a romantic one upon confirming that she was the one to cause it: “Your looks won me; I climbed on the bed and put my arms about you, and I think we both fell asleep. I was aroused by a scream; you were sitting up screaming. I was frightened, and slipped down upon the ground, and, it seemed to me, lost conscience for a moment; and when I came to myself, I was again in my nursery at home.” Carmilla must mysteriously use gaslighting as a seduction technique to keep her secret, which Laura seemingly recognizes, as she has already stated in this, her narration, that she was visited that night by a young lady, not a six-year-old child. Her methods are subtle and manipulative, but not impossible to see through. It is curious that Laura wouldn’t be more suspicious of her after this discrepancy along with all the alarming talk of death. This is a symptom of her loneliness: Laura has for so long been without someone she can relate with,

and she is willing to put up with a lot as a result. In addition, it is only natural for Laura to want her own social sphere: her communications with her father and governesses are largely superficial, and her need for close comradeship is unfulfilled. When her relationship with Carmilla quickly becomes more than that between comrades, it solidifies the sphere, making it impossible for others to join them in confidence.

When speaking of thwarting the ideal of the Victorian woman; Carmilla bears striking similarities to Lucy. It seems a plausible speculation that Carmilla served as a strong inspiration to Stoker's Lucy. Carmilla has a hedonistic way about her, as she does not adhere to the unwritten rules of a household. She does not engage in deep conversation with anyone but the one person she has bestowed her favour on: Laura. The remainder of the household is kept at a polite distance, including the master of the house. There is every possibility that he does not even notice this, as close relationships between a man and a woman he isn't married to would constitute a far more obvious breach of social customs than Carmilla's other, more subtle violations. Carmilla keeps her bedroom door locked and does not leave her quarters until late in the day. She also takes great liberties in her relationship with Laura:

Sometimes after an hour of apathy, my strange and beautiful companion would take my hand and hold it with a fond pressure, renewed again and again; blushing softly, gazing in my face with languid and burning eyes, and breathing so fast that her dress rose and fell with the tumultuous respiration. It was like the ardor of a lover; it embarrassed me; it was hateful and yet over-powering; and with gloating eyes she drew me to her, and her hot lips travelled along my cheek in kisses; and she would whisper, almost in sobs, "You are mine, you shall be mine, you and I are one forever." (Le Fanu 48)

Carmilla's seduction of Laura is perceived by Laura, and meant by Carmilla as a deeply intimate act, and described in an intense manner usually reserved for actual intercourse, yet nothing truly indecent technically takes place. If the scene had been described from a neutral point of view, it could look merely laden with affection, with the exception of Carmilla's exclamation. The scene as described is unmistakably sexual in nature, and Carmilla's conduct as a sexually aggressive seducer is one that is traditionally masculine in nature, yet

this part of the text is immediately followed up with pointing Carmilla's languor out as a feminine trait:

Between these passionate moments there were long intervals of commonplace, of gaiety, of brooding melancholy, during which, except that I detected her eyes so full of melancholy fire, following me, at times I might have been as nothing to her. Except in these brief periods of mysterious excitement her ways were girlish; and there was always a languor about her, quite incompatible with a masculine system in a state of health. (Le Fanu 2020, p. 49)

Carmilla's languor seems like a method for balancing out her more aggressive traits. She is sexually aggressive, yet languid, apathetic, yet passionate, a lover, yet a killer of her lovers. Carmilla appears to be at war with herself. The disharmony between all of these various attributes, almost all of which can be ascribed to either traditionally masculine or feminine values suggest the corruption within her. She is a woman, but she has masculine features, which signifies her abominable nature, as unwomanly is the worst thing a woman can be.

Once Carmilla's vampiric identity is discovered, Laura's father swiftly gathers the men he can and together they venture out to kill Carmilla. They take Laura with them, and she is thus made to bear witness to the carnage of Carmilla's execution. Her resulting narration of the scene is strangely devoid of emotion, save a final, closing remark where she brands the scene as "shocking". (Le Fanu 149) With the discovery of Carmilla's identity, all tension is gone from the text, and the beguiling seductress is reduced to something that needs pest control: the men have now seized control of the narrative. The emotionless language with which Carmilla is executed suggests that this is no longer the young and impressionable Laura that is talking, but Le Fanu who wishes for the reader to know the details of the villainous woman's death. In this scene, Carmilla's body is not spoken of as being that of a person, but as an object that can be picked apart, and picked apart it is. The cold manner in which Carmilla is disposed of signifies the disgust felt by the men towards her. She bears the appearance of a beautiful young woman, and she has sought out intimacy with one among them, but the fact that the person she selected was a woman and not a man is not only a

rejection of heteronormativity, but also rejection of them, which adds insult not only to their gender politics but also to their vanity.

Carmilla will be explored further in the final chapter. We will then focus on her role as an antagonist as opposed to the Count's role in *Dracula*.

2.2.2 Lucy, Favoured by Many

Mina's best friend, Lucy Westenra, is Stoker's counterpart to Carmilla in many ways. Lucy is another kind of "New Woman" than Mina. She is young, beautiful, and exceedingly popular as a bachelorette, as she has no less than three eligible suitors at the same time. Her suitors suggest another parallel with the fairy tale genre: They make up the traditionally "magical" number of three, their personalities are flat and easily summed up as lesser stereotypes, they are the best of friends, and, perhaps most magical of all: they harbour no hint of jealousy between them when it comes to Lucy. This seems an odd narrative, as they are all explicitly masculine and in competition for the same lady's affections. According to Signorotti's assessment, this situation belongs in the same discussion as the one about the exchange of women for the sake of male bonding, however, Lucy's suitors have not exchanged her; they have openly competed with her as the ultimate prize. Like Mina is revealed to be an impossibly competent individual, the three suitors are impossibly amiable and devoid of jealousy. It can both suggest homosexuality or a foreshadowing of how unworthy Lucy will be shown to be, which disqualifies her from deserving jealous, hurt feelings between her former suitors and her chosen beau.

Once Lucy has decided whose proposal she accepts, the ones she rejects remain devoted to her, with no bitterness, in fact Quincey Morris hardly changes his demeanour towards her at all: "Won't you give me one kiss?" . . . "Little girl, I hold your hand, and you've kissed me, and if these things don't make us friends nothing ever will." (Stoker 58) This suggests the friendship between man and woman cannot be platonic in the same way that the friendship between two men can. Even when the woman is spoken for, she is expected to express a form of intimacy that wouldn't be expected (or wanted) of another man. He also affectionately calls her a "little girl", a typical tendency of the period, where the infantilization of women was romanticized to the point of becoming terms of endearment. Lucy exclaims: "why can't they let a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save

all this trouble? But this is heresy, and I must not say it.” (Stoker 58) Signorotti opines that this is Stoker’s way of making her “a threat to established gender roles . . . Lucy serves as Stoker’s paradigm of woman-gone-wrong and predictably suffers from it.” (Signorotti 622) Though Lucy’s self-condemning behaviour opens her up for a punishing fate, she is written as a representative for the New Woman who admits to having premarital sexual appetites that revolve around more than one man, and yet, she is universally adored within her social circle. She does not admit this to just anyone, however: Mina is Lucy’s confidante, and they enjoy a strong, intimate relationship with each other; one whose intimate nature might even challenge that between husband and wife. In *Gender, the New Woman, and the Monster*, Elizabeth D. Macaluso views Mina and Lucy’s relationships in a far more liberating light than Signorotti does. There is a passage in one of Mina’s letters to Lucy that has her fantasize of being with Lucy in a dreamlike setting: “The life of an assistant schoolmistress is sometimes trying. I am longing to be with you, and by the sea, where we can walk together freely and build our castles in the air.” (Stoker 53) Macaluso views Mina’s fantasy as confirmation of a lesbian relationship between the two:

Mina intimates to Lucy that she wishes to escape the heterosexual world of work and duty to join Lucy in their imagined world. This world privileges the women’s creativities and dreams. Mina wishes to see Lucy “by the sea” [...], so they can build an intimate world together without interruption from a patriarchal Victorian society. Mina’s longings indicate that she and Lucy share a secret life together, one that does not include men and that solely privileges the bond that Lucy and Mina have. (Macaluso 23-24)

Signorotti reads the supposed romantic relationship between Mina and Lucy as one-sided lesbianism on Lucy’s end, quoting a letter from Lucy:

I wish I were with you, dear, sitting by the fire undressing, as we used to sit; and I would try to tell you what I feel. I do not know how I am writing this

even to you. I am afraid to stop, or I should tear up the letter, and I don't want to stop, for I *do* so want to tell you all. (Stoker 55).

Signorotti analyses this in the following way: "Lucy's wish to share her secrets while undressing suggests her desire to reveal 'what is more properly concealed,' something she knows is 'wrong.'" (622) This suggests that Signorotti ignores Mina's affectionate language in her letters to Lucy, unlike Macaluso's reading. Macaluso and Signorotti both have valid points in their analyses. Signorotti's assessment that Lucy is alone in having forbidden feelings for her friend serves her theory well, as it only further substantiates how far Lucy's values are from what a Victorian woman should have, and thus explains why she must be punished later on in the text. My own reasoning tends to agree more with Macaluso on this, however, as it enhances Mina's liberated pre-marriage personality and by extension how much her personality changes once she's married. This is not to say that Lucy is not more obvious in her deviant behaviour, which indeed leads to an inevitable and brutal punishment.

Once Lucy takes ill due to Dracula's nightly visits, Lucy loses the right to bodily autonomy in many ways: Dracula is feeding off her. Van Helsing enacts blood transfusions, beginning with her fiancé Arthur Holmwood, and the good doctor takes it upon himself to distribute rewards from Lucy to Arthur by instructing him that he can kiss her unconscious body before the procedure. Afterwards he goes out of his way to facilitate a repetition: "'The brave lover I think deserve another kiss, which he shall have presently.' And as he had now finished the operation, he adjusted the pillow to the patient's head." (Stoker 116) The deserving young man receives an elevated position while the unconscious woman is objectified. The matter of consent is not acknowledged at all, symbolic of the romanticization of the apathetic woman whose will is both inconsequential and unwanted. This theme repeats itself once Lucy returns as a vampire: When opening her coffin a week after the funeral, Dr Seward is astonished at the change in the previously sickly Lucy: "She was, if possible, more radiantly beautiful than ever; and I could not believe that she was dead. The lips were red, nay redder than before; and on the cheeks was a delicate bloom." (Stoker 186) Her state of heightened beauty while in her coffin is in stark contrast with her appearance while awake: "The sweetness was turned to adamant, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness." (Stoker 196) The word "voluptuous" is repeated twice in the following paragraphs as a describing factor so as to carve the word into the reader's impression of her,

and she tries to lure Arthur to her in a suggestive manner. Arthur, on his side, almost gives in, like an impressionable, innocent child. The freed woman may be beautiful when unconscious or without the command of her own faculties, but once awakened and given her own agency, she becomes something like a succubus, seeking to lead innocent men into condemnation. As part of her seduction, she tells Arthur: “Come, and we can rest together. Come, my husband, come!” (Stoker 197) The notion of “resting together” becomes Lucy’s way of recalling Carmilla’s romanticization of death, solidifying it by calling her mourning former fiancé her husband. Lucy and Carmilla are become deadly temptresses, turning the image of restful eternal sleep inside out, perverting it into tormenting innocents by making their intimate desires into pure weakness. They are akin to succubi; demonic women whose aim it is to dominate men through lust and shame.

When Lucy is finally killed, the act is drawn out over several pages, and described in great detail. The grief and horror are felt deeply by the men, but when looking down upon her dead body after the fact, “a glad, strange light broke over [Arthur’s] face and dispelled altogether the gloom of horror that lay upon it.” (Stoker 202) Looking down at this corpse, which must by now be a ghastly sight after a death scene in which “the sharp white teeth champed together till the lips were cut and the mouth was smeared with a crimson foam (...)the blood from the pierced heart welled and spurted up around it” (Stoker 201), the men band together self-congratulatorily and act as though she looks like the very purest angel now that they have freed her. Her fiancé Arthur performs the staking of her heart himself, looking like “a figure of Thor as his untrembling arm rose and fell”. (Stoker 201) After this, Van Helsing bids him to “Kiss her dead lips if you will, as she would have you to, if for her to choose”. (Stoker 202) After the kiss, we are told matter-of-factly that “we cut off the head and filled the mouth with garlic”. (Stoker 202) All the deeds by the men are spoken of as heroic and traumatic to them, but their final take-away is one of blissful relief that they were able to set things right by themselves. Van Helsing’s statement that Lucy would have Arthur kiss her if it were for her to choose may well be correct, but it isn’t for her to choose, and kissing her dead body is in fact desecration of her corpse, which has no way of choosing anything. Judging by this scene, and others where he bid Arthur kiss Lucy’s unconscious body show that he believes that men should have dominion over all decisions, and as the reigning authority, their wishes and wellbeing must be prioritized higher than any other concerns. In contrast to Lucy’s graphic, long lasting death scene, the main antagonist of *Dracula*, the Count himself, is swiftly dealt with in the course of three modest sentences:

But, on the instant, came the sweep and flash of Jonathan's great knife. I shrieked as I saw it shear through the throat; whilst at the same time Mr Morris' bowie knife plunged in the heart.

It was like a miracle; but before our very eyes, and almost in the drawing of a breath, the whole body crumbled into dust and passed from our sight.
(Stoker 350)

No description of blood or even a body to desecrate after the kill: the Count evaporates like a bad dream. This unilaterally evil creature who has terrorised every page of this relatively lengthy novel is disposed of without anything resembling the torturous and viscerally detailed punishment of Lucy. This is because the male fantasy is not interested in outdrawn punishments of male evildoers, but they draw a perverse pleasure, or a sexually tinged "schadenfreude" from the punishment of women who refuse to adhere to patriarchal rules, especially if they are promiscuous.

2.3 Conclusion Chapter 1

The four women discussed in this chapter are all subjects to the same social norms, but their situations and choices separate them. Laura's youth, naivety and loneliness work as contributing factors both to the ease with which Carmilla can prey on her and to Laura's redemption and survival. Another contributing factor to Carmilla's leisurely hunt for Laura is the inattentiveness of Laura's father, which stems from his patriarchal, limited view of his role as the father of a young woman. The distance between Laura and her father enables Carmilla to establish an intimacy with Laura unlike any of Laura's pre-existing relationships, and the sheltered, inexperienced young girl thus becomes all too accessible to the predator. Carmilla, in turn, takes advantage of men's, and thus Laura's father's, preconceptions of the fragility of women. He displays his instinct to save and protect in her scene of arrival, which confirms that Carmilla's method of approaching the family by acting languid is tactically clever. She appears to be a maiden in need of assistance, but she is in truth a predator on the hunt. This may suggest that Le Fanu wants to encourage closer surveillance of women from the man in the house, under the guise of providing protection, though this would inevitably also create a far more controlling environment for women. In the end of "Carmilla", Laura is

traumatized, but alive and well: thanks to her father's (and other men's) intervention, she survived the vampire's attacks. As an innocent who has "only" been violated by a woman and not a man, she is not punished beyond having to carry the memories with her. Carmilla is killed by the men that Laura's father can muster once her identity as a vampire has been uncovered, restoring order to the world of the schloss and peace of mind to Laura's father.

Laura's counterpart as a rule-abiding woman in *Dracula*, Mina, is someone who fits into the mould of the New Woman and who holds the New Woman in great regard, but she places herself outside of this category. She is superbly skilled as a working schoolmistress, and she maintains her skills chiefly with the goal of assisting Jonathan in his work once they're married, a remarkably progressive ambition for a Victorian woman. She is greatly looking forward to marrying Jonathan, who idealizes her for having "nothing in common" with Dracula's three irresistibly seductive vampire brides, meaning she has no sexual desire – the perfect Victorian lady. In this respect, Mina seems somewhat at odds with herself, admiring the liberated New Woman while also dreaming of tying the famous knot, effectively giving herself away to a man. Stoker bridges this gap by tying her skills to Jonathan's line of work, so that she can use them to assist him, but she displays her own pride and ambition through them when flaunting her cleverness in front of Van Helsing. Her best friend Lucy has a very different personality – easy-going and with a flirtatious appetite for men. Correspondence between the two suggests that their relationship is more than just platonic, which signifies the freedoms unmarried women can allow themselves as long as the counterpart for the flirtation is not a man. Where Mina matches Stansell's description of the ideal Victorian lady as strait-laced and repressed, Lucy may represent the empty-headed part of the same image (see page 3 for quote). By this I mean the appearance of a frivolous nature in her, as she seems to have no serious pursuits in life beyond her love life, which is full to the brim. Her slight unwillingness to choose a suitor shows a disregard for the strict rules of monogamy set for women. In fact, it can compare to Jonathan's unwillingness to give in to the three vampire brides: she comes out looking like a woman of shockingly low moral fibre, a woman with sexual appetites like those of a man, while Jonathan remains an absolute, faithful hero, choosing his Mina over the three tempting seductresses. Lucy receives a devastating punishment for her behaviour through a prolonged execution at the hands of her suitors. The fates of Mina and Lucy suggest that Stoker is teaching the reader lessons about what behaviour a woman needs to live up to.

3 Mina Harker and the Men she Serves

With the established polarities between female and male gender roles during the Victorian Age, it is no surprise that women and men are portrayed differently in these two texts. Both use women as the preferred victims to their monster, which preserves a heteronormativity in *Dracula* and presents as lesbianism in “Carmilla”. This also preserves the societal narrative of female subjugation and required desirability, which is less important with men. The contrasts in the way men and women are described are so great they almost seem to be describing creatures of different species. In this interest, I wish to explore just how and where the contrasts show themselves, and what function they may have.

This chapter will predominantly revolve around *Dracula*, and the way Mina is treated by the male protagonists. To begin with, we will concern ourselves with the male characters and what, if anything, they signify when viewed in the polarizing light of gender politics. Since this thesis is mainly concerned with female characters, this analysis of the male characters will illustrate what the women are faced with when it comes to the opposite sex. This will involve implications suggested by Signorotti regarding the exchange of women as a facilitation device for male bonding. We will then move on to a further exploration of Mina’s character. We have previously explored her introduction and development as an unmarried but engaged young woman in chapter 1. In this chapter, however, we will look at the married Mina, whose priorities in life have made a shift from the young lady who loved both spending time with her best friend and dreaming of married life to complete dedication to her servitude to her husband and allied men. We will specifically explore the sudden interest Mina takes in motherhood after becoming a wife. I want to argue that *Dracula* enforces the exaggerated importance of the male ego, which enforces expectations that women should sacrifice themselves entirely in order to feed it.

3.1 A Look at our Leading Men

The flatness of male characters in “Carmilla” and *Dracula* and the sexual details surrounding female characters suggest that these novels, which were written by men, were also written for men. In “Carmilla”, men are borderline anonymous as characters. Laura’s father is the most prominent male character, but even he only exists peripherally to Laura and Carmilla. His physical appearance is never described in any detail, which causes the reader to

form a random or faceless image of him in their mind's eye. What's even more compelling, though, is the fact that he is never called by his own name. With Laura as narrator, he is mainly mentioned as "my father" throughout the text, which is logical, as this is realistically how a young woman of only 19 might speak of her family members, but since this rhetoric never changes at any point, it flattens his character and negates his status as a character of authority. The constant repetition of him as her father also implies ownership through possessive pronouns; he is *her* father, while she is not spoken of as *his* daughter. This subverts the established narrative of Victorian society wherein a woman must always belong to a man, such as being someone's daughter, ward, wife, sister or mother. Thus, Laura's father is rendered inconsequential through her narration.

In *Dracula*, the men greatly outnumber the women. Only a few of them are revealed to have been given a three-dimensional character, however. I have already mentioned the fairy tale-like personification of Lucy's suitors. Though they remain in the story until the end, their personalities remain archetypal throughout, though they receive functions that each suggest minor details surrounding the main plot. Mr Quincey P. Morris fits the stereotype of a rich, young, overtly masculine American man. Stoker makes sure to exaggerate his broad, American mannerisms when describing his proposal: "Won't you just hitch up alongside me and let us go down the long road together driving in double harness?" (Stoker 2011, p. 57) Quincey's language makes him sound rough, unrefined, and not necessarily very distinguished or intelligent. His ample fortune enables the protagonists in their quest to defeat Count Dracula. Even doctor John Seward, one of the main point-of-view characters whose writings make up the bulk of the novel, is stuck as a one-note character. He has a primary function through his work, as he is physician to Renfield, the Count's prospective underling in London. He is also the one whose relationship with van Helsing as a former student enables them to summon van Helsing, who becomes the mastermind of their entire operation. Arthur Holmwood is the benevolent suitor ultimately selected by Lucy for marriage, and thus the one who is allowed to mourn her most deeply, as he was the one who was set to assume ownership of her once married. His personality is perhaps the least explored of all of Lucy's suitors. We know he is an upper-class English gentleman who succeeds his father as Lord Godalming in the time after Lucy's death. The reader's distance from him through not knowing more about him makes him stoic and free of weakness beyond his grief over Lucy, which solidifies his position as belonging to a class above the rest. Thus, Lucy's suitors become slightly different versions of the self-sacrificing hero archetype, each of them

moulded as the ideal, white, young, upper middle class or upper-class man. The three men become the complete antithesis to the three vampire brides: brave versus manipulative, self-sacrificing versus greedy, honourable versus promiscuous. The most striking thing about the three suitors as a group remains the fact that they so readily accept Lucy's decision about who she accepts as her fiancé and who she decides to spurn – the jilted lovers stay friends with Arthur and with Lucy, and despite apparent strong feelings for her, there is no bitterness to be found amongst them. Lucy has been granted the luxury of being able to choose for herself, but she is ultimately worth no more than any other prized possession, and the men are somehow above feelings like jealousy and resentment for one another. They ultimately value each other more than they do the woman. This all fits well with Signorotti's assessment about the exchange of women as a method for male bonding, however these men haven't exchanged a woman, but competed for one, and their lack of jealousy can be read as a hint at more than a mere platonic friendship between the men.

Van Helsing, the saviour of the situation in *Dracula*, is introduced through Dr Seward's description of him:

He is a seemingly arbitrary man, but this is because he knows what he is talking about better than anyone else. He is a philosopher and a metaphysician, and one of the most advanced scientists of his day; and he has I believe, an absolutely open mind. This, with an iron nerve, a temper of the ice brook, an indomitable resolution, self-command and toleration exalted from virtues to blessings, and the kindest and truest heart that beats – these form his equipment for the noble work that he is doing for mankind – work both in theory and practice, for his views are as wide as his all-embracing sympathy. (Stoker 106)

This description takes place in a letter from doctor Seward to Arthur Holmwood, and is supposed to have the purpose of ensuring Holmwood that van Helsing will be of valuable help in diagnosing and curing Lucy of her sickness, but includes many properties that at the time of their correspondence seem irrelevant, considering how little they know about what she is going through. It is, for example, not pertinent to the conversation to mention that van Helsing is a philosopher, has an iron nerve or the noble work he does for mankind; one would

think his knowledge of human anatomy and skill as a diagnostician would be far more relevant to the matter at hand. Through his unflinchingly complimentary description of van Helsing, Stoker dictates to the reader through Seward what to expect from Seward's mentor; a nearly superhuman helper whose skills and benevolence transcends human fallibility. This makes van Helsing fit into another archetype: the older, implicitly powerful man whose great wisdom serves as an inspiration and the foundation for the ultimate resolution to the central conflict. This has in modern times become an increasingly popular archetype that is used often in popular fiction, such as Tolkien's Gandalf, J.K. Rowling's Dumbledore, the older Obi-Wan Kenobi in episodes IV, V and VI of the Star Wars movies to name a few of the more prominent ones. The wise old man is always universally benevolent, powerful and a source of great comfort to the protagonists of their story and to the reader. Van Helsing is immediately deeply concerned with Lucy, and he mourns her suffering and ultimate death. It is his knowledge of Lucy's mysterious malady that clues the party of protagonists in on what is wrong with Lucy and on what must be done about it. The reason for his possession of this insight into this very specific occult monstrosity is not explained but layered in mystery: he is old and educated and has thus had time to acquire more knowledge of the world than the younger protagonists. He comes from a foreign country, but not too foreign; the Netherlands is a powerful, western European country, but the average English reader would not have much deeper knowledge of the country, which makes it easier to believe that van Helsing could somehow possess different knowledge of physical ailments than English (and thereby implicitly more modern) medical doctors. What seems more of a message to the reader is the fact that van Helsing has a more open disposition towards unconventional ailments and cures than the modern-minded pragmatist doctor Seward does. Seward is the English scientist and therefore represents British progress of which Britain had experienced a superior abundance throughout the 1800s compared to other nations. Van Helsing represents open-mindedness and the willingness to involve solutions from the older world, possibly a suggestion from Stoker that we should not allow society to change too quickly, and that progress isn't universally to mankind's advantage. Van Helsing makes certain questionable choices, however, which threaten his characterization as altogether benevolent. I have already mentioned the instance in which he offers up a comforting kiss from the unconscious Lucy to Arthur on page 24. It seems clear, however, that his intention in doing this is good, which further strengthens the view that women are objects for men to exchange to strengthen kinship between themselves, once again as assessed by Signorotti, and therefore, the woman/object need not be considered as a person from whom consent is needed.

Out of the male protagonists in *Dracula*, only one is developed slightly beyond archetypes – Jonathan Harker. Jonathan goes through change throughout the novel, and this is owed to three specific developments: his time in the Count’s castle, his growing relationship with Mina, and her victimization by the Count. This is reflected in his hospitalization upon returning from Transylvania to England, his frail mental state following his ordeal, and his physical appearance, which prematurely ages him, as Dr Seward reflects:

The poor fellow is overwhelmed in a misery that is appalling to see. Last night he was a frank, happy-looking man, with strong, youthful face, full of energy, and with dark brown hair. Today he is a drawn, haggard old man, whose white hair matches well with the hollow burning eyes and griefwritten lines of his face. (Stoker 280)

Jonathan’s sufferings due to the Count’s actions are shown from the beginning to the end of the novel. He is a noble young man whose integrity never wavers, and his relationship with Mina is upheld as an ideal existence, desired by all. At this point, Mina has proclaimed that she wishes to be put to death should her transformation into a vampire be completed at some point. One of the most explicit scenes of the novel has recently taken place, in which the Count has fed on Mina and proceeded to force her to drink his blood, which the male protagonists walked in on. They have thus witnessed what is tantamount to a perverse form of rape, and Mina suffers greatly for it. She mourns her proverbial fall from grace, and Van Helsing’s touch of a piece of sacramental bread against her forehead leaves a physical mark on her: ‘burned into the flesh as though it had been a piece of white-hot metal.’ (Stoker 275)

3.2 Mina Harker

Mina’s heroism is as true as Jonathan’s integrity. She readily and unperturbedly welcomes her fiancé back after his ordeal in Transylvania during his hospital stay, spiritedly relaying to Lucy her anguish for his sufferings in a letter that despite this is written in a happy tone, as it proceeds with Mina’s exultation over finalizing plans to get married and ends with the news that the nuptials have now occurred. The last words of the letter are symbolic: “I must attend to my husband!” (Stoker 101), which in a way sums up the letter – Mina saves

Jonathan from his wretchedness by showing up and marrying him and beginning to inhabit the role she was born for: the devoted wife who cares for her husband. When Lucy has been put out of her vampiric misery by way of execution by the male protagonist party, Mina's heroism gains depth, as she insists on being told the details surrounding Lucy's final demise, which is unthinkable to Dr Seward's sensibilities: "No! no! no! For all the world, I wouldn't let you know that terrible story!" (Stoker 206) The doctor repeats these sentiments when he sees signs of recent tears on her face after reading his rendition of Lucy's violent euthanasia: "I greatly fear I have distressed you." (Stoker 207) This is an old-fashioned mode of genteelness; a gentleman's manner of showing consideration for the fairer sex by sparing them gruesome details, even though female lives normally include a fair amount of gruesome details that men are spared, such as the visceral consequences of menstruations or childbirth. In accordance with the typical English mannerisms of stiff upper lips and avoidance of blunt truths, such things are not spoken of in polite society, and thus, through silencing, they are erased from factual occurrences of life.

Mina's heroics continue by way of mothering the men when they are in need of comfort. On an evening when the grief after everything that happened to Lucy hits the protagonist party particularly hard, one by one, the men turn to Mina to be consoled. Lord Godalming, Lucy's former fiancé, is naturally offered special attention due to his closeness to Lucy:

With a sob he laid his head on my shoulder, and cried like a wearied child, whilst he shook with emotion.

We women have something of the mother in us that makes us rise above smaller matters when the mother-spirit is invoked; I felt this big, sorrowing man's head resting on me, as though it were that of the baby that some day may be on my bosom, and I stroked his hair as though he were my own child.' (Stoker 214)

The man is here once again allowed the unique freedom that he had as a child, because it is normally only reserved for actual children: weeping freely on the shoulder of a woman, substituting for his mother. It is a display of emotion and vulnerability that must not be risked

in front of another man, because that would be emasculating. Paradoxically, the emulation of a child's behaviour in order to procure the consolation and affection of a woman – one whom he does not know very well and is attached to another man, no less – is somehow not emasculating, because a woman's need to mother is the natural order of women, and the consoled is then, naturally, in this heteronormative world, masculine. There is no directly sexual context in this exchange, as Mina is married to Jonathan and Lord Godalming is only seeking out her comfort, and neither is seeking an extramarital affair. Mina's willingness to mother the grieving men tells us that she is willing to forego her own grief over Lucy to prioritize theirs, furthering the theory that her role as their consoling mother is natural, and they, as men, must be allowed to grieve more than her. It is not mentioned, however, how this requires a greater emotional strength on her part, as this is another thing about women's lives that should go without saying, and men prefer this truth silenced.

Mina next goes on to notice Mr. Morris, who must also be in need of mothering, and she reflects:

No one but a woman can help a man when he is in trouble of the heart; and he had no one to comfort him. (...) impulsively I bent over and kissed him. The tears rose in his eyes, and there was a momentary choking in his throat; he said quite calmly: - "Little girl, you will never regret that true-hearted kindness, so long as ever you live!" (Stoker 215)

Mina is a married woman, and her kiss is meant as a platonic one, but it reveals the intimate nature a woman's mothering is expected to take, even if the child she is consoling is a grown man. In a patriarchal view, her affections are common property among men in such extenuating circumstances. It has parallels in how van Helsing offered up kisses from the unconscious Lucy to her fiancé (see page 24): it is a given fact that a woman should offer herself up to a man who, in the view of men, deserves it, and when Mina here participates freely and without inhibition with this, she becomes the female representative consenting to this narrative – though she is written by a man. The assumption of earned appropriation of intimate comfort and affection from the woman is a form of objectification, and Stoker makes Mina the woman who acknowledges and approves of the objectification of women. If we turn

this argument on its head, however, it also displays a superior strength in Mina to the men. Mina is aware of this imbalance:

I must hide it from Jonathan, for if he knew that I had been crying twice in one morning – I, who never cried on my own account, and whom he has never caused to shed a tear – the dear fellow would fret his heart out. I shall put a bold face on, and if I do feel weepy, he shall never see it. I suppose it is one of the lessons that we poor women have to learn... (Stoker 239)

Mina prioritizes the men's need for comfort over her own, as the ever-self-sacrificing mother does. Jonathan must not even know that she is hurting because her hurt would cause him even greater hurt, because men are more fragile than women. Her lament for "we poor women" is an acknowledgement of the extra hardships that women are saddled with that the fragile men must be spared even the knowledge of, like the visceral realities and discomforts of menstruations and childbirth. The subject of parenthood is not elaborately focused on in neither "Carmilla" or *Dracula*, yet it has a many-faceted part to play in both. Laura is motherless, and therefore lacks that formative, intimate bond with a maternal figure. Her relationship with her governesses is a close one, but there is still the distance between them of a highborn young lady from her servants. Her emotional distance from her father seems even farther removed, as he treats her as a prized possession rather than an equal that he can confide in or discuss important matters with, the way he treats other characters who are also highborn but not unattached young ladies. Carmilla maintains a façade of having at least a mother, but this appears to be nothing but a charade to uphold her human appearance. Mina has no parents, which not only underlines her initial status of independence, but also serves to justify her wish to become a wife and mother in order to establish familial bonds that she does not already have. Lucy's father is dead, and she is left with a severely sickly mother, who dies of fright shortly before Lucy dies. Lucy's mother (and her impending death) has a narrative purpose; she entails the family estate to Arthur Holmwood even before he has gone through with marrying Lucy. The entailment is logical according to tradition at the time, though it stands out as a strange and unexpected signal of distrust toward her daughter. Rather than giving in to the modern thinking that might interpret the entailment as ill will towards Lucy, it seems more credible that her mother represents the female protester against the New Woman

who believes that women should stay subordinate to men. Her death is unnecessary for the main plot, and it becomes apparent that it takes place for reasons that have little to do with driving it further: Stoker gets the chance to confirm Lucy's dependence on her guardian, be they a parent or a spouse, while the mourning party after Lucy's death is limited to her three suitors and Mina. While Mina winds up becoming a traditional wife and mother, Lucy becomes a warped perversion of the ideal Victorian woman: a forbidden, sexually suggestive demon-like being who preys on that which a woman is made to cherish: children. The contrast between the mother Mina becomes as a married woman and the "mother" Lucy becomes as a vampire are metaphors for the opinions men form of women who adhere to traditional norms and those that do not. One is cultivated and the other is condemned.

The men have a great weakness in their inability to turn to each other for comfort in their shared grief. Should they comfort each other with embraces or worse – kisses – that would constitute a breach of decency that not even the Gothic genre could excuse away. Male homoeroticism is a taboo that far outweighs even the graphic scene involving a forceful exchange of blood between the Count and Mina, as described in Dr Seward's diary:

On the bed beside the window lay Jonathan Harker, his face flushed, and breathing heavily as though in a stupor. Kneeling on the near edge of the bed facing outwards was the white-clad figure of his wife. By her side stood a tall, thin man, clad in black. His face was turned from us, but the instant we saw it we all recognized the Count – in every way, even to the scar on his forehead. With his left hand he held both Mrs Harker's hands, keeping them away with her arms at full tension; his right hand gripped her by the back of the neck, forcing her face down on his bosom. Her white nightdress was smeared with blood, and a thin stream trickled down the man's bare breast, which was shown by his torn-open dress. (Stoker 262)

As we can see, this scene bears great similarities to the scene of a rape. Mina, clad in innocent white, and the Count, clad in dooming black, are revealed to be in a non-consensual intimate situation in which bodily fluids are exchanged, and the men are all made to bear witness to her debasement. This is one of the most gruesomely detailed scenes of *Dracula*, and yet, it fits well within the confines of acceptable horror, as the perpetrator is a man, and the victim is a

woman. The Gothic nature of the novel lends it that extra availability of a clearly fictional occurrence – a vampire exchanging blood with a victim – and yet, we never encounter similarly intimate situations between the vampire and another man. This is because such an occurrence would reveal issues that are simply too sensitive to the patriarchy: the male victim’s weakness, and thus emasculation, and male homoeroticism. I also wish to direct attention to the language used in this scene: Jonathan is made out to be an equal, if not greater victim of the situation than Mina is. He is “breathing heavily as though in a stupor” in fear and shock over what is happening to his beloved wife right in front of him, a hypnotic state the Count has placed him in. Even after impressing the men with her intellect and compassion previously in the timeline of the novel, Mina is not spoken of as her own individual, but as “his wife” and as “Mrs Harker”, insisting on language heavy with possessive pronouns, which cements the fact that Jonathan is the true victim here. Mina’s importance is weighed in how she reflects on the man she belongs to. As for the men who witness this scene: collectively, they are frozen in the moment, watching their treasured Mina be violated by the count. These men, who have all been favourably described as brave and manly, joining the hunt for the Count, all become transfixed in watching rather than acting to stop the assailant. The reader sees the details of the scene through their eyes, making the men (and by extension the readers) voyeurs, more concerned with taking in what they are seeing than with putting a stop to it. What is physically happening to Mina is grim enough without considering the implications of the men’s inaction. It suggests that Stoker is catering to dark male fantasies, something that repeats itself throughout the novel in different ways. In this particular case it is the fantasy of watching the rape of an honourable woman, which enables sadistic, sexualized misogynistic tendencies. We should also keep in mind that Mina is not only an honourable woman: she has been shown as supremely capable and seemingly without any personality flaws, and thus the rape scene also serves to subjugate her to “put her in her place” as a mere woman, regardless of how infallible she may be as a person. Lucy may have endured a worse punishment, but Mina’s is not much better, even though her behaviour is the opposite of Lucy’s.

The treatment of Mina by the male protagonist party is at the same time self-contradictory in a different perspective, which is a reflection on how women were treated in Victorian society. She is the cornerstone of the home, she must birth and rear children, she must manage a tidy home, she must suffer female maladies while also spare the men from their existence, but at the same time, she is to be viewed as a frail and beautiful flower whose innocence must not be marred by the knowledge of the ugly truths of the world. The men

decide to spare Mina of their activities in plotting against the Count, as decided by van Helsing:

Friend John, up to now fortune has made that woman of help to us; after to-night she must not have to do with this so terrible affair. It is not good that she run a risk so great. We men are determined – nay, are we not pledged? – to destroy this monster; but it is no part for a woman. Even if she be not harmed, her heart may fail her in so much and so many horrors; and hereafter she may suffer – both in waking, from her nerves, and in sleep, from her dreams. And, besides, she is a young woman and not so long married; there may be other things to think of some time, if not now. (Stoker 219)

Van Helsing here excludes Mina from the protagonist party already in the first sentence, as she has been “of help to us”, instead of naming her a valuable member of the party, one of “us”. His assessment that the men are determined, and thus suitable vampire hunters - but that it is too great a risk for her - does not add up, unless we take into account the established narrative of men being the authority and women being their prized possessions, not their equals. Her heart may fail her – but a man’s heart may fail him, too. She can suffer nerves when awake and nightmares in her sleep as a result – but so may a man. Van Helsing speaks as though a woman is the only kind of person for whom the Count’s horrors may have dire consequences, yet she is the one who had to console and mother the heartbroken men only a few pages previous to van Helsing’s decision to keep her out of their vampire hunting affairs. He finally ends his statement with a mention of “other things to think of some time” regarding Mina’s condition, hinting at her ability to get pregnant. The analogy of Schrödinger’s cat springs to mind: the theory that if a cat is placed in a sealed box along with something that could kill the cat, the state of the cat would be an unknown factor while the box stays sealed, and the cat is to be considered both dead and alive at the same time until the box is opened. Mina is *Dracula’s* Schrödinger’s cat: She is both pregnant and not pregnant at the same time. It doesn’t matter whether she is currently pregnant or not; as a young, newlywed woman, she is to be thought primarily of as a mother-to-be, and she must be guarded and held holy as the

soil from which new, young men may spring, and like the soil, she is to be granted no voice of her own. It is a tragic irony that she, the one the men are guarding, is the one who is used most viciously by the Count after this. Jonathan has a slightly rose-tinted view of these proceedings:

I am so glad that she consented to hold back and let us men do the work. Somehow, it was a dread to me that she was in this fearful business at all; but now that her work is done, and that it is due to her energy and brains and foresight that the whole story is put together in such a way that every point tells, she may well feel that her part is finished, and that she can henceforth leave the rest to us. (Stoker 230)

Jonathan here acknowledges Mina's skills and sizable contributions to the protagonist party's work fervently. His relief suggests that the one whose peace of mind is secured through the omission of Mina from the vampire hunt is her husband and not her, and the consensus that she should be content with "leaving the rest" to the men seems illogical if she is truly the one whose stellar attributes and effort has put together the story so well. One would think that her valuable contributions would be continuously desired as an asset on their team, given the tremendously difficult task they are still facing. Furthermore, it seems like Mina's "energy, brains and foresight" are among the major factors that contribute towards Jonathan's love for Mina, contrasting the superlatives which Lucy's suitors attribute to Lucy, never more passionately meant than after they kill her vampiric form: "Lucy as we had seen her in her life, with her face of unequalled sweetness and purity." (Stoker 202) The scene in which vampiric Lucy is put to death is a bloody and gruesome one, and yet, once the vampiric curse has left her mangled body, the men's spirits are lifted because of this visible change in her: 'We gazed so eagerly that Arthur rose, for he had been seated on the ground, and came and looked too; and then a glad, strange light broke over his face and dispelled altogether the gloom of horror that lay upon it.' (Stoker 2011, p. 202) Lucy's attractions are those of the superficially ideal woman; silent, innocent and beautiful. It explains why van Helsing thinks of offering her unconscious kiss to her fiancé, and why Arthur desires it; though she is unconscious, and the kiss is offered up by someone else, she is still lovely while silent because her attractions remain apparent even then. Mina's impressions upon the men are more

cerebral, and as van Helsing exclaims: “Ah, that wonderful Madam Mina! She has man’s brain – a brain that a man should have were he much gifted – and woman’s heart.” (Stoker 218) This remark, incidentally, is made immediately before van Helsing decides that Mina is to be kept out of their work from now on. Her “man’s brain” is not enough to warrant her the same rights or duties as a man, because her “woman’s heart” overshadows it, and her potential for motherhood – to her own children to come and to the men as well – disqualifies her. Mina’s potential for motherhood makes her a mother, a holy object that must be guarded.

Jonathan shows great reverence for Mina, her skills and her mind, but once she is his wife, and thus his possession, he dismisses her as a thinking, contributing person with the same ease as the other male characters. Mina makes it her passion project to gather all the various accounts available of Lucy’s progressing disease after her passing, as noted by Dr Seward:

They are hard at it. Mrs. Harker says that they are knitting together in chronological order every scrap of evidence they have. Harker has got the letters between the consignee of the boxes at Whitby and the carriers in London who took charge of them. He is now reading his wife’s transcript of my diary. (Stoker 209)

Dr Seward here establishes the way the Harkers have distributed the work of documenting the various accounts of the Count’s movements that they have at their disposal. Despite having read Mina’s writings, which include detailed accounts of Lucy’s declining health after the Count has begun feeding off her, Jonathan fails to detect the same symptoms in Mina once she begins to display them too. It seems curious that, amid this emergency, where the protagonist party can be presumed to be on high alert against such symptoms, especially after what they have so recently gone through with Lucy, no one is looking out for them in Mina, their one female companion. Jonathan takes her safety for granted:

I came tiptoe into our own room, and found Mina asleep, breathing so softly that I had to put my ear down to hear it. She looks paler than usual. I hope the meeting to-night has not upset her. I am truly thankful that she is to be

left out of our future work, and even of our deliberations. It is too great a strain for a woman to bear. I did not think so at first, but I know better now. (Stoker 236)

Considering why Jonathan would assume Mina's safety, we return to the subject of who the Count chooses to feed on. The Count makes his female victims his brides, as we have seen both with his three brides in his home in Transylvania, and with Lucy. Though Lucy was engaged to be married when the Count chose her as his victim, she was still unwed and thus a virgin. The Count's feedings off Lucy shares the intimacy of sexual relations, and she is no longer to be counted as a virgin, which is mirrored in the way the men perceive vampire Lucy at the graveyard: "the pointed teeth, the bloodstained, voluptuous mouth – which it made one shudder to see – the whole carnal and unspiritual appearance, seeming like a devilish mockery of Lucy's sweet purity" (Stoker 199) Bereft of her virginity and under the influence of the predator Count, she is now tantamount to a vampire whore. Mina continues this perception of how she is to be viewed once the Count has begun to change her: "Unclean, unclean!" (Stoker 2011, p. 264) The sanctity of the marital bed has been violated by the Count. To underline the transgression, the act between the Count and Mina literally takes place in the marital bed. It may be that Jonathan believes that Mina is not eligible as a new victim to the Count, as she has already been claimed as Jonathan's bride, and is thereby somehow unqualified to be chosen by Dracula as a victim/ bride/ possession. There is also the assumption of her safety due to the group's omission of her from their vampire hunt, which is a source of great relief to Jonathan and the other men. In fact, their relief seems the primary goal for her omission, as she has been one of the most passionate and productive contributors toward their goals so far. By openly displaying their fear for her safety this way, the group reveals how important Mina is to them, and as the Count knows they are hunting him, she naturally falls into his crosshairs. This shows how inferior the male characters are to Mina: they are all so honourable and brave that they almost seem inhuman, yet it is their decision to dismiss Mina – one they all feel very confident and relieved for – that becomes their great failure.

As for Mina's survival in the end – once the ordeal with the hunt for the Count is finished, a time jump at the very end of the novel, described by Jonathan and not her, reveals that she has gone on to have a son that they have named after the male protagonist party, though they call him Quincey. Every choice Stoker has made here seems conscious because

they all point in the same direction. Mina should be the one who gets to end the story with this added time jump because although Jonathan was the one whose torment as the Count's guest began it, Mina is arguably the one who has had the most varied experience and the greatest development throughout the story. Removing her voice here shows that she is no longer important, and she has now finally taken her rightful place in the home as a wife the way a woman should. Speaking of her new life as a wife, now without a lethal threat hanging over their heads: this is not at all the married life she dreamed of back when she was schoolmistress Mina Murray, with her impressive secretarial skills. She is now reduced to using the only skill men want women to cultivate: that of bearing and rearing children. The addition of naming the child – conveniently a male child, the ultimate blessing – after the male protagonist party solidifies an all-round happy ending for the men. This happy end for the men should also be seen as a happy end for Mina, because she did change her entire personality once married towards a dedication to serving men and mothering. Consequently, Stoker attains a remarkable feat: in a Gothic vampire novel full of supernatural and fantastical happenings, one of the least believable elements is the character evolution of the central female character.

3.3 Conclusion Chapter 2

The men of *Dracula* are perfectly dull and dully perfect at the same time. This may reflect that as the reigning population group, white Englishmen do not need to be made interesting, because the only group of readers that matters is other white Englishmen, and beyond the enforcement and following celebration of their own perfection, they are not interested in reading about themselves. What they want to read may have more to do with what they do not already know: explorations of the inferior fairer sex and other supernatural beings.

The male protagonist party is laden with self-contradictory behaviours. They are traumatized after having to kill Lucy, and they assume that Mina, as a woman, won't be able to handle knowing the detailed truth of it, but they depend on her, again as a woman, to console them. In accepting her consolation, they breach intimacy boundaries that are meant to cement the distance between a woman and any man who is not her husband. Her consolations take the form of a mother's care for her children, however, and it becomes clear that where Mina Murray was more of her own individual, Mina Harker takes a different role as Bram

Stoker's mouthpiece in the shape of a woman, telling the reader what male readers will want to hear: that women want to mother them. This enables the men to break down completely like children, without foregoing their masculinity, like a symbiotic relationship wherein the woman exists primarily to enable men's whims and desires. In return, the man shelters his woman (or multiple in case of daughters and wards), provides for and protects them, and bravely allow themselves to be traumatized so that their women shouldn't have to be and so that they can create their own status as heroes while also denying women the possibility of gaining that same status.

The men's behaviour during the Count's rape of Mina shed a less heroic light on them, and darker whims and desires become apparent: instead of intervening to save someone who has showed maternal care for them, they remain watching the scene unfold itself from the doorway. Mina has been portrayed as the perfect Victorian woman: intelligent enough that her husband won't grow bored with her, but also entirely dedicated to being his wife, and never revealing any hint of sexuality. By adhering to the rules of modesty, she has created a curiosity around her non-existent sexuality, and the men have their curiosity sated when they witness her violation by the Count. The non-consensual nature of the encounter adds another dimension: the men are treated to watching her punishment for being too perfect. It is a different, and less visceral and final punishment than the one Lucy is given, but this is because Lucy's infraction as a promiscuous woman is worse than Mina's lack of flaws. More importantly, the male reader may have his curiosity with Mina's sexuality sated better through the men's detailed observance than he would through a rescue scene.

Mina's life at the end of the novel all but erases all traces of the remarkable young woman whose opinions and ambitions were her own entirely. As a result, Mina becomes used as a pawn for the men's satisfaction in this novel.

4 Carmilla and Count Dracula

Writing about two novels which both derive their respective titles from the name of a character central to the plot, it may seem ironic that the bulk of this text is concerned with other characters, particularly with *Dracula*. In this chapter I wish to explore these two characters more.

Carmilla and Count Dracula's respective personalities appear, at first glance, to be very different from each other. Carmilla is, in Laura's narration, a mercurial lover: languid, but intense, gentle, but sometimes surprisingly forceful. The different narratives of *Dracula* describing the Count make no attempts to disguise his nature: he is an unmistakable monster. Though one operates with subterfuge and the other with brutality, some glaring similarities also shine through the façade: they both primarily prey on women, they both use methods with strong, sexual undertones. More than anything, neither of them fits into the mould of the ideal Victorian. In this chapter, I wish to argue how Carmilla and Dracula represent the horrific *other* through which the world suffers, and their vampirism is, for the most part, meant as illusions that facilitate the unveiling of greater societal issues than supernatural horror.

4.1 Carmilla

While "Carmilla" mostly takes place in a relatively isolated place, and thus becomes removed in a sense from the movements of the world, Dracula makes use of a world on a fast track towards becoming more globalized as the years go by. When *Dracula* was published in 1897, the world was undergoing great changes, both on a political and social level and also on the literal world map. Stoker made sure to use the image of the then modern world as a device in his novel. Count Dracula wields numerous unfathomable and terrifying powers that make him a threat on a far greater scale than Carmilla. When we first meet him, he is an established terror in his homeland who complacently feeds on the native population, which has seemingly accepted that he is an unfortunate "bogeyman" that they must live with, using religious paraphernalia and garlic as their safeguards against him. Discovering the fruitful metropolis of London through reading, he decides to move there, and he arrives with a storm, leaving a literal bloody trail in his wake. His movements can be read as allegory for the previous feudal tyrant of England, a colonising superpower with its sights set on greener pastures to usurp and

bleed dry of its resources. The Count is a relentless aggressor who expresses entitlement to the blood he takes, the minds he controls, in other words, the people he conquers.

In this respect, Carmilla is a very different monster, and her hunting grounds are far smaller than the Count's. Judging by these two individuals, the distinction between female and male vampires becomes more than biology: "Historically, women represented as vampires were seen as threats to order, whether of ownership, property and heredity, since the vampire invaded the home, the body of the beloved, and upset every comfortable complacency." (Wisker 2016, p. 159) Carmilla is presented as an archetypically feminine character, and she does not attempt to conquer. Where the Count has stayed in the same place for centuries as a type of alpha predator at the top of the food chain, Carmilla travels with a low profile from place to place, secretly killing local girls while appearing as a frail young, pretty girl, the most innocent, inconsequential creature thinkable to men. Where the Count sets off to take what he feels himself entitled to, Carmilla seeks out intimacy and blood both through seduction. The Count's victims are pawns for him to use, while Carmilla's victims are individuals with whom she shares intimate relations, and she is even shown to feel guilt when reminded of those whose lives have been lost on her account. The home is "the woman's sphere", which Carmilla invades, while Count Dracula is a threat on the world stage; a stage that at the time belonged to men alone. Carmilla's is a feminine, intimate form of horror, an invasion of the home and personal sphere, while the Count's horror is potentially world-encompassing, and at its worst, almost as grand as the machinations of Lovecraftian horror. This feeds the perception of "Carmilla" as ultimately progressive and Dracula as patriarchal, but though Carmilla's methods are more discrete and feminine, they are no less antagonistic.

Carmilla is described as ethereally beautiful, positively irresistible, which is mirrored in *Dracula's* three vampire brides. Laura does not manage to resist Carmilla the way Jonathan resists the more explicitly sexual nature of the three vampire women, however. It becomes imperative that the reader remembers that we are seeing everything through the perspective of Laura, who is young, impressionable, and starved for excitement and companionship. She is quick to recognize Carmilla's face from a childhood incident wherein she was accosted by a female night-time visitor:

I saw the very face which had visited me in my childhood at night, which remained so fixed in my memory, and on which I had for so many years so

often ruminated with horror, when no one suspected of what I was thinking. It was pretty, even beautiful; and when I first beheld it, wore the same melancholy expression. But this almost instantly lighted into a strange fixed smile of recognition. (Le Fanu 38)

Laura begins by reminding the reader of the horror with which she recalls the incident, which we are told in chapter 1 occurred when she was around the age of 6, and “produced a terrible impression upon [her] mind” (Le Fanu 12), leaving her the morning after in “a state of terror, and could not bear to be left alone” as well as “awfully frightened” (Le Fanu 15). Her traumatic memory is soon glazed over, however, by Laura’s observance of the beauty of Carmilla’s face, and she moves on to how her melancholy facial expression is the same as she remembers in her childhood assailant. From this exchange we learn a multitude of things. For one, Laura is easily seduced by Carmilla’s beauty, and her observance of Carmilla’s melancholy suggests that she feels sympathetic towards her, opening her up even further emotionally towards Carmilla. It also tells us that Carmilla not only hunts for sexually mature women, but also little girls, something the reader is liable to forget later on in the novel as the rest of her victims all seem to be of age. Carmilla becomes a predator that not only hunts down women for their sexuality, but for their innocence as well, suggesting that no women are safe from the dangers of corruption.

When Carmilla’s party literally crashes into Laura’s father’s estate, there is little to suggest Carmilla’s true nature, except for one of the governesses’ observance of a person who stayed inside the carriage, who receives no further inquiry in the novella: “a hideous woman, who was gazing all the time from the carriage window, nodding and grinning derisively towards the ladies, with gleaming eyes and large white eyeballs and her teeth set as in fury.” (Le Fanu 2020, p. 34) The men of her party, who are all servants, are also thought to be “ill-looking”, “ugly, hang dog-looking” and likely to “rob the poor lady in the forest” (Le Fanu 2020, p. 34). These unfavourable descriptions are all made in the aftermath of the carriage incident, and so it becomes an afterthought, with the focus of the event landing on the incident itself, the plight of the inhabitants of the carriage, the chivalry of Laura’s father and the conversation between him and the woman who brokers the arrangement for Carmilla to stay at the schloss. Only now that Carmilla has gained entrance and an agreement for a sojourn there, the inhabitants get to gather their less-than-ideal thoughts about the event that at the time of occurrence had seemed so melodramatically chivalrous and romantic.

Remaining without any actual introduction or explanation, the unsightly woman in the carriage seems to have a grim purpose: she is a warped mirror of Carmilla, revealing the darkness that Carmilla hides when in public. Her hideousness counterbalances Carmilla's beauty, her "nodding and grinning towards the women" reveals what Carmilla hides so well – that her true agenda is to rob women of their lifeforce – and her intense expression "as in fury" counterbalances Carmilla's constant languor. In her we see a foreshadowing of the beast that Carmilla hides within herself. There is also something to be said about the gender balance of the party: the travellers inside the carriage are 3 women: Carmilla, the hideous woman and the woman who brokers with Laura's father. The servants are all wretched-looking men. It suggests a nightmare vision to the patriarchy, wherein the upper class consists of powerful women (one, Carmilla, later to be revealed as a vampire, leading the other two to also be suspected vampires) and the lower class is made up of miserable men who look so wicked that they are assumed to be scoundrels by those who lay eyes on them.

Amanda Paxton draws a line between "Carmilla" and Darwin's *Descent of Man* (1871), which was first published ten months before Le Fanu's novella. Much of this theory stems from the parasitic nature of many of the creatures within Darwin's text, which resembles the ways in which vampires survive and reproduce. Paxton presents as an example the way in which Carmilla gains lodgings at the schloss: "Carmilla's mother ensures her child's survival at the expense of Laura's, upsetting the system of patrilineage." (179) This is but one of the signs that men are entirely taken over by women in "Carmilla". Carmilla becomes like a parasitic larva that feeds on its host until it succumbs to blood loss and she can move on to her next victim, which is how Carmilla has survived for ages. More than that, she is a woman who excludes men entirely from this exchange, or as Paxton claims: "the system is, notably, one that promotes female bloodlines instead of male." (179) The societal hierarchy of Victorian culture originally roots all familial systems in exaggerating the man's function in the act of procreation by dictating that the man will be the proprietor of the woman. Subjects to this system, the woman and their shared progeny shall take the man's family name and thereby delete the woman's maiden name, along with a multitude of other patriarchal rules baked into patrilineage. Carmilla refuses to take men into her account whatsoever. She not only disturbs the patriarchy; she refuses to engage with it, which may be the worst horror a male author could want to present to his readers.

4.2 Count Dracula

Despite being the titular character of his novel, Count Dracula is only rarely quoted as an actual speaking, involved character. He is seen from the outside, and often from afar: he is an entity that exists in the outer perimeters of the protagonist group's world, a creature whom they live in fear of and must defeat once they are made aware of the threat. In this respect, he not only represents the foreigner, but the idea of strange, foreign nations themselves. He represents a form of masculinity completely unlike that of the Englishmen: he does not adhere to the honourable, tidy order of Victorianism, but transgresses English codes for masculinity. In his existence as a man whose masculinity does not agree with Victorian culture, he gains more similarity with Carmilla, whose lesbianism is also excluded from Victorian society.

In his own way, the Count performs a reversed colonization of the greatest colonizing nation of the world when he arrives with a violent storm, and the crew of his vessel is not strong and ready for battle like that of the British Fleet, but dead from being fed on by the Count. In his homeland, his power is extended by helpers, in the forms of gypsies and ravenous wolves. The gypsies are so devoted to their master, they are willing to put their own lives on the line in the Count's defence when returning his dormant body in his casket to his castle before sunset in the end of the novel, only faltering once he is dead. In his paper on Slovaks and Gypsies in *Dracula*, Stoyan Tchapravov reads the scene thus:

Once bereft of their powerful employer, the Count, the Gypsies flee in fear of suffering his fate at the hands of the vampire hunters. Notably, the wolves, the Count's ferocious "allies" from the woods surrounding the castle, choose to "follow in [the Gypsies'] wake." While Stoker does not explicitly offer a reason for the wolves doing so, one is hard-pressed not to read the Gypsies as the new leaders of the pack. Loyal to the powerful dark forces of a land defined by violence and corruption, the Gypsies become emblematic of evil at the end of the novel (Tchapravov 527-528) (Stoker 348, 350)

The Count has had the supernatural ability to control and turn into certain animals throughout the novel, which is explained by his status as a powerful vampire, but when the gypsies here become aligned with wolves as though they are equals after the supernatural power of the

Count has been broken, their otherness is treated to another extreme: the gypsies are to be dehumanized and seen as no better than animals.

All but the perfect middle-to-upper-class Englishmen in *Dracula* are somehow treated unfavourably throughout the novel. The accents of working-class Englishmen are exaggerated to a fault, for instance when Mina speaks to old Mr Swales, a local old man at Whitby who foretells the coming evil just before the Count arrives: “We auld folks that be daffled, and with one foot abaft the krok-hooal, don’t altogether like to think of it, and we don’t like to feel scart of it; an’ that’s why I’ve took to makin’ light of it” (Stoker 71). Mr Swales appears in Mina’s journal, which makes his extremely accent-heavy quotes seem out of place, as Mina does not seem the kind of person who would do someone such a disservice as this. The reason can only be that this is Stoker speaking through Mina: Mr Swales’ low class must be highlighted to put him in his place, lower on the proverbial social totem pole than Mina. But Mina must also be debased: women must be punished either for being too unwilling to conform to societal rules (Lucy’s execution) or for conforming to them too perfectly (Mina’s rape).

The inclusion of gypsies is natural at this point, because of the unflattering stereotypes that they are infamously labelled with historically, which is a narrative that is easily continued as a vampire’s henchmen. As Tchapravov observes, they look like impressive opponents, but are no match for the vampire hunters (527). It suggests, like Braidotti argues, that the European, white, able-bodied (to which I’ve added English and middle-to-upper-class) man is what we are meant to consider the standard for human, and others fall short of it: they are *others*. There is a marked hierarchy, but it is complicated: Van Helsing is almost as valued as the Englishmen, but the Dutchman is shown to speak in a peculiar way, which does not resemble Dutch or any other common linguistic affectations when speaking English as a second language. Quincey is also almost at their level, but he is shown to be almost *too* manly in his mannerisms and dies bravely in the final battle against the gypsies, playing to stereotypes about American bravado. Women are elevated, but simultaneously side-lined, because they spend their lives in service to the man, and they are made to please him, but they are at the same time resented for their sexuality, whether it tempts the man too much, like Lucy, or they command it too well, like Mina. British workers are jovial and down to earth, but unintelligent and uncultured, which Stoker emphasizes with their speech. Gypsies are made to fulfil the worst prejudices against them, and here, they end up allying with the vampire’s wolves: they are no better than evil animals.

Like the hideous woman in the carriage appears to reversely mirror Carmilla, the Count tends to mirror Jonathan in a similar way. When Jonathan visits the Count, there are instances where the two seem to meld into one another. They are never joined by anyone else while they are both present in any given space. One might argue that they are in the scene with the three vampire brides, but Jonathan is barely conscious there. Jonathan observes the Count's movements almost like a passive watcher:

His host crawls down the walls like a lizard – dressed in Harker's clothes. Is it really Dracula crawling or does Dracula mirror the young man Harker? (...) This assumption is confirmed by the following evening, when Harker shaves himself in front of his shaving glass. Harker is only able to see his own face, not that of the suddenly appearing Count. Together with the fact that Dracula cannot be seen in a mirror, he also casts no shadow. It is not clear whether the Count is really alive or just a projection of Harker's own imagination. It seems as Dracula is a part of Harker, a part of his Self. (Nußbaumer 13-14)

This theory puts a psychologically interesting spin on Dracula – is the horror of the Count merely a revelation of Jonathan's darker side? The Count does, indeed, wear Jonathan's clothing to venture into town and send mail back home to reassure (lie to) Mina of his wellbeing. The fact that the Count does not appear in the mirror has, in popular culture, been picked apart more in the direction of creating "rules" for vampires, when it can rather mean that he does not show up in the mirror because he isn't really there. If we read the Count as Jonathan's Shadow Self, then can the punishment of Lucy really be motivated by a jealousy of her close relationship with Mina, a relationship that is so close it can be read as a homosexual one, mirroring Carmilla and Laura? Does he rape Mina in retaliation in order to establish a dominance of sorts, to claim her back and to also reaffirm that she is his subordinate in their household? Is the change in his appearance a result of his dual nature and the struggle within him between Jonathan and the Count? This interpretation may not belong as a literal one, and a complete reading of Dracula under this re-conception of the novel may be taking it a bit too far. A further consideration of the theory leads one to surmise that Stoker

inserted himself into some of his characters, of which Jonathan and the Count are two, and the actions of both reflect the mind of the author.

4.3 Conclusion Chapter 3

The romanticized image Laura initially has of Carmilla and the intimacy that builds up between the two can easily conjure up the image of a love story between two women in a time of strict heteronormativity. Carmilla does indeed choose women as her objects of desire, and her relationship with men consists of manipulation to eliminate them as obstacles in her pursuit of women. This is far from a pure hunt for the sake of romance, however: Carmilla has a very specific diet, and it exclusively involves female victims. In order to obtain her goals, she manipulates men's vanities and their superficial perceptions of women. Her beauty and languor make her appear to fit very well into the ideal image of young Victorian women, but underneath it, her true nature is something unthinkable to Man: she is an uncontrolled woman hungering for other women, and by not fitting into societal norms for young women, who should not hunger for anything, and certainly not other women, she is an *other*. Le Fanu's story of Gothic horror, to the modern reader, seems to want to inspire fright through his use of vampires, but to a male Victorian reader, Carmilla is something far scarier. She is a proverbial wrench in the machine, someone who does not fit into the image of the Victorian home, to which all women must be relegated, in any way. To have one's young women seduced by another man is horrific enough, but for it to happen at the hands of a woman, who may be able to offer something that a man cannot seems downright unthinkable and horrid. She is even known to attack a 6 year old girl, making her attacks not just sexually motivated, but discriminatorily motivated. She is the horror because she is not just a bloodsucking predator, but a female, sexually laden predator, and she doesn't procreate: she only kills.

Count Dracula embodies the other in a different way than Carmilla. He is as an image of Colonist England turned on its head: a devastating foreign superpower invading England rather than the other way round, there to debase and feast on English citizens. He gives the foreign *other* a voice without actually having a voice of his own, as he is hardly ever quoted as speaking, and his actions are made to do the speaking for him. This substantiates the xenophobic narrative of the contemporary political climate of the publishing of *Dracula*. Using as his henchmen gypsies from his home country, a people historically vilified, the Count underlines the difference between good Englishmen and antagonistic foreign powers.

Like in “Carmilla”, the horror in *Dracula* is more than that of vampires: it is also of foreign invasions, *otherness* imagined as worse than what the English themselves inflict on the world.

Conclusion

Having initially begun work on this thesis with the goal of exploring how gender politics were dealt with in Gothic Vampire Fiction, the patterns that I was able to uncover have been highly revelatory in exposing just how well ingrained the patriarchy was in Victorian society. As I observed in the Introduction, the Gothic Genre has two purposes: one is to entertain, and the other is to challenge the canon of the power structure of the society it is written in or for, which during the Victorian Era was the strict rule and general mindset of the English patriarchy. It thus becomes apparent that Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Sheridan Le Fanu's "Carmilla" both carry progressive elements within them, especially when the modern reader looks for them. Critics like Elizabeth Signorotti discuss "Carmilla" as a narrative that celebrates female sexuality by excluding male interferences, an idea that was unheard of at its time of publishing. Indeed, the intimate and explicitly sensual relationship between Laura and Carmilla is allowed to develop because Laura's father suspects nothing of the sort, lacking, as Rubin puts it, someone with a phallus between them to truly appreciate their value. Similarly, Elizabeth Macaluso argues that the relationship between Mina and Lucy in *Dracula* hints at a non-platonic friendship between the two. This is substantiated by the way both ladies speak of their time together as time where they can dream and be free in ways that elude them otherwise.

Signorotti argues, however, that *Dracula* is written partly as an attempt to "correct" the progression of "Carmilla", signalling that women who operate outside the bounds of established gender rules must be punished, and forced back into the known patriarchal system of social policy. My findings in researching this thesis are not in total agreement with neither Signorotti nor Macaluso, though none of them is without merit. In fact, my analysis agrees with most of Signorotti's analysis of *Dracula*; it is her view of "Carmilla" that I disagree with, and I find that the novels both enforce the same narrative, though perhaps Le Fanu disguises it better.

Carmilla, Lucy and the three vampire brides are all female figures that represent the polar opposite of what is desired of women in a harmonious, patriarchally run society. The 4 seductresses of *Dracula* frighten the men by tempting them with unbridled sexuality, abandoning all pretence that women do not know what carnal pleasures men desire and that women do not desire them as well. When the men manage to resist this, they reaffirm their indomitable strength of will, having in this way established two categories of male fantasy:

observing women embody the forbidden fruit of uncontrolled sexual desire and the fiction of being able to resist this. Lucy's horrid execution becomes a symbol for what the reigning body must do to inhibit the abomination that is the idea of women's sexual liberty. The sharp contrast between Lucy's drawn-out execution and the brief one given to Count Dracula, who passes quickly and without leaving a trace of his being behind, signifies men's sexual domination over women and a denial of the strength of foreign power.

Meanwhile, Carmilla manipulates men in order to avoid closer interaction with them altogether, which is absurd and unthinkable behaviour in a strictly patriarchal society. She takes advantage of their vain, well-intended need to play heroes to apparently helpless maidens so that she can prey on their women while under the guise of the recovering, femininely weakened guest. Laura's father's complaisant ignorance of the dangers surrounding Carmilla leave Laura as a ready target for Carmilla's consumption. Laura and Carmilla's sexual intimacy becomes a controversial point of interest: male readers are treated to sexual scenes without having to endure a man's involvement but are at the same time forced to consider the existence of lesbianism, in which men become insignificant. If this were indeed a progressive story, it would only seem natural that Carmilla intended to bestow vampirism on her lover. Looking at Carmilla without the influence of the rose-tinted glasses through which Laura views her, the truth about Carmilla becomes far harsher: she is a predator, and unlike Count Dracula, she does not endow her victims with vampirism; she kills them. This all points towards a warning lesson for men: be aware of what goes on in your women's lives, or you may not be able to rescue them from evil, and your heroic ambitions will have been for naught. In other words, women's movements should be under constant supervision, because they are unable to censor their own actions properly.

In *Dracula*, Mina's character grows throughout the novel to the point where she seems almost superhuman in her lack of character flaws. Before getting married, she displays a lust for life, taking great enjoyment in spending time with her best friend Lucy and anticipating marriage to Jonathan, whom she expects to be of great use to professionally speaking. Once married, her ambitions are thrown to the wind, and instead she devotes herself to fulfilling the needs of the men. The shift in Mina's personality seems an overtly conscious choice by the author. An unmarried woman is free to go gallivanting with (female) friends and fantasizing about what the future will bring, but once she is married, her duty to others becomes the centre of her proverbial universe, and in Stoker's hands, she welcomes her new burden with open arms. The author seems to take over Mina entirely, imbuing her with desires to serve

and mother, with no needs of her own and blind acquiescence with the men's decisions. She becomes the woman of the Victorian man's dreams. In the end of the novel, the once opinionated and dreaming young woman who wanted to become an asset to her husband's work is reduced to a wife and mother and a facilitator to men's agenda. Mina's unnatural development is a patriarchal daydream, a fantasy of what women should be and how they should not only allow but yearn for men to behave.

I spoke in the introduction about otherness, which is dealt with in different ways in "Carmilla" and *Dracula*. If we take *others* to mean "the sexualized, racialized and naturalized" others in the words of Rosi Braidotti, this implies that everyone except the distinguished middle-to-upper-class Englishmen in these novels is an "other". There are perhaps no characters in these novels for whom otherness is more relevant than their namesakes, Carmilla and Count Dracula. The Count is a literal monster who comes from obscure parts of Eastern Europe which fits well with many established prejudices, which are affirmed by his use of gypsies as his henchmen. He is an *other* by being very foreign – far more so than van Helsing or Quincey Morris, who both come from western nations. His otherness becomes extreme when he turns British imperialism on its head by invading England himself to feed on the population the way the British, through colonizing other countries, have leeched resources from foreign parts. Carmilla becomes doubly other by being female and attractive and simultaneously rejecting heteronormativity categorically. In fact, she not only rejects men, but she takes advantage of their weaknesses to reach their women. Both of these characters' otherness is so extreme they are the given antagonists to the Victorian patriarchy.

Both of these novels are presented as horror novels – as well they should be, as their namesakes and central antagonists are bloodsucking vampires, thoroughly supernatural monsters. But are the vampires themselves and the carnage and death that they cause what the reader will take away as the singular, true horror of these stories? Vampires alone might be considered viable frightening factors with children, young adults and what these male authors viewed as the fairer sex, but if these novels were intended for these audiences, it is unlikely that the authors would have included such heavily sexual and otherwise graphic content as they have. If we consider the audience for which they were written, which was more than likely made up of men like the authors themselves; would the threat of undead monsters who prey on the living be enough of a horrific threat on its own? The insertion of progressive elements into Gothic horror novels might just be a better way to summon goosebumps in this

demographic group. What better way to shake those in power than suggest that the foundations for their well-established world view are unstable? Carmilla travels with an all-female party whose wretched servants are men. She enters into a lesbian relationship with Laura which Laura's father is completely unaware of. Mina has dreams and valuable skills of her own. Lucy dares to desire sex, and with more than one man, and while unmarried. Judging by this, the women appear to be co-antagonists alongside vampirism. The honourable male protagonists must battle this evil femininity in different ways: Mina must be cowed thoroughly and shown the error of her liberated ways. Stoker himself must intervene to change her entire personality into a domesticated housewife. Lucy must be shown to suffer in graphical ways for her promiscuous tendencies. Carmilla must be coldly disposed of after entirely rejecting heteronormativity like she's worth no more than garbage.

Enforcing patriarchal rule will not suffice to satisfy, however – the availability that Gothic fiction offers for taboos to be dealt with enables these male authors to include an even more extreme device: male fantasy, their very own taboo. This consolidates male superiority while also potentially bringing comfort to male readers whose comfort has been challenged in the text by deceptively progressive narratives. Thus, Carmilla's relationship with Laura becomes overtly sexual without the involvement of another man, making the act an entirely feminine one so that the reader won't be encumbered with having to read about the sexual acts of another man. Vampire Lucy is executed in a drawn-out, visceral sequence which ends with unanimous relief and celebrations by the men who killed her as they look at what remains of her after the fact and see Lucy purified: the blessed reward for their excellent work. Mina is as good as raped before the very eyes of the same party of men, who take in the scene in all its debasing detail instead of attempt to help her, which shows the reader that even a "perfect", asexual woman like Mina can be sexually conquered by a man. The reader is given the role of voyeur to a rape scene, and the absence of intervention in favour of letting the Count continue even after the men arrive allows the reader to take it all in without distraction, the way one would prefer a sexual act to remain uninterrupted. Finally, the novels both end with patriarchal order having been restored: Mina and Laura are once again safe and back under the leadership of honourable Englishmen and the evil vampire women – and other 'others' – are no longer.

Gothic Fiction, helped by fairy-tale elements, is an opportunity to address and to front progressive subjects that are taboo under other, non-fiction circumstances. This means that Gothic Fiction can be used as an indirect form of rebelling against the reigning body without

breaking any formal laws or codes of conduct. By writing “Carmilla” and *Dracula* in the way they did, Le Fanu and Stoker both used the genre to enforce the reigning canon of patriarchal thought instead of challenge it, and the opportunity for progression through Gothic Fiction becomes reversed into regression. This notwithstanding, my love for Gothic Fiction has only been further bolstered through my work on this thesis and discovering hidden depths in these novels leads me to wish to read more of the genre. The use of Gothic Fiction has also expanded in modern times, embracing many styles from Historical Fiction to Cyberpunk Futurism, opening for great potential going forward. We can only aspire to make Gothic Fiction a literary genre through which we grow in the future. Gaining consciousness regarding its conservative uses in the past can be an asset in that regard. In my coming career as a teacher, I intend to use what I have learned here to impose upon my students the following lesson: be aware of your intentions with what you write or otherwise create. It will inform the world of who you are, and it might even change the world.

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